

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 6, No. 10

February 17, 2015

DIVINE VIRTUES

PRAJNA—PERFECTION OF WISDOM

THE SEVENTH Paramita is *Prajna*, described as, “the key to which makes of a man a God, creating him a Bodhisattva, son of the *Dhyanis*.” It is last of the seven Paramitas, and may be regarded as the culmination of the previous six Paramitas. However, for those desirous of further advancement, those who wish to become the teachers of men, there are four additional Paramitas. These are: (1) *Upaya-kaushalya*, or the skillful means of helping others; (2) *Pranidhana* or Vow—to destroy evil and pain, to learn the Truth, to save all beings and lead them to Brotherhood; (3) *Bala*, the gaining of strength or power, and (4) *Jnana*, the gaining of Knowledge.

In the *Secret Doctrine* we learn that *Prajna* is the “capacity of perception” and that it exists in seven different aspects corresponding to seven different states of matter. We can therefore see that this Paramita leads us to the highest stage, the stage of full perception—perception of things as they are and not as they appear—unaffected by our worldly experiences, prejudices and preconceptions. Perhaps a glimpse of what this stage is like can be had by reading, in the *Light of Asia*, the description of the Buddha’s Enlightenment in “the middle watch,” when he attained “the ‘fourth’ degree of *Dhyana* (the seventh in the esoteric teaching).” At this stage the victor visualizes his past lives of suffering and knows

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

DIVINE VIRTUES—PRAJNA—PERFECTION OF WISDOM	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT WHY BE HONEST?	8
STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA THE FOES OF THE SOUL—II	12
SANKARACHARYA’S LIFE AND TEACHINGS—III	17
BELIEF IN REBIRTH OF MAN IN ANIMALS	22
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	29
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India
email: ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in ♦ Phone : 22039024
website: www.ultindia.org

that they were worthwhile; but he faces now the fact that if he lets the voice of the world's suffering overcome the urge for Bliss, he will have to wed woe, *i.e.*, be ready to experience suffering. He sees the truth that all he has gained must be used for others; he can use nothing for himself. All he can do is to invite suffering upon himself by shielding others. It is because of the undercurrent of love working in him that the whole Nature responds with a thrill of joyous awe, when he accomplishes the final Renunciation.

Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, explains that etymologically, the word *prajna* is derived from the Sanskrit root *jna*, “to know” and *pra*, which is simply an emphatic prefix. *Prajna*, therefore, means knowledge *par excellence*, which means knowledge of Reality or Wisdom. *Prajna Paramita* or the Perfection of Wisdom is concerned with seeing *Sunyata* everywhere, at all times, under all circumstances. In the given context, One Reality is *sunyata*, which means voidness or emptiness. But *Sunyata* is not emptiness as opposed to fullness, but a state beyond words and a state beyond opposites. In the Diamond Sutra and Heart Sutra we are given perfection of Wisdom teachings. There are four main degrees of *sunyata*, which means there are four progressively deeper stages of penetration by wisdom into Ultimate Reality. It is something which the Enlightened Ones have actually seen and experienced.

The first degree of *sunyata* is *samskrata sunyata*, or “Emptiness of the Conditioned.” Here, Wisdom sees that the Conditioned, phenomenal and relative existence is devoid of the characteristics of the Unconditioned and the Absolute. The characteristics of the Unconditioned are Bliss, Permanence, and True Being. The Conditioned existence is devoid of these characteristics. It is unsatisfactory, impermanent and unreal. In practical terms it means that we should not expect to find in the flux of relative existence what the Unconditioned, the Absolute, alone can give us.

In fact, the beginning of perfect perception, or an attempt to realize emptiness of conditioned existence is made with the first

step of the Noble Eightfold Path, *viz.*, *Samyag-dristi* or Perfect vision—the vision of the nature of existence. Perfect Vision is a vision of our actual present state of bondage to conditioned existence, represented by the image of the “Wheel of Life.” The image of the Buddha represents our potential future state of Enlightenment. The image of the Path represents the whole future course of evolution, or the passage from the state of bondage to state of freedom and Enlightenment. Perfect Insight or Vision consists in realizing the three Characteristics of Conditioned Existence, namely, Conditioned Existence is full of Suffering. Conditioned Existence is Unsubstantial. Conditioned Existence is Impermanent. Every day, every hour, every minute we are being made aware of the fact that nothing lasts, nothing stays, and that everything is in constant flux. We are made to see that everything is impermanent and transient, as we are unable to hold on to things or people “forever.” Conditioned Existence is devoid of True Selfhood. If we look at ourselves we become aware that our thoughts, emotions, our bodies are changing, and anything that is changing cannot be Real. True Selfhood can be found only at the level of Unconditioned Reality, explains Sangharakshita.

The second degree of *sunyata* is *asamskrata-sunyata* or “Emptiness of the Unconditioned.” Here, Wisdom sees that the Unconditioned is devoid of the characteristics of the conditioned. Thus, in the Conditioned, one will not find the Unconditioned, and so also, in the Unconditioned, one will not find the Conditioned. In the early stages of spiritual life it is useful to make such distinction, which reminds us that we have to go from “here” to “there.”

The third degree of *Sunyata* is called *Maha Sunyata* or the *Great Emptiness*. In the Great Emptiness all distinctions and all dualities are obliterated. We have to experience and understand that the conditioned and the Unconditioned, ordinary beings and Buddhas, *samsara* (worldly existence) and Nirvana, are of one and the same essence, one and the same ultimate Reality. We have to learn to

see the “emptiness” of the distinction between the conditioned and the unconditioned. The fourth degree of *Sunyata* is called *Sunyata Sunyata* or the *Emptiness of Emptiness*, which implies that “emptiness” itself is only a concept. In Maha Sunyata one is still clinging to subtle thoughts, subtle dualistic experiences. When even these are abandoned, there is nothing to be said, and all that is left is profound silence. When one transcends *sunyata*, one experiences enlightenment. These four degrees of *sunyata* represent successively advanced stages of penetration into Reality, explains Sangharakshita.

In Buddhism, the concept of Five *Jnanas* or “Five Wisdoms,” unfolds different dimensions of wisdom. The first of the Five Wisdoms is the wisdom of the *Dharmadhatu*. Here, *Dharma* means Reality or Truth, and *dhatu* means realm or field. The wisdom of *Dharmadhatu* means direct knowledge of the whole cosmos as not being different from Reality. The second of the “Five Wisdoms” is the “Mirror-like Wisdom.” This Wisdom is like a mirror, because just as a mirror reflects all objects, but is not affected by them, so also the Enlightened mind reflects or understands everything, but is not affected by them, and is free from subjective reaction and subjective attachment. The third of the “Five Wisdoms” is the “Wisdom of Equality.” The Enlightened mind is equal-minded towards all, has the same Love and Compassion towards all, without distinction or discrimination, because it sees the same Reality pervading everything. The fourth of the “Five Wisdoms” is the “All-Distinguishing Wisdom.” The Enlightened mind under this aspect sees the unity of things and at the same time sees uniqueness of things, and it sees both these things together. The fifth of the “Five Wisdoms” is the “All-Performing Wisdom.” The Enlightened mind spontaneously devotes itself to the welfare of all living beings. These “Five Wisdoms” exhibit different aspects of *Prajna*, writes Sangharakshita.

However, *Dhyana* (Meditation or *Samadhi*) and *Prajna* (Wisdom and Insight), though considered as separate paramitas,

in reality, they cannot be separated. They are analogous to a lamp and its light. With the lamp there is light. The lamp is the quintessence of the light, and the light is the expression of the lamp. The same is true of *Samadhi* (the highest form of *Dhyana*) and *Prajna*. We might say that *Samadhi* represents subjective and *Prajna* represents the objective aspect of Enlightenment.

Lord Buddha says, “Without insight there is no meditation and also without meditation there is no insight. With both insight and meditation one approaches Nirvana.” He who is concentrated sees things as they are. Concentration is the means to an end. That end is Wisdom or Insight, or the seeing of things in truth and reality as they are. With concentrated mind, the disciple penetrates the true nature of the teachings and then what was merely an intellectual understanding of the teaching becomes transformed into Transcendental Wisdom.

Prajna is the power or the capacity that gives rise to perception. The practice of *Prajna* at our level means improving and elevating our present power of perception to reach the highest perception, the sight of *Paramarthasatya* or Compassionate Wisdom. We have sight of knowledge and of love, but to combine them is to blend mind and heart, and that means to become single-eyed. There must not only be intelligent mind and a compassionate heart, but also, compassionate mind and an intelligent heart. *Prajna*’s development begins with the unfoldment of *Dana* or charity and love.

On the Paramita Path the practitioner should give up the habit of (1) fanciful thinking, (2) loose talk, and (3) selfish acts, and adopt such ascetic rules as are conducive to the concentration of mind and purity in speech. The aspirant to occultism must not misuse the powers of thought and speech, and strive to rise above the ordinary ways of the world. The Paramita Path may well be called the preparatory class for the School of Occultism, in which the student is getting his “mental luggage” ready.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT WHY BE HONEST?

“HELLO, THERE, have you done your arithmetic lesson?”

“Sure,” answered Ernest, with a friendly grin. “Not so bad, was it?”

“Don’t know. Haven’t done it. Let us have a look at your paper.”

Ernest turned very red and gulped uncomfortably. “Oh, I say! I can’t do that, but I will help you work the problems out if you want me to.”

And then he felt very much as if he had a slap in the face, for the other boy turned away exclaiming, “Oh! All right, Goody-Goody!” with a sneer that hurt far more than the words. And yet Ernest was sure he would be feeling worse if he had shown his paper. At least he did not have that “all-gone” feeling a fellow has after he has gone ahead and done something with that “Don’t!” yelling at him inside, that they call the “voice of conscience” at Theosophy School.

Douglas did not hold his resentment long. But he had not forgotten the incident. One Saturday, when the two boys were on the way home after a strenuous game, he asked Ernest why he thought it wrong to help another fellow. The question took Ernest by surprise and he answered slowly, anxious to put his point of view so it would “get across.” “That is not it, Doug. I would have been glad to help you—to show you how to do it yourself, you know. But if I gave you my paper, knowing the answers would not do you any good. I would be helping you to cheat, and you could not get away with it.”

“A lot I couldn’t! Miss Batts never would know the difference.”

“It is not just Miss Batts, it is the Law you could not fool.”

“I guess the police would have their hands full if they tried to catch all the boys that crib in school!”

“No, I do not mean the police any more than Miss Batts. It is just that this is an honest world and you have to play fair or suffer for it. If you start anything you are sure to get the come-back, and

if you do anything that is not straight you can look for a come-back you will not like.”

“Say, what is this ‘Be good and you will be happy’ talk?” jeered Douglas. “Do you mean I might never draw a harp to play on if I copied an arithmetic paper?”

“No, I don’t,” declared Ernest stoutly. “But you never saw anything that did not have a reason why it was. You can’t think of anything without a cause back of it. And you can’t do anything that is not setting up a cause for something else. Just for instance, you might grow up and never know how to work those problems and you might need some time to show you did know how—to get a job or something.”

“Well, what harm would that do *you*, if I didn’t?” demanded Douglas, impressed in spite of himself but unwilling to give in. “Not a bit, if you copied the answers out of a book or off somebody else’s paper; but, if I let you copy them from me, I would have been helping you to do wrong and I would be just as sure to suffer for it. But the worst come-back of all, it seems to me, is that if you once let yourself do what you know is not right, it makes it easier to do it the next time, until finally you forget that you ever knew it was wrong, and do it almost without thinking.”

“Say, I believe you are right on that. I do remember feeling awfully bad the first time I copied somebody’s answers. I was just a little kid, too. Of course my mother and the Sunday-School teacher go on about being honest, but I never could see why, cheating did any harm, if you could get by the teacher with it. It puts it straight up to a fellow, doesn’t it, that even if you fool the teacher you have not heard the last of it? Honestly, though, it sounds as if there might be something to it.”

“Surest thing you know!” responded Ernest heartily. And Ernest went whistling up the street, kicking pebble before him and rejoicing to think that his standing on principle, which had seemed so hard at the time, had borne such good fruit in the opportunity to tell another boy some of the truths of Theosophy that help a fellow

to see things straight.

[Taken from “Teacher’s Manuel and Guide to Eternal Verities.”]

Why should we be honest, truthful, loving or patient? The answer is, virtue is its own reward and vice its own punishment. Even before Karma punishes us there is punishment in terms of degradation of character when we indulge in vice or fall prey to weaknesses. Morality practised out of fear is useless. A child that follows the discipline out of fear, is bound to skip it, when he is sure of not being found out. Religion often makes use of psychological fear to make people follow religious injunctions.

Our thoughts and actions, good or bad not only affect us, but also others. There is the story of a grocer who always cheated his customers using faulty scales. In fact, he had spare faulty scales to meet with emergencies. A vegetable vendor, who had broken his scales, once borrowed the faulty scales from the grocer. Now the wife of this grocer, who always bought her vegetables from this vegetable vendor, complained of getting lesser quantity of vegetables than before. The grocer confessed that the vegetable vendor had been using faulty scales borrowed from him for the past few days. This apparently simple story has many implications. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” In fact, it is the concrete example of what is happening on the invisible plane. Since we are all interconnected on the invisible plane, we are continually helping or hindering others in building their character, not only by our actions, but also by our thoughts—for good or ill. By not resisting the temptation to take bribe or tell a lie, or by allowing a material or sensual thought to enter the mind, we are giving an impulse to some weak person with similar tendency to indulge in sin. The converse is also true. Every attempt to overcome vices in us sends out an impulse for good that strengthens another individual who may be fighting similar weaknesses. That is because our good and bad thoughts and actions

create an impression in an invisible register called *astral light*, forming a common pool of impressions. Each one of us attracts from this pool, the thoughts and impressions that are consubstantial with his nature. It is like pollution affecting us, but then, the way we handle our cars, in turn, affects the surroundings.

Doctrines of Karma and Re-birth provide sure and logical basis for the practice of ethics. H.P.B says that once people are aware that they cannot escape the consequences of their actions, they would spontaneously avoid evil as they would avoid physical danger. If we know that putting our hand into the fire would burn our hand, we would avoid such action. In the same way once we are convinced that painful consequences of our unwholesome actions are inevitable, we would be motivated from within to be moral. The Law of Karma is all-seeing, and it is foolish to try to escape the consequences of our actions. When we do wrong knowingly, greater is the severity of karmic consequences.

A person who has decided to speak the truth, and continues to speak the truth even when cornered, is at last able to make sufficiently strong impression on the atoms of his body. A time comes when speaking the truth becomes instinctive or spontaneous. His being will rebel if he is called upon to tell a lie, and having told a lie, he is likely to experience intense pricking of conscience. But till such a state is reached, we are bound to falter, go astray, to make wrong moral choices, intentionally or unintentionally. We slowly acquire both the knowledge and the ability to make morally right choices by bringing about necessary corrections in our natures and learning lessons from the wrong choices made by us.

At times, we are indirectly responsible for immoral actions. We may instigate another to cause harm or to kill. At a subtle level, our consumption of non-vegetarian food, or use of medicines and cosmetics that are produced by experimenting on animals, makes us indirect participants in the crime of cruelty to animals. The Buddha said, “One should neither slay, nor *cause to slay*.”

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

THE FOES OF THE SOUL—II

ARJUNA, as a man in this world of sense and matter is of necessity either always in a battle or about to begin one, and is also ever in need of advice. Arjuna has to fight both inner and outer foes. What are the enemies in the outside world that Arjuna—the spiritual aspirant—is required to fight? A spiritual aspirant has to fight against conventions imposed upon him by the nation, society, community and family to which he belongs. He is compelled to go against his friends and relatives some of whom he had revered and considered great and noble. Among these outer foes, the strongest to fight against is perhaps the family. While fulfilling the family obligations we have to learn to transcend the self-identifying attachment for wife, children, and household. He may find that his friends and relations do not view life as he does and are attached to customs, traditions and dogmatic religion. They may even consider him foolish for devoting so much attention to spiritual pursuit. Then Arjuna should realize that while he must continue to perform his duty, he must learn not to conform to the views of the world. That is what Jesus meant when he said “Come ye out from among them and be ye separate.” This swimming against the current is the most difficult as then the man stands a risk of being isolated. So Jesus says:

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother....And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Arjuna's inner enemies are subtle and hidden. They are his lower tendencies and desires—some of them legitimate but not conducive to spiritual life, and false views based on his limited knowledge and understanding. He must give up his personal life to gain the spiritual life, and the remedy for this position is only one. It is to find the eternal code of knowledge of Absolute Truth, and not to rely and depend only on his limited knowledge acquired through past experience. The other terrific foe is this sense of “I am I,” the sense of separateness from other human beings and from humanity in general and in the mass. Now we have built up this strong sense of individuality, this strong self-conscious condition of *Ahankara*, the condition of being distinct and separate. But there comes a moment in our evolution when we must give up the notion of separateness and realize the unity of all beings, and become a channel for the universal principle, and devote our energy, time, all our life, not for our own growth and evolution, but for the Spiritual Service of our fellowmen and mankind.

People often ask, “Why is it that spiritual men consider certain things wrong and unnecessary, when they have been helped by these very things to gain their present position?” What would we think of a man, who having succeeded in building a beautiful building with the help of the scaffolding, would insist on keeping the latter when it is no longer needed, and when the building has no longer any necessity for it? We would, of course, call the man foolish and unreasoning. And so in the Spiritual Life, things must be looked upon as right or wrong in terms of the position we occupy as human beings, and it is necessary for us to understand when the friends and relatives of the past become, when we mount the step in the ladder, the enemies and foes of the person, and we must give up the things we had considered noble and sacred in the past in order to find things that are still more sacred and more noble. Now it is this very thing that Arjuna realises and that brings upon him this tremendous despondency.

It is not the ordinary despondency. It is not the despondency

which comes when our own hearts are not satisfied when our personality has failed to get what it wanted for itself, but it is a deeper feeling than that. It is a permanent despondency, we can call it, which comes when we realize fully that now the time has come for us to give up completely all that belongs to the human life, though they be glorious, beautiful, virtuous, pure and that we must stand absolutely alone, as far as the human life is concerned, that we are going to find ourselves separated from everybody, everything, and will only have the guidance and friendship of one single being, and that is the Higher Self, Krishna, the Charioteer, our only true Friend.

This chapter in the Sanskrit is called “Arjuna Vishad Yoga,” or “Yoga of despondency of Arjuna.” *Vishad* is not an ordinary grief. It is the kind of despair essential for a man who aspires to walk the Spiritual Path. There comes a stage in a seeker’s life when he begins to find the world like a cage or a prison, and all false and fleeting. He is dissatisfied with himself and with the world around. This is the point where treading of spiritual path begins, *i.e.*, he decides to seek, in this eternally changing and evanescent world, a real and permanent thing.

It is the despondency which arises on realization that what we are going to kill out, must be killed out for ever. We will cross the abyss, and find that no return is possible. We will have to give up every beautiful and noble thing that belongs to the personal and individual life, and we will simply become channels of the Universal Principle, but when the time comes to fight the last great battle on the plain of Kurukshetra we realize this so intensely that we become despondent. All human souls will have to go through that state. It is the loneliness, an illusion that is very real and in which sorrow and suffering are really felt. The answer, which comes from the Spiritual World to the Human Soul, longing for separation from all that is unreal and for union alone with the Universal Reality, will be seen in the commentary on the Second Chapter.

Editor’s Note: As we consider the “foes of the soul” which hinder spiritual progress, we should realize that they are not restricted to mere vices and weaknesses of an individual. We start with our ordinary self, with its various desires and interests, and discover with pain that “Living the higher life” often requires giving up of some of our desires that we considered legitimate. It involves waging a war not only against our *vices*, but also against our habits, beliefs, pet theories and our likes and dislikes. We experience an inner conflict. Each spiritual aspirant has “at the first step to take himself steadily in hand and put the bit into his own mouth; no one else can do it for him.”

Mr. Judge suggests that the enumeration of generals and commanders in both the armies must be a catalogue of all the lower and higher faculties in man, and if we carefully analyze the names of various personages, we might have clue to the powers of our being. “We find these generals given their appropriate places upon either side, and see also that they have assigned to them various distinctive weapons....” Probably this might explain the presence of many great individuals, such as, Bhishma, Drona, Kripacharya, etc., in the Kaurava army. Evil is good gone astray, and powers of body and mind can be *used* as well as *misused*. We could use the rational faculty to save an innocent person unjustly condemned, or use it to justify the wrong done.

It is useful to dwell on the symbolism underlying some of the main warriors and personages on either side of the army. For instance, Dhritrashtra is the body acquired by Karma, and the eye cannot see nor the ears hear of themselves, and hence the body is blind or dead without the presiding, indwelling spirit. Dhritrashtra represents material existence in which inheres the thirst for its renewal, explains Mr. Judge.

In his book, *On the Meaning of the Mahabharata*, Shri V. S. Sukthankar explains that Dhritrashtra seems to represent the lower and transient personality, blinded by egoism and foolish infatuation. The very word Dhritrashtra signifies, “one who has seized the

kingdom,” naturally by force or cunning. Though he is the king of the Kurus, his rule over the kingdom is merely nominal, as the real power lies with his vicious sons, “just as the human personality which so proudly says ‘I’ is but the sport of a continuous succession of involuntary desires and passions which are the real rulers of the body it calls its own.” Thus, Dhritrashtra’s hundred sons symbolize egocentric desires, such as, lust, greed, hatred, anger, envy, pride, vanity, and so on. However, even the most vicious and degraded human being is not without conscience, the voice of *Buddhi-Manas*, which is the chief counsellor of man in ordinary life, enabling him to discriminate between good and evil, right and wrong. Dhritrashtra has such a counsellor in his own brother, the wise Vidura, who is described as *dharmarthakusala* or adept in questions concerning *dharma* (duty) and *artha* (wealth). Dhritrashtra appreciates the wisdom of Vidura’s words and consults him constantly, but never follows his advice. He acts under the guidance of his sons, and that is what lower, personal man is accustomed to do. Some of the names of Kaurava princes suggest that they are firmly established in evil. For instance, Duh-sasana means “hard to rule” and Dur-Yodhana means “hard to conquer.”

Another important character in the Kaurava army is Grandsire Bhishma, of whom Krishna says that when Bhishma dies all knowledge will die with him, and Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandava is advised to approach dying Bhishma and learn from him matters concerning *Dharma*, especially. Shri Sukthankar suggests that “Bhishma seems to represent tradition, the time-binding element in human life and society. It is recognized that one of the most difficult things to obliterate completely is tradition or memory. Its death may be said to be in its own power, as Bhishma’s was; because every attempt to kill gives it only a new lease of life. It subsides of itself when its purpose is achieved. And this is true of memory of the individual as of race memory.”

(Concluded)

SANKARACHARYA’S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

III

Vedanta literally means “end of Vedas,” or “end of knowledge.” Primarily the word Vedanta stood for Upanishads but later it came to include all thoughts arising out of the Upanishads. The vast Vedic literature that was passed on by word of mouth is divided into four different types: *Samhitas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*. The *Brahmanas* are theological treatises in prose and they explain the sacred significance of different rituals. The *Aranyakas* are forest-treatises, which emphasized the value of meditation and showed self-knowledge to be the goal of life. The *Aranyaka* age was a period during which free thinking tried to shake off the shackles of ritualism and paved the way for the *Upanishads*. Sankara was the most eminent exponent of the *Upanishads* and he held that they are meant for those who are above worldly or heavenly prosperity. Those who follow the *Upanishads* have no attraction for Vedic rituals but look for emancipation (*A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp. 12-14 and 30). Upanishads provide a key to understanding the Vedas.

The *Upanishads*—*Upa-ni-shad* being a compound word meaning “the conquest of ignorance by the revelation of *secret*, *spiritual* knowledge”—require now the additional possession of a Master-key to enable the student to get at their full meaning....In a few words: They CONTAIN *the beginning and the end of all human knowledge*. (*S.D.*, I, 269-70)

“*Upa*” in the term *Upa-ni-shad* suggests going closer to the God or the true Self or the Truth. It can also mean being closer to the Teacher in mind, by so purifying the mind that it is *en rapport* with the mind of the Teacher. “*Shad*” means to sit. It means to allow the mind to settle down, and not allow it to wander here and there, so as to be receptive to what the Teacher says without prejudice or preconceived ideas. “*Ni*” means to sit down, not necessarily, in a seat lower than the guru, but inwardly in the attitude

of humility, explains Sri M.

The Upanishads were considered to be the *rahasyas* or secret meaning of the Vedas. But each Vedic school taught it and interpreted it in different way, and therefore these teachings were systematized to bring out the harmony underlying them and that task was attempted by Badarayana. He put the Upanishadic teachings of various vedic schools in the form of *sutras* or aphorisms, which are known as *Brahmasutras*. Since these sutras were brief, commentaries were written to explain and interpret them, and so we have commentaries or *bhasyas* by different teachers who came to be known as founder of that particular Vedantic School. There are Vedantic schools of Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Vallabha, Nimbarka, etc. The most common question on which schools of Vedanta are divided is: What is the relation between the self (*Jiva*) and God (*Brahman*)? We have *dwaita* (duality) of Madhava, *Adwaita* (Monism) of Sankara and *Visishtha Adwaita* (qualified monism) of Ramanuja.

Ramanuja finds it difficult to reconcile immanence of God with his transcendence. How can God be said to be in the world and yet remain unaffected by the world's imperfections? There cannot be identity between finite man and infinite God. There can be no identity between two dissimilar things or between two identical things. Identity can be between two forms of the same substance. There can be identity between a person seen at present, and the person seen in the past. We know that it is the same person at two different times. So also, when we say "That thou art," "That" is God, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, etc. and "Thou" is also God existing in the form of man, the embodied soul. Then we may speak of identity between God with certain qualifications (That) and God with certain other qualifications (Thou), which is like two forms of the same substance.

Sankara was the expounder of Advaita Vedanta Philosophy. Advaita means non-dual or one without a second. There is only one supreme reality called *Brahman*, infinite and omnipresent

(present everywhere). There is no place for the world or man or any creature outside *Brahman*. It transcends all description and pairs of opposites. The relation between God and the World is described as *Brahma Satya, Jagat Mithya*, which means only *Brahman* is real, and world is an illusion. In comparison with *Brahman*, the world is unreal. By unreal is meant illusory, very much like a dream, which has its own subjective reality but which is illusory compared to the waking state.

Sankara compares Creation to magic or jugglery; God is a magician who creates the world by the magical power called *Maya*. *Maya* is not distinct from *Brahman* but is indistinguishable from It, just as power to burn is inseparable from fire. The world is an *appearance* which God conjures up with his power, *Maya*. When rope appears as a snake, we have superimposed snake on the substratum or reality called rope. We see many objects in the one *Brahman* on account of our ignorance, which conceals the real *Brahman* from us and makes it appear as many objects. One who sees through the trick of the magician, is no longer deceived. Similarly, for those who see nothing but God in the world, God ceases to have *Maya* or the power of creating appearance.

Sankara distinguishes between two different points of view—*Vyavaharika*, practical or ordinary viewpoint that regards the world as real and God as its omnipotent and omniscient creator, sustainer and destroyer. God in this aspect appears to have qualities and is termed *Saguna Brahman* (God with attributes) or *Ishwara*. The second is the real or *Paramarthika* viewpoint, which is that of the wise who have realized that only God is real and that the world is an appearance. Here, God is *Nirgunabrahman* (without attributes) or transcendental reality. The description of God as being Truth, Pure Consciousness and Infinite (*satyam, jnanam, anantam Brahman*) is an attempt to describe His essence (*svarupa*).

Sankara taught that *Jivatma* is not separate from *Paramatma* or One Reality. The Higher Self or *Atman* is like a ray of the sun, which may *appear* to be separate but cannot be detached from the

Sun. When we see a person for the second time, we say, "This is that person (we had seen yesterday)." But the conditions by which the man was surrounded yesterday cannot be exactly identical with those by which he is surrounded today. Therefore, there cannot be any identity between the man qualified by one set of conditions and the man qualified by another set of conditions. We might say that man viewed apart from the different conditions is the same. Likewise, the Self, viewed apart from the conditions which differentiate it from pure consciousness, is identical with God, viewed apart from the attributes assigned to it. The Self in man appears limited and finite because of its association with the body. The true nature of each individual is *Brahman*. Each one of us is *essentially* divine. We have forgotten our true identity and mistakenly believe that we are puny, limited individuals.

The evolution of the world out of *Brahman* is through its power of *Maya*, which is often described as *prakriti* or *avyakta*. Sankara's theory of creation is called *vivarta-vada*, which says that in the process of evolution of the world, *Prakriti* does not undergo any real change; change is only *apparent*, not real. Our perception of change is due to projection (*adhyasa*) of multiplicity of objects on the One Reality. Sankara teaches gradual evolution of the world out of *Brahman*, through *Maya*, by a process of apparent change of the subtle to the gross. There are three stages in the process of evolution, analogous to the stages in the development of a seed into a plant. There is undifferentiated seed stage or causal stage, the subtly differentiated germinating stage, and the fully differentiated plant stage. All change and evolution belong to the sphere of *Maya*. It is *Maya*, the creative power, which at first remains unmanifested, then becomes differentiated into subtle objects, and then into gross ones. *Brahman* conceived as the possessor of the undifferentiated *Maya*, or power of creation is called *Isvara*. *Brahman* possessed of subtly differentiated *Maya* is named *Hiranyagarbha*. God in this aspect would be the totality of all subtle objects. *Brahman* possessed of *Maya* differentiated further

into gross or perceptible objects is called *Vaisvanara*. In this aspect, God is the totality of all gross objects, the entire manifested world.

T. Subba Row in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* (p. 27) explains that *Vaisvanara* is not to be looked upon merely as manifested objective world, but as the one physical basis from which the whole objective world starts into existence. Beyond this is *Hiranyagarbha*, which must be looked upon as the basis of the astral world. Beyond it is *Eswara*, which may alternatively be called *Sutratma*, and may be looked upon as *Karan sarira* (Casual Body) of the Cosmos. Beyond these three is *Parabrahmam*. We might perhaps compare this with three aspects of the Universe: the *Ever-existing* from which evolves the *Pre-existing*, and the third aspect is *Phenomenal* which is the reflection or shadow of the last, mentioned by H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 278). We might look upon "Ever-existing" Universe to represent *noumenal* or archetypal world or *Akasa*. We are told that "prototypes or ideas of things exist first on the plane of Divine eternal Consciousness (*Akasa*) and these become reversed in the Astral Light." In the astral light, we have the subjective picture, which develops into physical, objective, tangible form in the phenomenal world.

(To be concluded)

THERE is a road, steep and thorny, beset with perils of every kind—but yet a road, and it leads to the heart of the Universe. I can tell you to find Those, who will show you the secret gateway that leads inward only, and closes fast behind the neophyte for evermore. There is no danger that dauntless courage cannot conquer. There is no trial that spotless purity cannot pass through. There is no difficulty that strong intellect cannot surmount. For those who win onwards, there is reward past all telling: the power to bless and save humanity. For those who fail, there are other lives in which success may come.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

BELIEF IN REBIRTH OF MAN IN ANIMALS

I

A BELIEF is widespread among the Hindus and Buddhists that a man who commits sinful acts will, after his death, be reborn in bodies of animals or plants or even in stones. They dread such a prospect. The belief was also widespread among many other ancient peoples. Ordinances of Manu of the Hindus, lay down authoritative moral and religious injunctions for right living, and the basis for a harmonious social order, and spells out kinds of acts committing which a man is reborn in bodies of beasts, plants and inanimate objects. Pythagoras who believed in and taught the doctrines of metempsychosis and reincarnation, taught and asserted that the soul was immortal and that it transmigrates into other animals, as seen in the writings of Xenophanes, his contemporary. Plato also taught in his *Republic* the doctrine of the immortality of soul and its transmigration into animals. Herodotus, the Greek Historian, said that Egyptians believed that the soul is reborn as every sort of animal before returning to human form after three thousand years. In the great epic, *Ramayana*, is portrayed an account of *Ahalya*, wedded to Sage Gautama, who curses her to turn into a stone for a thousand years for committing adultery, and her returning to human form, at the end of the term, when touched by Lord Rama's foot.

In the *Vishnu Purana* is seen the episode of a great ascetic Jada Bharata whose penance was interrupted because he had developed an over-fondness for a deer. It is said that his mind was so preoccupied with the thoughts of the well-being of the deer all the time that at the time of death his last thoughts were centred on the deer, in consequence of which he was reborn as a deer, and that, after the cycle of deer birth was over, he was reborn in a high-souled and pure family of an ascetic as an enlightened Sage known as Jada Bharata; the epithet *Jada* accruing to him because, he concealed his enlightenment and appeared before the world as a dull witted, sluggish and stupid person. Once Gautama Buddha

pointed out to the Bhikkus a broom in a corner of a place in which he was residing and said that it had formerly been a novice who neglected to sweep out the council room, hence was reborn as a broom. Mr. Judge, while discussing the doctrine of rebirth of man in animal forms pointed out that it was a popular belief among the ancient Persians that men of wicked deeds are reborn in the bodies of predatory wild beasts, and that those who abetted criminal acts are reborn in defenseless animal bodies to be tormented and destroyed by the former. It is said in the *Bhagavati Sutra*, a scripture of the Jain religion, that those who practice deception, resort to fraudulent ways are reborn in animal and vegetable bodies, that violent deeds entails rebirth in hell, and that those with a disposition of kindness, compassion and humility obtain human birth.

How much of truth is there in this ancient belief? There is no doubt that the beliefs people hold about rebirth of man in animal bodies, as many other beliefs, based on religious scriptures, are misunderstood because the spiritual, psychical and psychophysiological principles of man, and the laws of Karma, metempsychosis and reincarnation are not generally known. When these principles and laws are well understood then superstitious fear and wrong beliefs will disappear, and we will be able to rebuild our lives and shape our destiny on the foundation of right knowledge.

There is but One Life, infinite, omnipresent, boundless, eternal and indivisible. From and in this One Absolute Life arise the individual lives, *Jivas* or souls, each a perfect copy of the One Life, and each has the potentiality of omniscience and omnipotence of that One Universal Spirit. Evolution of souls is the gradual unfoldment of the hidden potentiality in them of the One Life through a long series of metempsychosis and reincarnations governed by the Law of Karma. Man is the highest expression of this grand universal evolution whose destiny is conscious realization of the oneness of his Self with, and inseparableness from, the Universal One Life—thus attain Divinity—and aid and

raise souls in the sub-human kingdoms to the human stage and then on to divinity. Therefore there is nothing dead or lifeless. So-called inorganic mineral atoms have the potentiality of higher life, and will, in time, ascend the ladder of evolution to man-stage gradually by aid of man.

What distinguishes man from lower kingdoms of Nature is the principle of Mind or Manas (Ego), a ray of the Universal Mind, whereas the lower forms of life, below man, have mind principle in an un-awakened, latent condition, to be lit up when they evolve into human stage. Though Real Man is the immortal spiritual Ego, when he is incarnated in human body it becomes dual—higher immortal and lower mortal. Only a portion of the Higher Mind incarnates in the body as the corporeal mind of the perishable body—the terrestrial personality; while the Higher divine Mind, together with *Atma* and *Buddhi*, or Spirit, over-broods the mortal man. It must be remembered that the Real Man is the Reincarnating Ego—*Atma-Buddhi-Manas*—while the man on earth with his mind and life is a temporary reflection of the Higher Divine Ego. What reincarnates from life to life is the Higher Immortal Ego. Only the spiritual essence of mortal man's thoughts and aspirations in every incarnated life survive after death to be assimilated to the Higher Self as so much of progress of the Ego towards perfection.

Therefore, when it is said that man is reborn in animals or vegetable forms, it must be distinctly understood that it is not the Reincarnating Ego, the Real Man, who goes into bodies of lower kingdoms. Souls in the sub-human kingdoms reach the stage of Man, the eternal Thinker, through countless ages of evolution through all the lower stages. Having arrived at the human stage, under no circumstance can the Human Ego fall back into animal or vegetable forms. The theosophical axiom is: *once a Man, always a Man*, and by Man is meant in this context the *Manas*, the Eternal Thinker. Teachers explain that human Ego can no more re-enter lower forms of life than a baby born can re-enter the womb; or, the blood flowing in our veins can flow back by the same vessel to

engorge the heart—the valve closing behind, compelling it to ever move forward. Rebirth of Human Ego in lower kingdoms is, therefore, impossible in the scheme of universal evolution.

What then is the basis for the ancient teachings that man can be reborn in lower forms of life? There are three principal truths which are at the bottom of this belief. Knowledge of these is of great importance for the happiness and higher progress of mankind. The first of these lies in the mystery of the *transmigration of Life-Atoms*. Our body—as the bodies of all the kingdoms of Nature, even the form of the earth itself—is built up by countless invisible *atomic lives* belonging to the four great elements. They are all *indestructible Jivas*, countless millions of sparks of One Life, evolving on the lowest rung of evolutionary ladder. We, as Immortal Egos, standing at the upper rung of the evolutionary ladder, draw these *Life-Atoms* by magnetic attraction, according to our Karma, every time we reincarnate, to form our body of four lower principles—physical body, Astral Body, *Prana* and *Kama*. When the mortal man dies the aggregate of the four lower mortal principles disintegrate and separate from the Ego, and the Life-Atoms composing the four lower principles fly back to the general circulation of life in Nature, and are again drawn back from the general pool to the Ego when it comes back into another incarnation.

Ego is indestructible; so are life-atoms. Death pertains only to the aggregate of our mortal frame, the earthly personality only and not to the Ego, or to the life-atoms, which are eternal. We impress these lives in our body daily, at every moment, with our thoughts, feelings and actions, so that they carry photographic impressions of our personality, and bear all our good and evil qualities. The Higher Ego, though immortal, also, in its turn, bears indelible impressions of all our life-long thoughts and deeds in minutest detail, as so much of *Mental Deposits*, called *Vasanas*. These mental impressions are magnetically linked to the life-atoms of our bodies which bear similar imprints of our character. Therefore, we attract to ourselves the same atomic lives which we have impressed with

our character and tendencies every time we are reborn after death. Thus we come into the inheritance of qualities and character, good or bad, called *Samskara*, which are of our own creation, and which we carry from life to life—improved or degraded by our own actions.

Not only at death do the life-atoms from our bodies go into Nature but even during our earthly life the atomic lives are constantly emanating from our bodies, charged with the quality of our thoughts, feelings and actions, entering into the general circulation of life current of the great Nature. They enter into the bodies of our fellowmen and fellow-creatures, and affect them for good or ill. If the tendency and character of our life are of selfish and of wicked kind, the lives, leaving our bodies through magnetic efflux, bearing our impress, are condemned to fly to the animal or vegetable or mineral kingdom. Then, man is said to be reborn as an animal or a plant or a stone, depending on to which of these his nature and character correspond. This is the meaning of the Buddha's statement that a lazy young man who was negligent in his duty of keeping the council room clean had been born as a broom. The life atoms emanating from the lazy person bearing the image of the person full of the gloomy quality of *Tamas* were condemned to fly to the nearby plants and grasses, out of which a broom had been made. The Buddha with his Spiritual vision saw the image of the person in the broom. It is thus that "man" is born in bodies of lower kingdoms of nature, and not the Real Man, the Reincarnating Ego. This is also the meaning of the verses in the Ordinances of Manu which say that a man indulging in certain vicious and evil acts is reborn in various kinds of animals. Says Manu:

Man (*Nara*) by bodily misdeeds attains to (*yati*) the state of stationary objects like plants and minerals (*Sthavarata*); by sins of speech he goes to birds and animals (*pakshi mrigata*); and by indulging in evil thoughts he goes to lowest of men (*antya jati*) (*Manu*, chapter 12, verse 9)

By *Nara* is meant the terrestrial personality, not the Ego, the Immortal Real Man. A clear distinction is made between "man," on the one hand, and the Real Man or the Reincarnating Eternal Ego, on the other; and these two are again to be distinguished from the Spirit. What goes into the lower kingdoms is "man" (*Nara*), meaning the *life-atoms* bearing the image of the terrestrial personality, not the Ego or the Spirit, or the physical man as such. The distinction is made clear by Manu :

Him who is the impeller of the life and activity of the corporeal self is called *Kshetrajna* (the knower of the field); but him who does the acts, the wise name *Bhutatma* (the Self consisting of elements); Another internal Self that is generated with all embodied (*Kshetrajnas*) is called *Jiva*, through which the *Kshetrajna* becomes sensible of all pleasures and pains in successive births; then there is the Great One (*Mahakshetrajna*); these two, the *Kshetrajna*, and the *Mahakshetrajna*, are closely associated with the elements, pervade him who reside in multiform created beings. (*Manu*, chapter 12, verses 12 to 14)

Man, *Nara*, refers to the combination of *Bhutatma*, the body, and the *Antaratman*, the Inner Soul, which is the Lower Mind—both of which constitute earthly personality; while the *Kshetrajna*, is the immortal Higher Ego, who stands above mortal life as Witness and experiences life on earth indirectly through the first two, which are his earthly mortal instruments. Supreme Soul or *Paramatma* is the ultimate basis, support and sustainer of all.

It is the earthly man (combination of *Bhutatma* and *Antaratma*) who has to save himself by following the dictates of his Divine Parent (*Kshetrajna*), or perish by neglecting to do so, preferring to live by demands of earthly passions. Further, it is said in the *Manava Dharma Shastra* that the *unwise and lowest of men (avidvamso-naradhamah)*, addicted to sense pleasures, neglecting to observe the ordinances of the scriptures, obtain such conditioned existence which is vitiated with sin (*ibid.*, verse 52). What is to be noted is, what goes into the sub-human existence is *Nara*, or *man*, and not

the *Kshetrajna*, the Reincarnating Ego. Again, it is not *man* as such who goes into lower states but the *life-atoms* of his body which he has, by his misdeeds, condemned to fly into the animal or plant bodies, suffused with his image and character. This is the meaning of the doctrine of Metempsychosis. It is the amalgamation of human particles with animal or vegetable atoms. But it does not carry with it the idea of any personal punishment, but simply an effect produced by the action of man which may last throughout the next rebirths. (*H.P.B. Series No. 25*, p. 34)

A great Sage with his faultless vision can easily see the image of a man in a plant or an animal or a stone, and know that it is the life-atoms bearing man's image which has gone into them, and not man himself, least of all the Real Man, the Ego. But an imperfect seer, a clairvoyant—of such there are many in the world—is likely to mistake the image in a stone or plant or an animal, to be man himself, and report that such and such a person has been reborn in the animal or the plant in which he sees the man. It is thus that the belief of reincarnation of man in lower forms of life has become widely diffused among common people.

(*To be concluded*)

HE WHO loves the Whole, attracts all the units. He who hates one unit, repels the Whole, for in every unit the Whole is contained. One creature unloved has power to exclude me from the "Kingdom of Heaven," where I can only enter by being one with the Whole.

"Love" is not desire of possession, but a type of that universal interchange which gives and takes, takes and gives, in continual evolution and perpetuation of Harmony. It is the divine essence seeking perfect equilibrium in the human soul.

"*In his place I might do worse.*" To say this with my whole heart is truly to love my neighbour.

—*The Path* (February 1888)

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: Does evolution mean always a progressive march toward higher states of consciousness, without any "end" to this progress—even during and after the period of *Maha-pralaya*? Is there never a fresh start, with a clean slate, to this process of evolution?

Answer: When science speaks of evolution she takes into consideration only half of the process. Occult philosophy teaches that nothing can be evolved, unless it has first been involved, indicating that life is from the spiritual potency, and that the process of unfoldment is guided by intelligent forces under the immutable Law. This is known as the *doctrine of emanation*. Thus, there is first, involution—involvement or descent of spirit into matter, and then evolution, *i.e.*, expression or actualization of what is potential, through perfection of forms. The goal of evolution is to achieve self-conscious godhood while in the body.

Atman or One Life mirrored in *Buddhi*, its vehicle, is called Eternal Spectator, or Monad, which has been the Witness of the panorama of growth, which has watched in the beginningless past, as he is watching today and will watch in the endless future. *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* is the Eternal Pilgrim which is the totality of accumulated experiences gathered by passing through various forms in mineral, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms. Man is a thinking, choosing, self-conscious being, who progresses by self-induced and self-devised ways and means checked by Karma. All growth, for it to be permanent, must be from within, and must be the result of one's own effort. In the process of growth we do not add anything new from the outside. There is only *unfolding* of

what is locked up within, as potential.

In a lamp, the light is surrounded by a glass covering. For the light to shine forth we need to clean the soot on the glass. The light of wisdom is covered by layers or sheaths or vehicles, which need to be purified. On the one hand, we need to increase the capacity of the Ego to use the instrument, through assimilation of the life experiences, and on the other hand work towards achieving the purity and soundness of the instruments or vehicles. This process of actualizing that which exists as potentiality is a continuous process. “So progress and evolution mean an unfolding from within outward, a constant impulsion towards a better and better instrument for the use of the Spirit—the Self within,” writes Mr. Crosbie.

One reaches perfection as a result of series of progressive awakenings and we are also told that there is an ever-growing perfectibility. When one reaches perfection on earth chain of globes, it is as much perfection as is possible on this chain of globes—each globe being a different combination of matter and consciousness. We are told that the process of evolution is beginningless and endless and that our present universe is but one of an infinite series, which had no beginning and will have no end. When humanity as a whole shall have completed its evolution on the earth-chain of globes, millions of years later, the Egos that reached perfection on Earth will act as co-workers with nature when evolution on some other planet is begun. In that very process of helping nature, and other beings in their evolution, there is learning. It is difficult for us to imagine learning and growth in case of higher beings such as planetary spirits or Builders as they perform higher and lower functions in the Cosmos. *The Voice of the Silence* tells us about Mercury and Mars being servants to Sun, and that they were both suns in the past *Kalpas*, and may again become Suns in the future.

However, it appears that there will never be “starting afresh,” as it were, with a clean slate. It is possible to retard one’s progress, by deliberately choosing evil, till one becomes a lost soul, in which

case the Ego either gets merged with the Universal Over-soul, or it starts a fresh series of incarnations. *Maha-pralaya* is the period of final dissolution after *Mahamanvantara*, and is described as *Paranirvanic* state. H.P.B. mentions that ordinary human beings who have not attained to perfection by the end of *Mahamanvantara*, will be in a state of unconsciousness during *Maha-pralaya*, and for them it is like extinction for seven eternities, whereas the perfected beings are fully conscious during *Maha-pralaya*—although merged into and becoming one with the Absolute, they continue in full possession of *Paramartha*. Though the state of ordinary human beings during *Maha-pralaya* is like a drop merged into ocean, the Individuality is not annihilated. (*S.D.*, I, 53-54)

H.P.B. mentions that however limitless *Paranirvanic* state may be from human standpoint, it has limit in Eternity. Once reached, the same monad will re-emerge therefrom, as a still higher being, on a far higher plane, to recommence its cycle of perfected activity (*S.D.*, I, 266). We find almost similar idea expressed in the article, “Isis Unveiled and the Visishtadwaita,” (*H.P.B. Series No. 11*, pp. 33-34), which mentions that however long the period of Universal Pralaya, when it ends, the same individual Divine Monad (divine individuality) resumes its majestic path of evolution, though on a higher, hundredfold perfected and more pure chain of earths than before. Thus, it appears that even after *Maha-pralaya* the process of evolution and perfection continues.

Question: We are told that “the purpose of life is to learn.” It seems, the possible lessons we could learn are more of the nature of after-thought, *i.e.*, learnt after the misfortunes, trials, etc. have passed away. Is it possible to learn the lessons (and become wise) *while undergoing* the struggle in the thick of the battle-field of life?

Answer: “While situations are not always agreeable, or what we would choose, yet they are the very apparatus by means of which we learn discrimination.” When we are in a trying situation, we get so involved and identified with the situation that we are unsure as to what should be our response to the situation. Often, there is

dilemma, “Should I be timid and tolerate the other person in order to keep peace, or should I become bold and resist when the other person is wrong? Should I be resigned to the situation or do I need to do something to change the situation?” Then again, it is important that having done all that was possible, having done our best, we should know when to stop and resign ourselves to the inevitable, and be able to see redeeming features even in seemingly hopeless situation.

We not only learn through proper response to *our own* pain and difficulties, which is one of acceptance instead of rebellion, but also through proper understanding of another’s pain. The extent to which we are willing to embrace and understand others’ suffering and difficulties, to that extent we are better able to cope with our own. The less identified we are with the situation or emotion, assuming the position of an observer, the greater the possibility of our learning the lesson in the midst of calamity or trial. The Buddhists speak of becoming aware of one’s thoughts and emotions. For instance, if we are by nature a bit hot-tempered and prone to anger, then as we develop awareness of feelings we shall first become aware of our angry feelings, *after* we have been angry. But with some practice we shall become aware while we are *being* angry. And with more practice we shall become aware when the anger is on the *point of arising*.

Undertaking regular self-examination, if sincere and objective, will reveal to us our weaknesses that land us in difficult situations. It may show that one is impulsive or quick-tempered; greedy or insensitive, and so on. Determination and efforts to eliminate these weaknesses will not achieve the results at once, but if one keeps up the effort, such occurrences are bound to reduce. Hence, initially, the learning is as an “after-thought,” but later, one becomes aware in advance. It is by checking ourselves in small matters that the big calamities may be avoided.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

When others are going through a meltdown, the biggest gift we can give them is to validate their emotions without reaction or judgement. When we are able to listen with compassion to another, allowing that person space and time to vent their emotion, we respond to the situation instead of reacting, and it helps us to avoid ugly confrontations and dramatic blame game. The gap between “reacting” and “responding” means providing emotional validation. Emotional validation is the message you give to the speaker that his feelings and emotions make sense and that you will not only hear him out but also understand why he feels the way he does. Very often people are not looking for solution but only wanting to share their feelings and experience with someone who would not judge them. When they are accepted by another even when they are being their most negative and reactive selves, a process of healing takes place.

It is only when we are able to accept, tolerate and express our negative emotions constructively that we can extend this space to others, says Pulkit Sharma, consultant clinical psychologist. Thus, for instance, from our childhood we are taught to suppress tears and anger, and having suppressed these emotions we resist when others express them, and try to make sad person happy, writes Amrisha Ahuja, clinical hypnotherapist and healing artist. Often we are tutored from childhood that giving vent to their negative feelings may cause them to appear weak, and such a person appears to be unsympathetic when it comes to validating others’ emotions, writes Dr. Seema Anand, an energy healer. Another major factor is the fast pace of life where we often do not have time to deal with others’ emotions, making us appear indifferent.

The practice of emotional validation requires giving ample space to others to express their anger, despair, sadness or unhappiness. In order to be able to do that we need to have cultivated a certain amount of detachment by tapping into the zone of our “True Self,”

that Self which believes in responding and not reacting, observes soul coach and HR consultant, Hitesh Vashisht. “When we validate the negative emotions of others we feel connected to them, and we realize that we are not separate beings but part of something universal,” says Pulkit Sharma. It is very difficult to remain calm and composed when anger is directed against us. Yet, we should try to listen to the words, recognize the emotion behind them and try to relate to them. Instead of mentally preparing for one’s line of defence, one must learn to be a patient listener. “At our most vulnerable moments, words of affection, a loving gaze, or an accepting silence are all we need to heal. These are also the most precious gifts we can give to others,” writes Punya Srivastava. (*Life Positive*, December 2014)

Today, majority of the people going to a psychiatrist is not “sick” in a conventional sense. What they really suffer from, says Dr. Fromm, “is an inner deadness. They live in the midst of plenty and are joyless.” Do we ever take the trouble to put aside our preferences and prejudices to look intelligently into the hearts of men? We do not have to seek for the afflicted; they are everywhere—in the family, in the neighbourhood, at the workplace. Amazingly, people are often ready to unburden their bottled-up emotions, anxieties and frustrations to total strangers, at the slightest show of sympathy and concern. A few words of inspiration or encouragement, *or* being able to make the person see things in a different light can go a long way in instilling hope for a brighter future, or could even avert a suicide or save a relationship.

We need to learn to adjust our mind to other minds. Instead of reacting angrily to criticism, bad behaviour or selfishness, we could always pause and reflect, “why does he behave the way he does?” When criticized for being proud or stingy, we can always do some soul-searching. If the criticism applies, we must take steps to improve; if not, we may ignore it. Similarly, when we are up against a difficult situation or difficult persons, instead of our usual reaction of frustration and despair we could always ask, “Why is it that no

one else but *I* am put into this situation? Do I perhaps have to learn something from this?” This is the mark of a creative mind. As Mme. Blavatsky suggests, we must learn to *act* from within and not just *react* to stimuli from without.

“Living the life implies quiet study and then reflection....So it seems to me your very first task is not to allow yourself to be disturbed within yourself, whatever others say or do. Do not answer, and then you will not retaliate....Go to the Inner Ruler more and more; even a few minutes of repeated inner retirements will prove a source of strength,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

Why learn Sanskrit? The knowledge of the Vedas, the six schools of Indian Philosophy, the *Puranas*, the *Itihasas*, the treatises on law, art, music, dance, literature, medicine, architecture, agriculture, political science, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, ayurveda and most importantly, *Sankalpa Shakti Vidya* (the knowledge of thought power) and above all the knowledge of the Self, is all contained in Sanskrit. Our old Sanskrit texts speak of even more advanced things that our modern scientists can only dream of at the moment. By researching Sanskrit texts, we can learn of many things that can push both objective and subjective sciences much further than where they are at the moment. Our rishis have expressed in Sanskrit language, the knowledge which they experienced within themselves. Sanskrit has perfection. Its grammar is *ashtadhyayi* or eight-faceted, by which the Veda can be understood correctly. Translations cannot accurately reflect Sanskrit. The translated version can be misinterpreted if the language into which it is translated is not equally perfect. It is now being discovered that Sanskrit is the most suitable language for computer software, as it is just right for giving commands in computers as it leads to perfect implementation.

If we want to keep Indian culture alive, we must know and protect Sanskrit language, just as Israel has kept its culture alive

by making Hebrew their national language. Besides learning regional language and English, it is important to make Sanskrit compulsory in all schools. Sanskrit is being taught in western universities, and if we do not learn Sanskrit, we may have to depend on them to understand what is written in our ancient texts. “Children can be inspired to learn Sanskrit by putting Sanskrit verses into popular music, and holding competitions with attractive prizes,” writes Mata Brahmjyoti, who is revered in the Himalayas for her social service projects and support to Sanskrit students under the aegis of the Bhrihu Ashrams in Uttarkashi and Haridwar. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India, January 25, 2015*)

Sanskrit, called *Devabhasa* or “the language of the gods,” is considered to be very old language. Mr. Judge records a prophecy concerning the Sanskrit language, by saying that the Sanskrit language will one day be again the language used by man upon this earth, first in science and in metaphysics, and later, in common life. “The new language cannot be English, but will be one which is scientific in all that makes a language, and has been enriched by ages of study of metaphysics and the true science.” There are scientific *mantrams* which are not to be found in modern western languages but in ancient Sanskrit and other languages which preceded it. The laws governing their use are also to be found in those languages. The vocalizations of these *mantrams* can produce certain effects in the *akasa*, by means of which men, animals and elementals can be influenced even without the knowledge of the language. (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 154-58)

In his article, “The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac,” T. Subba Row mentions that those who have studied to some extent the ancient “Mantra” and the “Tantra Sastras” (Works of Incantation and Magic) of India, would have noticed that very often Sanskrit words are made to convey certain hidden meaning, while their literal significance is something quite different from the implied meaning. The rules for ferreting out deep significance of ancient Sanskrit words found in old Aryan myths and allegories are: (1) Find out

the synonyms of the word used which have other meanings. (2) Find out the numerical value of the letters composing the word according to the methods given in ancient *Tantrika* works. (3) Examine the ancient myths or allegories, if there are any, which have any special connection with word in question.

One of the qualities assigned to God is Omnipotence, which means unlimited power. The devotees interpret omnipotence to mean that God is an all-powerful Being for whom nothing is impossible. Many Hindus believe that not even a leaf can stir without the will of God, and that he can bring even the dead back to life. To believe that God controls everything is to hold Him responsible for all the evil in the world. But why would God, Father of all souls, an ocean of love, peace and mercy, and remover of sorrows, bring sorrow to His children by doing evil? It is also naive to interpret omnipotence as the ability to work miracles. God cannot bring dead back to life because that is against the law of nature, and He violates no law. He does not interfere in human affairs but only teaches human beings the righteous way of life. He is omnipotent because He has the power to create, sustain and destroy the world order. All these tasks are beyond human capacity, because human souls tend to forget their spiritual identity as they get influenced by the physical world, life after life. This shift in human consciousness changes their outlook and they begin to experience fear, attachment, greed and selfishness, and in the course of time human beings begin to lose their self-awareness and strength.

The downfall of human race gathers pace until things reach a crisis point. It is at such time that God intervenes, incarnating in human form to give spiritual knowledge to humanity. He reminds them that they are souls and not bodies and if they remember Him with awareness that He is their Father, they will receive His powers and virtues through that mental link. When a critical mass of human beings has undergone this transformation, it triggers a massive

change in the world, replacing the old decayed order by a new world order, based on purity, peace, love and truth. The biggest manifestation of the omnipotence of God is the power to free souls from the grip of vices and turn a world that has become hell into heaven. (*Purity*, January 2015)

The atheists argue that if an omnipotent and benevolent God exists, why should there be so much suffering and evil? It is the belief in a just and merciful personal God that made it necessary for people to create his opposite, the *Devil* or *Satan* to explain injustice, cruelty and evil in the world. H.P.B. points out the absurdity by arguing that if God is Omnipresent, Omniscient and Infinite, that God must also include evil, else he must cease to be Absolute and all-embracing. The Ancient philosophers defined evil as lining or shadow of God or Good. ONE becoming the many, or homogeneity becoming heterogeneity, is responsible for one-third of evil inherent in manifestation, but two-thirds of world's evil is due to man's inhumanity to man, because man has free will. Deity is Law and that Law is impartial, just and all-seeing, which works to restore disturbed harmony by adjusting the effect to cause.

Man is essentially divine with all the potentiality of the divine in him. Man's powers flow from *Atman* or his Higher Self which is the direct ray of God or *Parabrahmam*, and hence man also possesses, in potentiality, the power to make, unmake and remake. In fact, H.P.B. points out that Man-spirit proves God-spirit, just as one drop of water proves the existence of an ocean of water. "When one sees mortal man displaying tremendous capabilities, controlling the forces of nature and opening up to view the world of spirit, the reflective mind is overwhelmed with the conviction that if one man's spiritual *Ego* can do this much, the capabilities of the FATHER SPIRIT must be relatively as much vaster as the whole ocean surpasses the single drop in volume and potency. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, prove the soul of man by its wondrous powers—you have proved God!" (*Isis, Preface*, p. vi)