

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

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

ON EQUANIMITY

EQUANIMITY is evenness of mind in all circumstances of life. It means calmness and composure in every event of life, small or great, but more particularly during stress and strain—physical, mental or moral—when equipoise and clear thinking are needed the most. Equal-mindedness is called Yoga, says Shri Krishna to Arjuna in the second discourse of the *Gita*. Yoga in the true sense means to unite with one's Higher Self. Amidst the difficulties, tests and trials of life, if the mind gets easily disturbed, how can union be achieved? Equanimity is necessary in all spheres of life so that the harmony between the divine and the human, and between the human and the personal may be preserved and life's aim and purpose may be fulfilled. In trying to maintain equanimity, the mind, instead of falling prey to *Kama* rises triumphant towards *Buddhi*.

It is interesting to note that the *Gita* says Equal-mindedness is called Yoga, and also, defines Yoga as skill in performance of action. What connection can there be between equanimity of mind and skill in performance of action, though both have been equated with yoga? The excellent typist is not necessarily well-poised, and so also, a person who is calm and placid is not necessarily skilful in action. However, the performance of action is adversely affected in the absence of equanimity or skill. We know that lack of attention or skill can result in bad typing, bad cooking or inability to keep our appointment with others.

However, skill in action in the *Gita* sense implies such co-ordination of mind—higher and lower—with senses and organs that all actions will be performed with skill, through steady and continuous control, by equipoise of mind. Such equipoise of mind and skill can be attained by performing every action in life, at every hour of the day, with complete attention, so as to lead to accuracy and tidiness of mental as also physical life. It is only when the doors of the senses are closed and we have cut ourselves off from sounds, taste, touch and smell, and have cut off the memory of old sense impressions and internal images, in which our lower mind is normally caught, that it becomes free, to be influenced by the Higher Mind, which is always equipoised and serene. We must attempt to reach this stage over and over again. Hence, all the actions become steady, accurate, the product of steady thought, the reflection of perfect thinking and imagining.

Equal-mindedness in action also means performing action by renouncing *kartabhav* or doership and also renouncing interest in the results of action. It is seldom that we act with the feeling of being only an instrument through which the divine works, a mere instrument for the manifestation of the law. To be an “immediate agent,” or an apparent cause, is to act without the feeling of doership. In the article, “Spiritual Progress,” H.P.B. advises:

Evil is often the result of over-anxiety....One of the subtlest forms of this evil is the hope and desire of reward. Many there are who, albeit often unconsciously, are yet spoiling their efforts by entertaining this idea of reward, and allowing it to become an active factor in their lives and so leaving the door open to anxiety, doubt, fear, despondency—failure.

When a surgeon performs an operation, he naturally wishes for the recovery of his patient. But, if he were anxious as to the success of the operation, he would only waste a lot of his emotional and psychic energy—unable to put in his best efforts. Krishna advises Arjuna in the *Gita* to “make...gain and loss, victory and defeat, the

same to thee.” We must seek the thing for its own sake. Some of the best works are done when we do not do them self-consciously. Anxiety shows our lack of faith in the law of Karma. We are required to do the best that the circumstances demand and leave the results to the law. When we are anxious we seem to assert, in a subtle way, our own will. We want things to happen as we desired.

It is often self-identifying attachment to things, people or action, which comes in the way of being equal-minded. For many of us it is difficult to remain equal-minded to praise or blame. It might be comparatively easy to rise above blame by analyzing if our action was really blameworthy, but it is extremely difficult to be impersonal to praise. 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. When we are praised we feel that we naturally deserve it, and there is never any need felt for analysis. In fact, a person who is normally praised for his lectures or good writing begins to *expect* praise, and may even feel depressed when not praised. The words of a Master of Wisdom, as to our attitude towards praise and blame, are worth meditating upon. Thus:

Human praise and enthusiasm are short-lived at best; the laugh of a scoffer and the condemnation of the indifferent looker-on are sure to follow, and generally to outweigh the admiring praise of the friendly. Do not despise the opinion of the world, nor provoke it uselessly to unjust criticism. Remain rather as indifferent to the abuse as to the praise of those who can never know you as you really are, and who ought, therefore, to find you unmoved by either, and ever placing the approval or condemnation of your own *Inner Self* higher than that of the multitudes.

The Pali word for equanimity is *upekkha*, which is equivalent to Sanskrit *Upeksha*, which means to ignore or to disregard. Monk Thich Nhat Hanh says that the Sanskrit word *upeksha* means “equanimity, non-attachment, non-discrimination and even-mindedness.” *Upa* means “over,” and *iksh* means “to look.” You

climb the mountain to be able to look over the whole situation, not bound by one side or the other (*The Heart of the Buddha's Teachings*). It is taken to refer to one's ability to observe, or one's ability to see without getting entangled into what one sees.

A spiritual person is not a stoic. On the contrary, he feels more keenly the pain and pleasure, and yet does not allow them to shake him or influence his decisions. He is able to achieve this by allowing one part of the incarnated mind to experience the emotion, while keeping another part detached, and thus assuming the position of an observer. When suffering is experienced and lessons are extracted then there arises once again insight into nature of life. One is able to enjoy without getting involved. In our experiences of praise and blame, or pain and pleasure, we tend to get identified with our special skill or a particular condition or circumstances. When we are unhappy or depressed because we were not praised our personality gets totally identified with our emotional layer. We forget to assume the position of an observer, and try to be a mere witness of pain. The example of an old lady who would do her work even when suffering from splitting head-ache, and when asked to rest, she would say, "The head is doing its work, and I am doing mine," demonstrates how with a little continuation of this self-effort one dissociates the "I" from the unhappiness.

There are experiences in life that open our eyes to the fact that our identity runs deeper than our appearance, our achievements, our ideas or feelings. A model who is rejected with the remarks that her hair is not silky enough or skin is not glowing enough, might slip into depression, saying, "I was rejected." When we associate "I" with the body, ideas or feelings, we tend to become most vulnerable. It could also be the reverse. When we are praised and put on a pedestal, for our beauty, eloquence, intelligence or skill, our personal worth is immeasurably increased.

Mr. Judge asks us to cultivate *higher patience*, which is a fine line between pride and humility. How shall we be proud, when we are so small? How dare we be humble when we are so great? In

both we blaspheme. But between these two extremes there is a place, "neither too high nor too low," and *there* we may stand calmly, not overshadowed by any man however great, because each of us contains potentialities of every other. That *special* skill, *special* virtue or *special* power that the other person possesses, "I" also possess. The greater the awareness of who we really are, the less will be the swaying by the externalities and the pairs of the opposites. St. Paul writes that the more we learn to be centred in the divine within, the less we are likely to be ruffled. He writes in his *Epistles to the Phillipians* (Ch. 4, 11:13): "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Meditation practices in Buddhism aim at cultivating mindfulness or awareness, as also, cultivating positive emotions, and acknowledging and eradicating negative emotions. There are four wholesome emotions, which include love or friendliness; compassion; sympathetic joy and *upekkha* meaning tranquillity or equanimity. These are four Buddhist virtues which are recommended in *Brahmavihara Sutta*, to be endlessly, and without limit developed by every person.

In the book, *Meditation—The Buddhist Way of Tranquillity and Insight*, the author, Kamalashila, a member of the Western Buddhist Order, while describing the four *positive emotions* gives an outline of each quality by describing its "near enemy" and "far enemy." The "near enemy" is a negative quality which we tend to mistake for the true quality. The "far enemy," is the opposite negative quality. The far enemy of *Upekkha* or equanimity is cold, hardened and fixed indifference. The near enemy is neutrality, lukewarmness or lack of interest. The main purpose of this meditation is to be aware of the feeling of indifference in us, and try to feel love equally strongly towards all. The quality of equanimity is a positive emotion that is combined with a powerful element of insight. In fact, an equal-

minded person is free from hostility and is full of good-will towards all, which includes his well-wishers and ill-wishers. Monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes that equanimity implies shedding all discrimination and prejudice and in a conflict, even though we are deeply concerned, we remain impartial, able to love and to understand both sides. (*The Heart of the Buddha's Teachings*)

True equal-mindedness has to be rooted in spiritual insight and *vairagya*, *i.e.*, detached attachment, or still better, “non-attachment.” Non-attachment simply implies not holding on. In every relation of life we may try to give up possessive thoughts of “mine,” beginning with *little things* from which it is easy to detach ourselves, and then gradually work towards detaching ourselves from possessions and aims to which our heart is most strongly attached. Detachment means non-dependence. While we may keenly enjoy every joy of existence, we should not get dependent on it. There is nothing wrong in going for a movie, concert or drama, every Sunday evening, but if for some reason we are deprived of this pleasure there should be easy acceptance.

Hence, equanimity is often described as a higher state of happiness arising from acceptance of what is happening in the present moment, based on spiritual insight. To acquire spiritual insight one must begin to understand and realize the three characteristics of the conditioned existence: All conditioned existence is *dukkha* or suffering. All Conditioned existence is *anitya* or impermanent. All conditioned existence is *anatma* or devoid of true selfhood. Something may be a source of pleasure but it may be tied up with anxiety, as we are afraid of losing it. It could be a person, a thing, or position or power. Our body, our ideas and emotions, all keep changing. We try to derive pleasure out of sensations. *Light on the Path* says: “In sensation no permanent home can be found, because change is the law of this vibratory existence. That fact is the first one that must be learned by the disciple. It is useless to pause and weep for a scene in a kaleidoscope which has passed.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT STRAIGHT THINKING

MASTER, we hear a lot about the need to meditate—schools of “meditation” seem to be coming up all over the world. Is this what is meant by Theosophy when we are told, “Think, think, think”?

Friend, it depends on what you mean by “meditation” and by “thinking.” Certainly no meditation is possible without the first step of concentration, which has a very near relationship with thought. Also, until true meditation is reached, thought in some aspect is active. But thought here is controlled and is affected by the memory-thoughts which normally crowd on our minds. Therefore, there is meditation with a seed-thought, and there is ecstasy, wherein thoughts, *i.e.*, embodied forms, vanish and absorption in that which lies behind all forms takes place.

But then when Theosophy teaches us to think, think, think, something quite different is meant. It means that we ought not to accept anything as true until we have thought about it and found out *for ourselves* if it is true, with the present knowledge we possess, and until we have tried to gain more knowledge about it.

But, Master, this would mean I could accept anything! Must I throw away everything that I hear or read which I have not the time to think about or the capacity to understand? Should I not turn into a denier?

Friend, here is an instance of what we are discussing. It is never a question of merely accepting or rejecting. What is needed is willing acceptance *after* thought; rejection *after* thought. Also, we need to remember H.P.B.’s advice in *The Secret Doctrine* to accept certain statements as “axioms” and try them out, just as we accept mathematical and geometrical axioms and postulates. They are to be used as starting points for our logical thinking, based on what we now know and are learning. If we prove them, then we can accept them as true.

But let us take something more practical in relation to our thought

in daily life—straight thinking. What is it?

Master, it is logical thinking, true thinking, not quibbling.

That is so, friend. How many of us can honestly say that we think straight? That we follow out a thought *beyond* the point where logic fails, that we refuse to acknowledge this failure and go on turning our backs upon it? In any argument we can see this happening, and that is one reason why argument is foolish and futile. Once get your opponent into a corner where he has to change his mind if he is honest, and he will very likely refuse to go on. Straight thinking means accepting the facts that come to light, even though it requires a radical change in our line of thinking.

Take the moot question of unmerited Karma which comes up again and again. Logical thought tells us that in a lawful universe there can be no such thing as anyone suffering from something of which he had not been the seed cause. You cannot get beyond that fact. To be told that you will be recompensed for it in *Devachan* is no help at all. All of us would willingly say that we would rather *not* suffer for what we have not done than be recompensed for it in *Devachan*. Joys in *Devachan* can never take away the suffering we have to undergo now.

Here we have a seeming stalemate. Once we admit that there is one point in the universe where rigid justice does *not* rule, the whole superstructure of our philosophy falls to the ground. Here, that innate sense of justice with which we are born comes to our aid and tells us that there must be some way of understanding this difficulty, that is to say, of accepting as satisfactory the explanation given. Please note, satisfactory acceptance implies that our feeling of justice is not contravened by the explanation but rather substantiated.

Master, how shall I begin to understand? This has been a stumbling block for me all along?

Friend, is it only suffering you experience from causes you think you have not sown? What about the brain with which you were born, the environment you came to, the nation, the era, etc.? Did your present personality sow the causes for these effects?

Master, it did not!

Friend, then you look upon them as “unmerited” Karma, but you accept them gladly, without thought! Do you expect to be compensated, or the reverse, after death, for the “unmerited” Karma which has been good?

Straight thinking will lead you to see that everything that pertains to us in life, even the environment we live in, giving us education or its reverse, giving us love or its reverse, is considered “unmerited” until we begin to act, feel and think consciously and deliberately. Then we begin to see that all is “merited Karma.” Who will benefit or suffer for this merited Karma? Our present personality will, if it bears fruit quickly. If those fruits are delayed, a new personality will. And that new personality will then cry, “I have not merited this”; though it will not cry, “I am grateful to the past personalities my Ego has lived in, for the good Karma I am experiencing now.”

Master, this is difficult to comprehend, for here logical thinking fails us and leads to an impasse.

Friend, here again the importance of straight thinking can be seen. Go on thinking about this, not arguing this way and that, but thinking over each step and trying to see where it leads. You will soon find that your thinking centers round one aspect of a problem without taking into account the crux. That crux is, “*What is the purpose of life?*” Or, to make it more striking, “*What is the role of the personality in life?*” Think on this and you will see that the problem is not whether we suffer unmerited or merited Karma, but what relation these hold to the purpose of life.

Far better than any recompense in *Devachan* for unmerited Karma or suffering is the benefit derived here and now by looking upon all Karma as something from which knowledge and power can be attained. Everyone knows that there is little which gives us as much happiness as the feeling of joy and satisfaction which comes from the accomplishment of a difficult task. By the time we become perfect in the art of overcoming difficulties and obstacles, we shall be on the way to “escaping” *Devachan*, so we ought to begin now.

Friend, you must pierce through your difficulties, those shadows from your past thinking, and go on. It is a hard decision to leave the familiar and go to the unfamiliar, for fear has a strong hold on our feelings. But once we think and get to the truth behind the obstacles, we are free from one more limitation, one more encumbrance. Do not be afraid of facing the result of your thinking. No one suffers by doing this, but ceasing to think straight at the crucial stage and so slipping back into the familiar ruts of thought is dangerous at all times. As an old saying puts it,

Let him who advances beware of slipping!
 Let him who stands beware; he is already slipping back!
 Let him who turns back beware; he is now falling into an abyss.
 The way is: "Forward only"—to Wisdom, to Truth, to Law!

This kind of thought is necessary in every case. When we complain of wrong morals today, let us rather think straight on our own morals. "Am I free from faults? Or do I make excuses for what I do? Am I ever cruel, or careless? Do I ever take more than my due? Do I find excuses for myself while blaming others?"

There is only a hair's breadth between right and wrong, it is said, and only straight thinking can find that hair's breadth. We often find ourselves in difficulties as the result of actions performed with the best intention but with insufficient knowledge. Hence the Theosophical injunction to spend some time daily in self-analysis. Only straight thinking will enable us to know what is, in fact, our ideal in life, and how far we are from it or how near we are to it. The attitude, "How right I am!" "How wrong others are!" must be transformed into a questioning attitude which strives to find out the right and wrong of things. The saying of the Adept known as Jesus the Christ is apposite: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone."

"Straight thinking" makes us see the narrow path between the personality of this life and the immortal reincarnating individuality which knows all our lives.

Friend, *think these things out.*

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA THE WAY OF CONTENTMENT—I

THE TWELFTH discourse is entitled *Bhakti-Yoga* or the yoga or union through devotion. It gives us the practical application of the wonderful concepts contained in the preceding discourse. Having seen what the Great Lodge of Masters really is, and what the work of the Lodge as a whole is, we are able to manifest in our own lives the power of that knowledge, and that manifestation is through an absolute and constant devotion to that great ideal of the Masters. In other words, having understood who the Masters are, we are now endeavouring to become devotees of the Masters. It is this comparatively simple and very short discourse which closes the second series of the whole poem of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It sums up the practical application of the philosophy expounded by Krishna. Yet many students, scholars and commentators alike have sometimes greatly misunderstood the real meaning of the Twelfth discourse of the *Gita*, which has been quoted as affirming and meaning that Krishna advocates the worship of an anthropomorphic Deity or a personal god.

The *Gita* is the book of esoteric science, a book of occultism, and nothing can be more contrary to the great rules laid down in the science of Theosophy or Occultism, than the idea of worship being paid to something outside of and separate to man himself. We must try to understand how these two paths referred to by Krishna—the path of the manifest and the path of the unmanifest—at the beginning of this discourse did not refer at all to the worship of a personal god. The very question of Arjuna should give us sufficient indication as to what is meant by the path of the manifest. Arjuna asks this question as a result of verse 55 of the Eleventh Discourse, in which Krishna speaks of those who went unto Him because they were devoted to Him. Thus: "He whose actions are for me alone, who esteemeth me the supreme goal, who is my servant only, without attachment to the results of action and free from enmity towards any creature,

cometh to me, O son of Pandu.” Referring to these devotees of Krishna and to Krishna as the visible representative of the Great Masters, Arjuna asks the question:

Among those of thy devotees who always thus worship thee, which take the better way, those who worship the indivisible and unmanifested, or those who serve thee as thou now art?

And we know through the vision and experience of Arjuna who Krishna is. When Arjuna asks, “those who serve thee as thou now art?” he cannot be referring to the idea of a personal god, but he is referring to the service and devotion of all disciples of that great Lodge of Adepts, to Krishna as Master, as the flower and perfection of human evolution. In the answer of Krishna then, we must keep that great fact in mind in order to be able to understand what the two paths are. The Path which is manifest is that great path which has been described throughout the series of discourses, from the seventh onwards, until the great Vision of the Eleventh discourse.

The path of chelaship, the path of the Spiritual life, the path leading to the supreme goal, the Master, is the path which is manifested. How is it a path which is manifested? Because every single state through which the aspirant must go is known and has been recorded for us. That ancient and immortal path has been trodden by all those who have gone on the path before us, and have reached the final goal, and have attained their own self-conscious immortality, and all that they have experienced, they have left in that record which we know as the Wisdom Religion. So that the student who is trying to tread that path of spiritual life, and undertaking the great task and the most noble of all tasks, the search for the Masters, knows exactly what his next step is. He has in his own hands all the necessary rules which are changeless. These spiritual rules cannot change, since they are based on the very facts of the laws of nature, which are always changeless and immutable. These spiritual rules give to every sincere and honest disciple, or would-be disciple, the exact guide, the map, the chart, so to say, which takes him step by step,

following the successive order which has been established and has been ascertained and proven by thousands of years of experience, and that will ultimately take him to the Masters themselves.

The whole philosophy is there in the documents which he possesses. He can, through a study of that philosophy, see exactly where he now stands, his particular stage of evolution, and try to reach the next step, and when that next step is reached and attained, the student is able to perceive clearly the still higher step for him. And thus, step by step, he always knows exactly where he is going. We can say that all those who are trying to tread that path are walking in the path of their Divine instructors, acquiring knowledge, degree by degree, and learning at the same time to unfold their own power of discrimination, so that they are always recognized in terms of the rules which are laid down for them, the good from the evil, and the true from the false.

On the other hand, all those desiring to find the truth, who do not know that there are perfected Human Beings who possess Absolute Knowledge, are really going through the labyrinth of life without any guide, without any light to lighten their every step. They do not know what they will next discover, because they do not know where they can find the Truth. All those sincere and honest seekers after truth do not know that truth can be found in an immortal record, which is embodied today by Beings who possess that Knowledge in its full and detailed explanation. It is to those beings that Krishna here refers when he says that “those who, with minds equal toward everything, with senses and organs restrained, and rejoicing in the good of all creatures, meditate on the inexhaustible, immovable, highest, incorruptible, difficult to contemplate, invisible, omnipresent, unthinkable, the witness, undemonstrable, shall also come unto me.” Let us see if we can find in our civilization today beings, who would come under this particular classification.

But a few words of explanation are necessary. Krishna has described the ideal seeker after truth on the path which is manifested. But alas! We are in *Kali Yuga*, and that ideal seeker after truth, that

contemplator of the Omnipresent, Invisible Reality, does not exist. We do not have in our own civilization at this present time human beings who can really qualify for this particular description, but there are, shall we say, the remains of those beings? There are those human beings who in another era with less selfishness and materialism would probably come exactly under this particular description, and those are all honest scientists, truthful philosophers, all real artists. We know there exists the scientist, philosopher and artist, worthy of his own title, who is endeavouring to do the best he knows, to follow the highest that is in him, and is trying to find the truth. He does not know that the truth exists in its manifested aspect, and therefore he does not know where to apply to find the answers to his problems, and the explanations of the mysteries of his life.

The scientist never knows what his next discovery is going to be, or what conclusions he will have to arrive at from the next discovery. So the knowledge is always undergoing tremendous change because of the new facts that come into his life, which he discovers. That is what we know as relative knowledge. The scientist is doing the best he knows how but he is following that relative knowledge, and he never knows where that relative knowledge is going to take him in his own deductions; and the same is true of the philosopher who is trying to meditate on the various systems of thought. He is using his power of analysis, and of drawing conclusions from this analysis and reasoning, but he does not know what his next step forward is going to be. For the artist, the truth is unmanifested. He longs to express something that he thinks will be the truth and he also sees, after each particular experience, that he has not achieved his own ideal, and that truth remains unmanifested, the sacred mysteries that he cannot attain. Thus, all these beings are going through life without any particular object that we can call a manifested one.

(To be continued)

THE PLANET SATURN

II

IN ASTROLOGY, the symbol for Saturn is ♄ which symbolizes Scythe or sickle, as Saturn is supposed to be the Roman God of Agriculture. H.P.B. points out that every symbol is like a many-faced diamond with each of its facets being open to several interpretations. There are seven keys to interpretation of every symbol, which include astronomical, metaphysical, psychological, philosophical, geometrical, etc. We come across interpretation of planetary symbolism in the books on Astrology. At a simple level, the symbols of the planets have been derived from the Greek names of the Gods associated with these planets or from the weapons used by these gods.

Alan Leo, in his book, *Planetary Astrology*, points out that symbols of almost all planets are a combination of circle, semi-circle and a cross; wherein the circle represents pure spirit, the semi-circle or crescent represents the soul, and the cross represents matter, or body. Saturn and Jupiter are the reverse of each other. They depict the relation between soul (or mind) and body. The symbol for Saturn, which is cross over half-circle, ♄, means matter over mind, and represents cold, dry and calculating intellect. Mind or soul is under the domination of matter and hence test, trials and temptations are necessary to free the soul. The planet Jupiter has reverse symbol (♃), with a semi-circle placed over a cross, that shows mind rising over matter. The soul is free from domination of matter, and feels compassion for struggling humanity.

Before we can interpret the symbols and myths associated with Saturn it is useful to remember that there are various aspects to Saturn. H.P.B. writes:

All the gods of Olympus, as well as those of the Hindu Pantheon and the Rishis, were the septiform personations
 (1) of the *noumena* of the intelligent Powers of nature;
 (2) of Cosmic Forces; (3) of celestial bodies; (4) of gods or

Dhyan Chohans; (5) of psychic and spiritual powers; (6) of divine kings on earth (or the incarnations of the gods); and (7) of terrestrial heroes or men. The knowledge how to discern among these seven forms the one that is meant belonged at all times to the Initiates, whose earliest predecessors had created this symbolical and allegorical system. (*S.D.*, II, 765)

In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 72 fn.) H.P.B. points out that Jupiter or Zeus is the son of Kronos-Saturn, which is “Infinite Time” or *Kala*. Kronos is the God of Boundless Time and of the Cycles. Kronos is Infinite Time while Jupiter, among other things, represents personification of the immutable Law of Cycles, and thus finite time—the child of Infinite Time. Jupiter the son of Saturn was hurled down by his father into the depths of Kosmos, just as Brahma is precipitated into the abyss of darkness by Siva. These are all *logoi* (*Verbum* or “Son”) cursed to incarnate on earth, and which means fall into generation and matter under the law of Karma. (*S.D.*, II, 515 & 786)

This has been further explained on p. 418 (*S.D.*, I). The “Uranides” represent the divine Titans, those who rebelled against Kronos, and they are the prototypes of the Christian “fallen” angels. The theogony of every religion speaks of “gods” who refused to create man and thus opposed or rebelled against God. Thus, the *Archangels* of the Christians, the *Ameshaspendas* of the Zoroastrians or Solar angels (*Agnishwatta Pitris*) of the Hindus, are all variously termed Satan, Asura (no-god), because they refused to create men. The rebels and Satans were the celestial beings who refused to create the physical body of man, because they did not possess the *physical creative fire*, but they endowed him with *mind*. In Greece they were symbolized under the name of Prometheus. These rebellious angels, or first mind-born sons of Brahma, who refused to create physical man were hurled down to Earth. These are the three classes of *Arupa pitris*. In other words, one third of the Dhyanis were doomed by the law of Karma to be reborn on Earth.

Kronos is Duration, without beginning and without an end, beyond divided Time and beyond Space. Those gods or angels who were compelled *to act in space and time*, on the phenomenal or super-terrestrial regions, are allegorically said to *have rebelled* against Kronos and fought the (then) one living and highest God. Likewise, when Kronos is represented as mutilating Uranos, his father, it implies that Absolute Time is made to become the finite and the conditioned, the portion is robbed from the whole, thus showing that Saturn, the father of the gods was transformed from Eternal Duration into a limited Period. Kronos cuts down with his scythe even the longest and seemingly endless cycles, and with the same scythe puts down the mightiest rebels. (*S.D.*, I, 418)

Uranos is the personification of the celestial Powers. H.P.B. writes that the mutilation of Uranos by his son Kronos, who condemns him to impotency, and thus prevented him from creating, has not been understood by the modern Mythographers. The whole symbolism relates to the mystery of evolution. As Uranos destroyed his children from Gaia, in the world of manifestation, with Aditi, so also, in the second stage of creation, Kronos destroyed his children by devouring them. H.P.B. explains that this has an allusion to the fruitless efforts of Earth or Nature alone to create real *human* men. Time swallows its own fruitless work. (*S.D.*, II, 268-69)

This has been explained by saying that for 300 million years or three occult ages, man and earth were astral in nature. Earth or Nature created forms from her own materials, without calling for the help of “Sons of Wisdom” or “Sons of Heaven.” The monstrous forms were created from the mineral, animal and vegetable remains, from the First, Second and Third Rounds. In her first attempt to create man, monsters, half-animal and half-man were generated. These are described as “water-men terrible and bad,” who were the product of the “evolutionary impulse,” and are shown to be failures. She (Nature) can produce the mineral and vegetable kingdoms and even lower animal kingdom, but when it comes to man, help of spiritual and intelligent powers is required for his creation (*S.D.*, II,

52-56). Hence, help and intervention of Lunar and Solar pitris was sought for creating the form of man and to activate his mind.

Uranos, or the personification of the celestial Powers, reigned and ruled over the Second Race and their Continent; Kronos or Saturn governed the Third Race humanity or Lemurians, and Jupiter, Neptune and others fought in the allegory for Atlantis, which was the whole earth in the day of the Fourth Race (*S.D.*, II, 765). In this context there is an explanation given on p. 766 (*S.D.*, II): Uranos gave birth to the Titans of the Third Race, and it is they who, personified by Saturn-Kronos, mutilated him, as they did not need Uranos anymore. These Titans seem to refer to beings associated with physical procreation, as we are told that these Titans *fell into generation*, when creation by *will* was superseded by physical procreation. Uranos has been described as one of the Dhyān Chohans presiding over Second Race humanity, which, as explained on p. 207 (*S.D.*, I) was constantly plunged in abstract contemplation and produced the Third Race which is described as “Sons of Passive Yoga.”

We are then told about Jupiter dethroning his father, where Jupiter, the Titan, is Prometheus in one sense, personification of “Sons of Wisdom,” and created the generations of Bronze. H.P.B. explains that while Golden and Silver Ages represent first and second race humanity, the men of the age of Bronze represent Third Race humanity which are giants physically and mentally (*S.D.*, II, 270-71). In other words, the astral model or *chhaya* is the gift of Lunar Pitris or *Barhishad Pitris* who evolved their shadows or *chhayas* to form the First Root Race on our Earth. But these lunar *pitris* could not give man the sacred spark, (light of mind), or self-reflective consciousness that distinguishes man from animals, and this was left to the class of divine beings symbolized by Prometheus, also known as *Manasputras* or *Agnishwatta pitris*.

In the magazine *Le Lotus* (December 1887), H.P.B. explains that once the mind of man was activated, *i.e.*, once endowed with the creative fire, completely evolved mankind had no further need for the help of the Powers or creative Gods. *Men became creative Gods*,

in their turn, able to give life to beings like themselves and that is the meaning of the Greek allegory of Uranos mutilated by Saturn-Kronos, who in turn finds himself mutilated by his son Jupiter.

In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 263) H.P.B. mentions that Saturn or Kronos was Bel or Baal of the Chaldeans and that Bel is but the Babylonian personification of the Hindu god Siva. Interestingly, the Egyptian god Typhon is compared to Siva and Saturn. According to the note on Typhon in the *Glossary*, Typhon is an aspect or the shadow of Osiris. In man, Osiris represents the higher spiritual triad, while Typhon represents the lower quaternary. We must look upon Osiris and Typhon as dual gods, or as symbols of good and *necessary* evil, or Light and Darkness. “Typhon belongs most decidedly to the same symbolical category as Siva the Destroyer, and Saturn—the ‘dark god.’” Also, in the *Book of the Dead*, Typhon or Set is emasculated in his battle with Thoth (wisdom), who is his spiritual counterpart, just as Saturn-Kronos and Uranos were emasculated, or dethroned before him.

The problem arises when we look upon Osiris and Typhon as distinct entities, because Typhon has been described as “a great and good god,” and at the same time, as embodiment of evil. He is like Siva or Saturn. Siva is auspicious but also as *Siva-rudra* he is terrible and a destroyer. Just as Ahriman is an inseparable part of Ahura Mazda so also Typhon is an inseparable and integral part of Osiris. Good and Evil are two aspects which must co-exist. This is the reason why Shri Krishna did not *kill* Kaliya but banished him to the fathomless depths of the sea. This indicates that though we may purge our *individual natures* of evil, evil can never be extirpated but must still linger in the whole expanse of the *Kosmos*, as the opposing power to active goodness which maintains the equilibrium in Nature. Further, Siva-Rudra is the “God of Time,” or Saturn-Kronos, as shown by his *damru* (drum), in the shape of an hour-glass. (*S.D.*, II, 502)

(Concluded)

THE CRITERION OF TRUTH

THE STATED object of science is to discover truths about the natural world through strictly objective observation, experimental verification and theoretical explanations, free from all subjective biases. Testability and reproducibility of laws so discovered are the criterion of truth so far as modern science is concerned. Though science has made remarkable progress in unravelling laws of the physical world by empirical and inductive methods, and in their practical applications, leading scientists however confess that they have failed to develop a unified science with a single set of assumptions and terms to explain all observations as aspects of one coherent whole. In other words, they are still in search of one single universal principle, theoretical formulation of which will reconcile many different specialized observations resolvable into one grand synthetic whole which explains all the mysteries of the natural world. They admit that such a universal unifying principle alone is truth and that its discovery, by means of inductive method they adhere to, is still a far cry.

Each one of the many sects of the world religions, resting on “Revelation,” lays claim to be the sole possessor of truth. Inasmuch as there is no other fertile source of mutual hatred and strife in the world than differences between the various religious sects, it is evident that none of them has the whole truth. Whatever truth they had originally possessed has been so mixed up with human error and superstitions over the centuries that they either repel and cause the reasoning and thinking portions of humanity to fall into agnosticism, or induce blind faith and superstitions in unthinking portions of the public who willingly submit to priestly authority.

Many a man and woman of the world, wearied of the endless seeking of pleasures of life which they have ascertained by long experience to be insatiable, begin to search for truth about the meaning and purpose of life. The first difficulty they encounter in their search is the confusion caused in their minds while deciding which of the many religions, religious practices and philosophies

that are presented to them is true, and who among the many persons claiming to be teachers can be trusted. Not infrequently many among the seekers of truth lose their way in this maze because of the lack of knowledge on their part of the criterion of truth by which to judge genuineness or otherwise of the many systems of thought and practices presented to them.

Before we can form a clear conception of the criterion of truth, we must first understand what is Truth and where it is to be found. A clue to this profound question is suggested by the Teacher, H.P.B., in her monumental work, *Isis Unveiled* (II, 121):

Among thousands of exoteric or popular conflicting religions which have been propagated since the days when the first men were enabled to interchange their ideas, not a nation, not a people, nor the most abject tribe, but after their own fashion has believed in an *Unseen God, the First Cause of unerring and immutable laws, and in the immortality of our spirit. No creed, no false philosophy, no religious exaggerations, could ever destroy that feeling. It must, therefore, be based upon an absolute truth.* On the other hand, every one of the numberless religions and religious sects views the Deity after its own fashion; and, fathering on the unknown its own speculations, it enforces these purely human outgrowths of overheated imagination on the ignorant masses, and calls them “revelation.” [*Italics ours*]

One has, therefore, to search for the Truth underlying the universe, the Unseen God, in the immortality of one’s indwelling spirit, and not outside, nor in the distorted formulations of it as dogmas of every religion. Absolute Truth being boundless and Eternal is reflected in every atom and dwells in the hearts of all beings. “In proportion as our consciousness is elevated towards absolute truth, so do we men assimilate it more or less absolutely,” writes H.P.B. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*, p. 2). While average mortals are overshadowed by the divine SELF some rare individuals succeed in assimilating their purified consciousness with their immortal Spirit and become divine. Only such can be said to be in possession of

absolute truth. Such are the great Adepts, *Jivanmuktas*. But even the greatest Adepts can reveal only so much of the universal truth to the degree the mind of the seeker after truth is susceptible of being impressed upon by it. Hence, “In every age there have been Sages who had mastered the absolute and yet could teach but relative truths” (*ibid.*). For, it is the immutable law of spiritual evolution that each one has to find final knowledge *in* himself, by his own exertions, and that the Teacher can but point the way. Teachers say: “Man has to *know himself, i.e.,* acquire the *inner* perceptions which never deceive, before he can master any absolute truth” (*ibid.* p. 4). The supreme sacrifice and unswerving love of Truth required on the part of the seeker to realize absolute Truth is stated by the Teacher thus :

On the plane of spirituality, to reach the Sun of Truth we must work in dead earnest for the development of our higher nature. We know that by paralyzing gradually within ourselves the appetites of the lower personality, and thereby deadening the voice of the purely physiological mind—that mind which depends upon, and is inseparable from, its medium or *vehicle*, the organic brain—the animal in us may make room for the spiritual; and once aroused from its latent state, the highest spiritual senses and perceptions grow in us in proportion, and develop *pari passu* with the “divine man.” This is what the great adepts, the Yogis in the East and the Mystics in the West, have always done and are still doing. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*, pp. 2-3)

But this is not easy. The great—almost insurmountable—difficulty, especially for the modern man, in the way of acquisition of absolute Truth is stated by the Teacher to be as difficult for the average mortal as trying to reach the moon on a bicycle. “The fair heavenly maiden descends only on a (to her) congenial soil—the soil of an impartial, unprejudiced mind, illuminated by pure Spiritual Consciousness.” (*ibid.*, p. 4)

Therefore, the first step in the long and arduous journey in the quest of truth is to assure oneself of the verity that one universal Eternal Wisdom-Religion has always existed, being the basis of all

world religions, sciences and philosophies. A fraternity of great Adepts are its custodians, who impart as much of the Truth to different nations at various times, according to cyclic law, as the peoples of the times are fit to receive and assimilate it. The seeker must then seek that one universal unitary basis of them all, the synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy—now promulgated by Adepts, naming it Theosophy. It is only through comparative study of World Religions and Philosophies in the light of Theosophy that one can comprehend, with one’s reasoning and intuitive faculties, the common basis of them all, and the criterion by which to judge and apprehend truth in all things.

The Great Master, the *Maha-Chohan*, struck the key-note of the criterion of Truth: “The true religion and philosophy offer the solution of every problem” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 33*, p. 5). None of the existing religions, sciences and philosophies are capable of it, though in every one of them may be found scattered a few fragments of that one true religion and philosophy alluded to by the Master.

Mr. Judge shows in a comprehensive way, in his work, *An Epitome of Theosophy*, the vital questions which every truth seeker asks but answers to which cannot be found in any of the existing religions and science, and that satisfactory explanation can be found most reliably in the philosophy of Theosophy: The object, use, and inhabitation of other planets than the earth; geological cataclysms on the earth; absence of intermediate types of the fauna on it; the occurrence of architectural and other relics of races now lost, about which modern science has only vain conjecture; the nature of extinct civilizations and the cause of their extinction; the persistence of savagery and the unequal development of the existing civilizations; differences, physical and internal, between the various races of men; the line of future development; the contrasts and unisons of world’s faiths, and the common foundation underlying them all; existence of evil, of suffering, and of sorrow, which bewilders alike the philanthropists and the theologians; inequalities of social condition and privilege; the sharp contrast between wealth and poverty,

intelligence and stupidity, culture and ignorance, virtue and vileness; the appearance of geniuses in families destitute of it, and of other facts which conflict with the law of heredity; frequent cases of unfitness of environment around individuals, so sore as to embitter disposition, hamper aspiration, and paralyze endeavour; the violent antithesis between character and condition; the occurrence of accident, misfortune and untimely death; possession of extraordinary psychic and spiritual powers and knowledge by rare individuals, failure of conventional religions to bring about reform of social iniquities and abuses, and to instill the ideal of Brotherhood and elevate humanity.

To say that such puzzles of life are mere accidents of nature, as some of the leaders of science say, is untenable as it contradicts the basic proposition of science that universe is governed by natural laws, and it would be illogical to say that the universe is partly governed by law and partly by chance happenings. It will be equally pernicious to take the position as theologians do that all this is due to an inscrutable God's Will.

In the Theosophical doctrines of common origin of man and the universe, both constituted of one universal essence, evolving under one and the same Cosmic laws towards the common goal of universal divine perfection through planetary and racial cycles, all subservient to, and evolving under the Law of all laws—Karma and Reincarnation—and all bound together in an indissoluble bond of Universal Brotherhood: in this all-inclusive body of philosophical, scientific and ethical doctrine alone is found the solution to every problem of life and every mystery of nature. It is not a mere theory but all of it can be demonstrated to reason, and the means and the way by which anyone can ascertain the truths of the doctrine for oneself is shown. Says the Great Master of the criterion of Truth:

That the world is in such a bad condition, morally, is a conclusive evidence that none of its religions and philosophies—those of the civilized races less than any other—has ever possessed the TRUTH. The right and logical

explanations on the subject of the problems of the great dual principles, right and wrong, good and evil, liberty and despotism, pain and pleasure, egotism and altruism, are as impossible to them now as they were 1886 years ago. They are as far from the solution as they ever were; but to these problems there must be somewhere a consistent solution, and if our doctrines will show their competence to offer it, then the world will be the first to confess that *there* must be the true philosophy, the true religion, the true light, which gives truth and nothing but the TRUTH. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 33*, pp. 5-6)

OF WHATSOEVER teachings, Gotamid, thou canst assure thyself thus: “These doctrines conduce to passions, not to dispassion; to bondage, not to detachment; to increase of (worldly) gains, not to decrease of them; to covetousness, not to frugality; to discontent, and not to content; to company, not to solitude; to sluggishness, not to energy; to delight in evil, not to delight in good;” of such teachings thou mayest with certainty affirm, Gotamid, “This is not the Norm. This is not the Discipline. This is not the Master's Message.”

But of whatsoever teachings thou canst assure thyself (that they are the opposite of these things that I have told you)—of such teachings thou mayest with certainty affirm: “This is the Norm. This is the Discipline. This is the Master's Message.”

With complete intellectual detachment and freedom from preconception, he [Buddha] surveyed them [contemporary teachings]...and followed the Middle Path of accepting as part of his own Teaching whatever was conducive to the attainment of the...heights of Liberation, and rejecting as false and wrong whatever hindered, or retarded, or even merely did not help, in the process of spiritual ascent.

—*A Survey of Buddhism*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: What is the significance of breaking a cocoanut before *puja* (worship) as also of using or breaking it during or before the performance of certain ceremonies?

Answer: Certain trees and fruits are considered sacred because of their peculiar characteristics and occult properties. The palms are believed to be the embodiment of the ancient Indian concept of *kalpavriksha* or the tree which grants all wishes. It is interesting to note that cocoanut tree's roots suck the salty water from the coastal soil and convert it into the sweetest water, known as cocoanut water, which, besides quenching the thirst has many health benefits.

H.P.B. points out that the cocoanut is an ancient symbol of affection and good-will. She mentions that for over 2000 years an irreconcilable religious feud had raged between the Buddhists and the Brahmins, and hence in October 1881, a committee of Buddhists went over to India with Col. Olcott to plant a cocoanut tree, an emblem of peace and reconciliation, in the compound of the Hindu Temple in Tinnevely, as a mark of preliminary reconciliation between the Brahminical Theosophical Society of Tinnevely and their brother Theosophists and neighbours of Ceylon.

Cocoanut is called *Sriphala*, which means fruit of the gods or auspicious fruit. The cocoanut fruit is considered highly auspicious and is an essential part of many rituals and ceremonies. It is customary, among the Hindus, to break a cocoanut before entering a new house, before starting a new venture, and in front of an idol of a god or goddess, during worship. It is considered the purest form of offering to God, since the water and the white kernel within remain unpolluted due to the hard outer shell. The cocoanut also

symbolizes selfless service, as every part of the tree, trunk, leaves, fruit, coir, etc. is used in innumerable ways for making thatches, mats, oil, soap, food and medicines.

The Sanskrit word for cocoanut is *narikela*, which means water spring or squirt. There is a popular legend in Kerala that the cocoanut was originally a *deva vriksha* (divine tree). It was brought down to earth by Lord Parshurama for the prosperity of the people of the Malabar Coast, which later came to be known as Kerala, meaning literally, "the land of cocoanuts." Hindus begin a new activity by breaking a cocoanut, to ensure the blessings of the gods and the successful completion of the activity. It is believed to be symbolic of good fortune and prosperity. The fruit is referred to as *Sriphala*. Sri is a name of goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity. She is symbolically depicted by the vase of plenty, consisting of a pot filled with water or rice and topped with a cocoanut, and the mouth of the pot decorated with five mango leaves. Symbolically, the cocoanut is considered Lord Shiva's head, the fibrous mesocarp representing his tangled hair, and the three black, round scars on the shell represent three eyes of Shiva. According to Hindu mythology, Lord Ganesa once asked Lord Shiva to give his head as a sacrifice. To symbolize the sacrifice, Lord Shiva created the cocoanut with the three eyes. Moreover, cocoanut is associated with human fertility, and therefore when a cocoanut is placed in a pot, the pot symbolizes the womb, while cocoanut symbolizes life. (*Sacred Plants of India*, pp. 112-117)

It is also believed that in ancient times the custom was to make a human sacrifice to god, but later the human was replaced by a cocoanut, as the latter resembled the head of a human being. At a simple level, breaking of the cocoanut symbolizes breaking or crushing of the ego (*ahankara*) or pride, which is the greatest impediment to spiritual development. It may be taken to be a mark of complete submission to Almighty, leaving results to the Law of Karma, as God is Law. The hard exterior and soft and sweet interior may also be taken to symbolize that we must be as hard as the rind of cocoanut to our own woes but as soft and sympathetic as its pulp

to other people's troubles and woes. It is also a reminder to us that often rough and rugged exterior hides the most beautiful and compassionate character. Let us therefore seek for the pulp under the roughest, most wrinkled, hardest exterior of our fellow men.

The essence of things is always hidden and must be extracted by getting rid of the superficial and the obvious. "The true philosopher... sees that the kernel is within the shell... the essence of the thing is obtained by cracking the shell and casting it away." We have to take the trouble of separating the husk from the grain; the shell from the kernel. Every emotion, sensation and experience must be subject to this process. *Light on the Path* suggests, weighing, observing and testing every sensation, without yielding to the seductions of the senses. We may experience the sensations without feeling horror and with confidence that a time will come when they will affect us no longer.

The hard outer shell of cocoon is taken to represent our gross physical body, and the kernel represents the subtle or astral body. The scientific process delineated in the article, the "Elixir of Life," which when understood correctly gives a clue to the esoteric meaning of meditation and contemplation. In the practice of contemplation it is suggested that we begin the discipline by determining to crack, literally, not *metaphorically*, the outer shell or the physical body and hatch out in our ethereal body, as a chicken breaks the shell of the egg and hatches out. This ethereal body is the astral body (and not spiritual body) on which physical body is built. In order to be able to do this we must adapt the astral body to life in this atmosphere, and at the same time make the physical form to die off gradually by certain training and process. When a person abstains from entertaining "gross" thoughts, feelings and actions, he will tend to diminish relative density and coherence of outer shell or physical body,

Lastly, in Hindu philosophy, Solar matrix, which carries within it future universe is said to resemble a cocoon, filled interiorly with pulp, and covered externally with husk and rind.

Question: In the article "Hit the Mark," we are told that "the wanderings of but a day will cost you years of effort to find the path again." Is this not discouraging?

Answer: This article deals with spiritual archery, which may be regarded as a powerful symbol of attaining the goal of self-realization through perfect concentration. If the eye wanders even slightly from the target, the arrow will fly wide or fall short of its goal. In reaching the spiritual goal, our mind and heart must not be permitted to wander, "for the path is narrow and the wanderings of a day may cause us years of effort to find the road again," says Mr. Judge. It must be the common experience of all the student-aspirants that at the early stages of our discipline, if there is a break in the discipline—because of illness or especially when we are on a vacation—picking up the thread again requires enormous effort. By "wandering," we set up a tendency, which repeats itself cyclically.

It is easy to "wander off" in by-lanes of alternative systems of philosophies that might promise short-cut to self-realization or a quick solution to our problems. It is easy to be led astray, lured by the dazzle of psychic development and psychic powers. A seeker, who pursues psychic development without purifying the moral nature, walks the broad and easy path, which ultimately leads to his destruction. Pursuit of psychic development is dangerous and the untrained and impure dabbler is ultimately ruined in his psychic and moral health. When such a person realizes the mistake and begins his search for truth and wishes to lead the true spiritual life, he might find it extremely difficult. His difficulty is compounded because pursuit of psychic powers and consequent involvement with subtle but lower, material forces of nature (elementals), tends to strengthen lower, personal nature. Hence, Mr. Crosbie says that opportunity to understand and apply Theosophy comes under Karma to the very few, not because it is withheld from anyone, but because the mind is not open to considering new truths. This comes from neglect or misuse of opportunities in former lives. Thus, it is the height of unwisdom to neglect such an opportunity to study Theosophy, especially in those cases where it is brought home to us without effort. "Difficult it is to

get to hear the True Law,” says the Buddha.

In some cases it is also possible to forget the mission and give oneself to the easy and immoral life of vices and pleasures. Only a person with a *strong nature* could sink very low and using that same strength, rise to proportionately greater heights. But this is not the highest path. “The highest path is that which goes with little variation, but few are strong enough to keep up the never-ceasing strain,” writes Mr. Judge. Such strength comes from many ages of service to humanity. On the other hand, it is not surprising that often there comes a time when the aspirant loses desire for the inner life, for progress and for service. One may, for instance, experience positive aversion for everything to do with Theosophy or spiritual living. But then, it would be good to give ourselves a *deliberate* break and gradually pick up the discipline by doing ten minutes’ Theosophical work or study every day. At the end of six or seven weeks, we will know what to add to that practice, writes Mr. Judge.

The ultimate goal and motive of one’s spiritual journey is not just attaining liberation or *moksha* but that of renouncing the peace and bliss of Nirvana in order to be able to help suffering humanity. But somewhere along the way, it is possible to lose sight of the original motive. “The Eastern idea of motive is a profound one, and in ascertaining our motive we must take time and have to be careful, judicious, alert and attentive....Here in India especially the desire for *Moksha* and to reach Nirvana has become the supreme, nay, the only goal of spiritual striving....The cultivation of Right Motive takes more than one life: the control of the wandering mind is a necessity universally recognized but how many think of the wandering heart? When the heart has been steadied concentration of mind becomes easy, for an objective has been found. The mind gathers itself together and makes the objective its centre....Once the aspirant resolves to follow the Right Motive, it, whether he remembers it or not, will affect his life and force him to work for humanity in one way or another,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. (*Studies in the Voice of the Silence*, pp. 3-5)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Is the Cluster phenomenon or Group reincarnation a fact or fiction? It has been observed that at infrequent periods in history, several geniuses appear at the same time. Usually they know each other, and their fame lasts through centuries. Then again a century or two later another cluster of talented men dominate the scene. This cluster phenomenon in the study and research of reincarnation defies explanation. Thus, there is Shakespeare and Bacon forming a cluster. Leonardo da Vinci and Verrocchio worked together, while the other two great artists Michelangelo and Raphael vied with each other at exhibitions. Two centuries later, Mozart, Beethoven, Hayden and Schubert appeared in the world of music.

Likewise, in the philosophical field we had Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot. Similarly, towering statesmen as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin were contemporaries at the birth of the “US Republic.” Likewise, too, there was a glittering array of poets and philosophers in the early nineteenth century, which included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, James Lowell, Henry Longfellow, Oliver Holmes and Walt Whitman. Romantic poets, such as, Blake, Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats, who simultaneously illumined English literature, formed another cluster. During the Renaissance period there was a cluster of talented people in various fields. Unfortunately, there appears to be recurring “cluster” of evil-doers. In his book, “The Spear of Destiny,” Trevor Ravenscroft mentions that the leaders of the secret Thule group in Munich, of which Adolf Hitler was one, were Satanists and practiced black magic. He mentions that Hitler believed himself to be the reincarnation of “Landulf of Capua,” head of the anti-Christ group, who had practiced black magic involving human sacrifice and torture. Others in the Thule group were all ninth century anti-Christ and anti-grail people.

In our materialistic world, most of us cling to possessions and

make wrong choices, and hence we are forced to incarnate again and again until we have mastered all the lessons and acquired peace. It is only after several lifetimes of moving up and down, in misery and happiness, in riches and poverty, with our “Karmic-Clusters” of family and friends, that we begin to understand cluster phenomenon, and why some relationships bring pain and others bring happiness, writes Ruby Lilaowala. (*Parsi Times*, December 10, 2016)

Karma and Reincarnation are twin doctrines. Reincarnation, the doctrine of hope and progress, is interwoven with the law of Cycles and Karma. We are born again and again on account of unexhausted Karma and unspent Karmic affinities. Theosophy teaches that “those who are like unto each other and love each other will be reincarnated together whenever conditions permit.” It is under Karma that the Ego is drawn to particular parents, family, race and nation, following the law of economy.

We may regard each life as a *rare* cyclic opportunity, which is going to come again only after 1000 to 1500 years. The law of Reincarnation lays down that man comes into this world, lives a life and then dies to come back in a new body and personality. In the state between death and rebirth, the soul goes to heaven or *Devachan* and assimilates the good garnered during earth life so as to come back enriched in the next life. *Average* stay in *Devachan* is said to be 1000 to 1500 years. Thus, we find history repeating itself, as at regular intervals of time, the same Egos being born together, bring with them special skills, capacities and knowledge. Thus, “Individuals and nations in definite streams return in regularly recurring periods to the earth, and bring back to the globe the arts, the civilization, the very persons who once were on it at work. And as the units in nation and race are connected together by invisible strong threads, large bodies of such units moving slowly but surely all together reunite at different times and emerge again and again together into new race and civilization. Therefore, the souls who made the most ancient civilizations will come back and bring the

old civilization with them in idea and essence,” writes Mr. Judge. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 127)

Speech or Language differentiates man from the animal, but the origin of our speech has remained one of the greatest mysteries of science. According to the study published in the journal *Plos One* by scientists from six universities in France and the United States of America, the barks, yacks and wa-hoos of the Guinea baboons reveal distinct human-like vowel sounds suggesting that human vocal system developed from such abilities already present in the ancestors such as Guinea baboons. The study suggests that “the spoken language evolved from ancient articulatory skills already present in our last common ancestor... about 25 million years ago.” The authors suggest that the findings “reveal a loose parallel between human vowels” and baboon vocalisations produced in such communications as sounding alarm or calling to copulate. Professor Scott Moisik of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in the Netherlands, who was not involved in the new study, remarks that “speech precursors” go back further than 25 million years ago and that more research is required to find the origin of consonants used in human speech. (*Mumbai Mirror, The Times of India*, January 13, 2017)

Interestingly, in another study conducted by researchers from the United States of America and Europe, it was suggested that monkeys could produce comprehensible vowel sounds and even full sentences, with their vocal tracts, if they had brain wiring for speech. Therefore, the researchers concluded that evolution of human speech capability required neural changes rather than an adaptation of vocal anatomy. (*Mumbai Mirror, The Times of India*, December 12, 2016)

H.P.B. tells us that “it is almost certain that the great linguistic families pass through three stages” (*S.D.*, II, 662). In the first stage, all words are roots and merely placed in juxtaposition, creating what are called radical languages. In the next stage, one root defines

another and becomes what is called a “determinative element.” This is the stage of agglutinative languages. Finally, this determinative element unites into a whole with the formative element, and we have inflected speech. This agrees with the scientific explanation of the origin of language, but science has no idea where the original roots come from. The early mankind (first three races) did not possess articulate speech. Some scientists assert that “human speech was developed from a few simple sounds,” but that is not true. Professor Max Muller contended that no plausible explanation has been given as to how the “roots” of language came into existence. Theosophy asserts that “a *human* brain is necessary for *human* speech.” When we compare the brain of an ape with that of man we find that a great gulf separates the two. It has been observed that the brain of the largest ape, the gorilla, measures only about 30.51 cubic inches; the average brain even of the Australian natives—one of the least developed races, measures about 99.35 cubic inches. Thus, the brain-size of the ape is not even half the size of the brain of the new-born child. (*S.D.*, II, 661)

To understand the development of language we must take into consideration the development of speech in various races of man. The First Race was speechless. The Second Root Race communicated by chant-like sounds composed of vowels only. During the second half of the Third Root Race, after the sexes had separated and mind was awakened, speech developed. This speech was, at first, monosyllabic, *i.e.*, consisted of vowels mixed with consonants. The Fourth Root Race developed what is known as agglutinative language, *i.e.*, consisting of loosely connected words. In the Fifth Root Race our modern languages were developed.

In the recent past there has been resurgence in psychedelic research, with scientists from John Hopkins and New York University talking about how hallucinogenic psilocybin could work “like a surgical intervention for mental illness.” Though it has been

observed that psychedelic substances seem to have profound and lasting impact in cases of depression and anxiety, it is hard to answer *why* they produce such impact. “Among their most consistent effects is the hard-to-understand ability to reliably provide what researchers term ‘mystical,’ ‘spiritual’ or ‘deeply profound’ experiences (along with certain changes in brain activity that resemble those seen in people who meditate). But understanding what these experiences are and why they have such a significant effect is not easy,” writes Kevin Loria. As a result these institutions are working to find out why these drugs work by taking the help of experts in “mystical” and “spiritual” experiences. Scientists are trying to understand mystical experiences by giving religious leaders hallucinogenic drugs. Shelby Hartman reported in Quartz that so far they have enrolled thirteen religious leaders which include an Orthodox Jewish rabbi, a Zen Buddhist roshi, a Greek Orthodox priest, and are looking for Catholic priests, Imams and Hindu priests to join the study. It is hoped that these volunteers would be able to describe well these psychedelic induced experiences and help figure out why they are so beneficial.

Roland Griffiths a professor of psychiatry and behavioural sciences at JHU (John Hopkins University) School of Medicine explained that after taking psilocybin, people say that they feel more “interconnected” with the world. He feels that after going through psychedelic induced experiences people are “more accepting and more willing about engaging [with] life as it is.” (*Sunday Times of India*, January 15, 2017)

By taking drugs and narcotics, it is often possible to get knowledge not known in normal state, but under their influence one’s consciousness is put into artificial state. Alcohol and drugs hinder the development of spiritual insight. The use of wine and spirits is a hindrance to the moral and spiritual growth of a person. H.P.B. writes: “Alcohol in all its forms has a direct, marked, and very deleterious influence on man’s psychic condition. Wine and spirit drinking is only less destructive to the development of inner

powers, than the habitual use of hashish, opium and similar drugs.”
(*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 259-60)

Moreover, could psychoactive substances provide insight into mystical and spiritual experiences? Drug-induced states could, at best, provide information about lower, psychic states of consciousness, but tell us nothing about higher spiritual states. H.P.B. writes: “Occultism teaches that physical man is one, but the thinking man is septenary, thinking, acting, feeling and living on seven different states of being or planes of consciousness, and that for all these states and planes the permanent Ego has distinct set of senses.” (*Transactions*, p. 73)

Even if these drugs succeed in inducing good moral qualities such as, acceptability and feeling of interconnectedness, they do not make for real spiritual growth. All growth, for it to be permanent, must be from within, and must be the result of one’s own effort. It is argued that even if these drugs could increase feelings such as kindness or altruism they might make us only “artificially moral,” and our ability to choose might gradually atrophy. There would be an addition to the good Karma of the subject, when he makes personal effort to reform, of his own free will—which would involve great mental and physical struggle. When one chooses the discipline of one’s own free will, it becomes part of one’s moral fabric. It survives death, and the Ego is born with that tendency strengthened. Some of these drugs spur creativity. But could we compare creativity achieved under the influence of drugs with that resulting from genuine inspiration from within? The higher impulse or inspiration which enables an artist to create a masterpiece, or a scientist to make a discovery, comes when our every-day mind temporarily disconnects itself from *kama*. A poet, a scientist or an artist gets flashes of intuition, when his mind becomes receptive and porous to the influences from his higher nature. There is a temporary conjunction of *manas* with *buddhi*.