

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE POWER OF HABIT

A HABIT is generally defined as a settled or regular tendency, or a practice that is hard to give up. In the *American Journal of Psychology* it is defined thus: “A habit, from the standpoint of psychology, is a more or less fixed way of thinking, willing or feeling acquired through previous repetition of a mental experience.” Old habits are hard to break and new habits are hard to form because the behavioural patterns we repeat are imprinted in our neural pathways.

Each one of us possesses a mixture of good and bad habits. A bad habit is formed when we repeat certain actions, and allow them to go unchecked. A good habit is acquired when we knowingly persist in the performance of certain good actions. Compulsive shopping, eating of junk food, smoking, abuse of drugs and alcohol, are some of the bad habits.

Our body is made up of atoms, and atoms are made up of “lives” or elementals. Every atom has a life and memory of its own. Memory in the “lives” when *innate* is called instinct. Instinct functions through readymade nerve connections, which ensure that such-and-such a response will occur in a certain situation. In a habit these nerve connections are made through exercise, when “lives” in the body are repeatedly given certain kind of impressions, day after day. Similarly, we can train the “lives” of the body to perform certain tasks—for instance, typing, playing musical instruments, etc. The “lives” in the fingertips retain the memory, are habituated, so

that after several attempts we are able to perform the task effortlessly.

Habit indeed makes or moulds our character. Many people are so reconciled to their character that they would in fact say that we cannot help, we are made like this. “This is how I am, and I cannot change.” That is because giving reverse impression to various sheaths of the soul is a difficult task. We are therefore advised to “nip in the bud” a wrong tendency. It is very difficult to undo what we have been doing for several years or several lives.

Though it is possible for a person to go through the required discipline and achieve perfection in seven years or in seven minutes, the strain involved would be enormous. One aspiring to be a weight lifter will end up having pulled muscles if he tries to lift a very heavy weight, all at once. For a number of days, he practises lifting only light weights, and only gradually attempts to lift heavier weights. So too, with living the spiritual life, which involves the purification of the lower nature. This process begins at the level of the mind. We are warned that it is a gradual process, stretching over a series of lifetimes. As the smith removes impurities in the silver, little by little, vices and weaknesses must be overcome gradually. Hence, the caution that violent control is not as good as gentle control which must be continuous and firmly unrelaxed.

When a hypnotizer helps the subject to overcome his habit of stealing or drinking, by suggestion, it prevents the subject from making further bad Karma, but there is no merit in it for the subject. There would have been an addition to the good Karma of the subject, had he made personal effort to reform, of his own free will—which would involve great mental and physical struggle, writes H.P.B. When one chooses the discipline of one’s own free will, it becomes part of one’s moral fabric. It survives death, and the Ego is born with that tendency strengthened, otherwise, the same habit returns sooner or later, in the same or in some other life.

What we call fleshly appetites or desires of the body have their origin in thought. Our flesh is a thing of habit. When body or flesh is repeatedly impressed with certain impulses through thoughts, good

or bad, it mechanically or automatically repeats those impulses, and brings back the temptations. Hence, it is not easy for a person who is deeply steeped in evil to undergo sudden transformation and become equally powerful for good. The wood of the barrel that was used for storing herrings, would be thoroughly soaked with herring drippings, so that it cannot be cleaned easily and used for storing rose perfume. Similarly, it is very difficult to reverse the *kamic* impulses given to the molecules of the body. If one tries to give the opposite impression suddenly and violently, then disease, madness or death might result. Hence, the advice is to control our thoughts. “Attachment to things or results, comes by thinking about them. You can have no attachment for a thing you do not think about; neither can you have a dislike for a thing you do not think about” writes Mr. Crosbie.

We are creating our destiny from moment to moment. How do we build fate or destiny? “Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” The manner in which a man turns into a chain smoker illustrates this process. An occasional smoker with confidence in his will power may finally become a habitual smoker. When we form these habits deliberately and consciously, it becomes *avoidable* fate, because by avoiding certain thoughts, feelings and actions we can avert the fate. Just as a spider weaves the web, thread by thread, so every man from birth to death weaves his destiny. When the last strand is woven, we are *seemingly* enwrapped in the network of our own doing, and are under the empire of *self-made* destiny. But, each one is born with the Divine Destiny of Self-Realization.

Deep aspiration is an intense desire or that on which the heart is set. It is the *line of life’s meditation*—a single thread of intention or desire running all through the life. If we follow spiritual discipline, making it our *line of life’s meditation*, setting our whole heart on it, then we are assured that we will be able to carry it to the next life. A Master of Wisdom beautifully describes the process of self-purification with the promise that a sincere aspiration never fades

away with death. Thus:

The process of self-purification is not the work of a moment, nor of a few months but of years—nay extending over a series of lives....*If his aspiration is genuine—a settled conviction and not a sentimental flash of the moment—he transfers from one body to another the determination which finally leads him to the attainment of his desire.* [Italics ours]

In the spiritual discipline we start with our ordinary self with its various desires and interests and are required to give up even some of our legitimate desires. What happens when a person decides to remain a celibate without making much effort to overcome the *desire* for the opposite sex? He is bound to experience an inner conflict. The personal self must be firmly but gradually controlled. “Living the higher life” means waging a war not only against our *vices*, but also against our habits, beliefs, pet theories and our likes and dislikes.

When we attempt to inculcate a good habit, there is an opposition on the inner planes from our own tendencies. A small resolve to take a walk for 15-20 minutes every day in the morning will give rise to many conflicting forces. Our habit of late rising, reading the newspaper in the morning, having our tea leisurely, etc., will clash with this resolve. Why are we habituated like this?

All our thoughts and feelings are impressed upon “lives” or elementals that form atoms and cells of our body. All our habits leave a deep impression upon these elementals because we have been doing it for many years and many lives. Breaking a habit amounts to washing the concerned elementals clean of their first impressions and giving them reverse kind of impressions. The whole struggle could be physically and psychologically draining.

Even at the mental level, it is suggested that the study of metaphysical and abstruse books, such as *Secret Doctrine*, must be gradual because every new mental effort calls forth adjustment and destruction in the brain substance, and if indulged in injudiciously it may do serious physical harm to the brain.

A good moral habit is not readily formed, but once commenced

it is not very difficult to maintain, especially, if one deeply aspires. The article, “Occult Study” mentions that a good moral habit can be deliberately engendered by a student-aspirant, earnestly desiring to walk the spiritual path, or it may arise from unintelligent aspirations towards good. Thus:

The unintelligent aspiration towards goodness propagates itself and leads to good lives in the future; the intelligent aspiration towards goodness propagates itself in the same way *plus* the propagation of intelligence; and this distinction shows the difference which may exist between the growth of a human soul which merely drifts along the stream of time, and that of one which is consciously steered by an intelligent purpose throughout.

The human Ego which acquires the habit of seeking for knowledge, life after life, develops mental and moral qualities and capacity to become successful in the search, so that at last, such a person comes across perfected Beings. The article goes on to point out that those who are determined to become disciples must acquire ascetic habits. Here again, one can begin by developing simple habits of self-denial, which may gradually lead to a preference for spiritual over material gratification, till one becomes capable of more rigorous asceticism. (*Five Years of Theosophy*)

In living the spiritual life, we are called upon to give up some habits that may come in the way of progress. These need not necessarily be vices, and may even be acceptable by worldly standards. H.P.B. observes that “the habit of speaking uncharitably of our neighbour and brother at every opportunity—eaten into the heart of all the classes of Society, from the lowest to the very highest,” is very difficult to overcome, even by student-aspirants.

Sheela is a transcendental virtue and may be described as “a good moral character that is permanent disposition.” Moral qualities like truthfulness, equanimity, honesty, etc., appeal to us all. But, *Sheela* implies leading a pure and virtuous life from moment to moment, and not once in a while. It does not take a spectacular

mistake or slip on our part to let in bad influences. Living a pure life, continuously, creates a shield. Then, evil thoughts, words and deeds of others do not affect us; they would be like dust thrown against high wind.

Professor C. S. Lewis observes that there is a difference between doing some *particular* just and temperate action, and *being* a just and temperate man. Someone who is not a good tennis player can play a good shot, now and then. But what we mean by a good player is the man whose eyes, nerves and muscles have been so trained, by making innumerable good shots that they can now be relied upon. They have a certain tone or quality, even while they are not playing—just as a mathematician’s mind acquires a certain habit or outlook, even when he is not doing mathematics. So also, one who perseveres in doing good action gets in the end a certain quality of character. It is this quality of character that is the real virtue of *Sheela*. Buddha describes such a man as one for whom “occasions to act with like or dislike arise not.”

It is because we are required to practise the virtues from moment to moment that the task becomes difficult. Often this leads to despair. The opposite of despair is hope, which tells us that we must not doubt our ultimate capacity.

Virya or spiritual energy is required not only to start something new, but is needed also for maintaining what has already been begun. In spiritual discipline we need to make efforts over and over again. *Virya* is the drive for living the spiritual life. The fact is that there is no shortage of energy, but it is dissipated in innumerable directions. *Virya* is Divine will. We do not have to manufacture this energy. Mortal man can gain courage only from his Immortal Spirit so that for the Divine Will to manifest one needs to surrender the personal will or personal self. Only he can hope to possess Spiritual Courage who is willing to be guided and assisted by the Higher Self.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT KIKI STUNG BY A SCORPION

ANIMALS have much more perfect senses than those of men. I challenge you to track a man as a dog does, for instance!

This means that in the curve or rather the spiral of evolution, animals (and more so those we call “higher” animals, because they resemble us more closely) are governed by the spirit of the species which is a highly conscious consciousness. Bees, ants, obey this spirit of the species which is of quite a special quality. And what is called “instinct” in animals is simply obedience to the spirit of the species which always knows what ought and ought not to be done. There are so many examples, you know. You put a cow in a meadow; it roams around, sniffs, and suddenly puts out its tongue and snatches a blade of grass. Then it wanders about again, sniffs and gets another tuft of grass, and so it goes on. Has anyone ever known a cow under these conditions eating poisonous grass? But shut this poor animal up in a cow-shed, gather and put some grass before it, and the poor creature which has lost its instinct because it now obeys man (excuse me), eats the poisonous grass along with the rest of it. We have already had three such cases here, [in which] three cows died of having eaten poisonous grass. And these unfortunate animals, like all animals, have a kind of respect (which I could call unjustifiable) for the superiority of man—if he puts poisonous grass before the cow and tells it to eat, it eats it! But left to itself, that is, without anything interfering between it and the spirit of the species, it would never do so. All animals which live close to man lose their instinct because they have a kind of admiration full of devotion for this being who can give them shelter and food without the least difficulty—and a little fear too, for they know that if they do not do what man wants, they will be beaten.

It is quite strange, they lose their ability. Dogs, for instance the sheep-dog, which lives far away from men with the flocks and has a very independent nature (it comes home from time to time and

knows its master well, but often does not see him), if it is bitten by a snake, it will remain in a corner, lick itself and do all that is necessary till it gets cured. The same dog, if it stayed with you and is bitten by a snake, dies quietly like man.

I had a very sweet little cat, absolutely civilised, a marvellous cat. It was born in the house, and it had the habit all cats have, that is to say, if something moved, it played with that. Just then there was in the house a huge scorpion. And the scorpion stung it. But it was an exceptional cat; it came to me, it was almost dying, but it showed me its paw where it was bitten—it was already swollen and in a terrible state. I took my little cat—it was really sweet—and put it on a table and called Sri Aurobindo. I told him, “Kiki has been stung by a scorpion, it must be cured.” The cat stretched its neck and looked at Sri Aurobindo, its eyes already glassy. Sri Aurobindo sat before it and looked at it also. Then we saw this little cat gradually beginning to recover, to come round, and an hour later it jumped to its feet and went away completely healed...In those days, I had the habit of holding a meditation in the room where Sri Aurobindo slept, and it was regularly the same people who came; everything was arranged. But there was an armchair in which this very cat always settled beforehand—it did not wait for anyone to get into the chair, it got in first itself! And regularly it went into a trance! It was not sleeping, it was not in the pose cats take when sleeping: it was in a trance, it used to start up, it certainly had visions. And it let out little sounds. It was in a profound trance. It remained thus for hours together. And when it came out from that state, it refused to eat. It was awakened and given food, but it refused: it went back to its chair and fell again into a trance! This was becoming very dangerous for a little cat...But this was not an ordinary cat.

To finish my story, if you leave an animal in its normal state, far from man, it obeys the spirit of the species, it has a very sure instinct and it will never commit any stupidities. But if you take it and keep it with you, it loses its instinct, and it is then you who must look after it, for it no longer knows what should or should not be done. I

was interested in cats to make an experiment, a sort of inverse metempsychosis, if one can call it that, that is, to see if this could be their last incarnation as animals, if they were ready to enter a human body in the next life. The experiment succeeded fully. I had three absolutely glaring instances; they left with a psychic being sufficiently conscious to enter a human body. But this is not what men ordinarily do; what they usually do is to spoil the consciousness or rather the instinct of animals.

(Taken from, *Stories Told by the Mother*, Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publication Department.)

* * * * *

“Instinct is simply a direct perception of what is right, within its own realm....Animals have right instinct in regard to what to eat, and in regard to what is dangerous to them, for their instinct is acquired experience,” writes Mr. Crosbie. Animals possess migratory instinct, as also, instinct for self-preservation. There is wisdom in this instinct. We find that a dog stops eating completely when it is unwell and that is one of the ways he recovers. Dogs sometimes eat certain type of grass and then vomit as a result, throwing out unwanted things from the system.

Man has always kept pets for various reasons. Dogs were domesticated and trained to be watchdogs and also used for hunting. Similarly, horses, cats and certain birds like parrots, have been domesticated all down the ages. Alarmingly, more and more people are keeping pets to get over depression and loneliness. Animals must be treated with love and compassion, but we need not make them our constant companions, and much worse, attempt to humanize them. It was once reported that a lady could not believe that it was not good for her parrot to lie on its back, and so she used to take it to bed with her and compel it with slaps to lie on its back. The most important thing for the animal is to have experience in the species to which it belongs. They are unable to have that experience when they are cut off from their natural surroundings. An animal has to learn self-defense, finding food for himself, etc. Hence, when some

people say that their dog is able to appreciate music, they fail to see that appreciation of music is not the next step in a dog's development. In fact, in close proximity with humans, they pick up lower tendencies. For instance, a pet dog that is showered with love and attention all the time is often found, out of jealousy, to harm the newborn baby, towards whom family's attention may have been shifted.

It would be comparatively better to keep a dog and use him as a watchdog. In olden days, in England, people kept and trained horses, but for a period of about 3 to 4 months, the horses would be allowed to graze into open lands—it was called “turning out to grass,” thus allowing them to remain in their natural environment. At the end of that period, they had to train the horses again.

Occultism teaches that there is a continuous exchange of atoms or “lives,” going on between man and the lower kingdoms. When we keep pets, there is an abnormal interchange of life particles. The animal is at a lower stage of evolution, while man is on a higher rung of evolution. The animal evolution is unnaturally forced and the task of developing instinct is interfered with. When we link ourselves so intimately with animal nature, we hold back our own human evolution, “animalizing” our own character. At a certain stage in discipleship, there is a strict rule that “no pet animals are permitted and it is forbidden even to touch certain trees and plants. A disciple has to live, so to say, in his own atmosphere in order to individualize it for occult purposes.”

There is no individual reincarnating Ego in an animal (as in man) which after the death of the animal will incarnate in another body. There is a stream of life-wave moving from one species to the next higher one. However, in the *Secret Doctrine*, H.P.B. mentions that the tendency towards segregation into individual Monads is gradual and in higher animals comes almost to the point (I, 178). The animals have seeds of all the human principles in latent condition. While animals may rise higher in their own kingdom they cannot possibly rise to human stage as we have reached the middle or turning point in the fourth round.

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA ON INCARNATION—III

IN THE same verse, *i.e.*, verse 6, after naming the four classes and natures, mention is made of the Maruts. They are also very familiar personages in the Rig Vedic hymns. We hear of the forty nine Maruts, and they are divided into seven groups, of seven each. This will immediately give the idea of what the Maruts are. Maruts are the incarnating *manasic* principles of our own natures; in our *manasic* being we are the Maruts.

These great names and titles are very helpful to all students who want to achieve complete success in treading the path of occultism and the path of chelaship. The *Gita* has been known as a book which is spiritual and esoteric. The next question that will arise is, why it was Arjuna alone of all those soldiers fighting the great battle who received from Krishna the Divine I. This is because the position of Arjuna is unique, like that of all chelas of the Masters. The teaching is clear. Initiation—the ultimate or the Supreme Truth, is reserved for one class of beings, but any human being can make himself a member of that “privileged” class. And that class is formed by all pupils and chelas treading the spiritual path, the path of the Masters. We know that Arjuna belongs to the Pandus, yet here Krishna actually calls him the best of the Kurus. This is an indication of what Arjuna has achieved. In the history of the *Mahabharata*, the two branches of the Kurus and the Pandus were both issued from the same root family, so in the ultimate analysis they do have one common ancestor, as we all have. The Kurus symbolise and stand for the material forces in nature, the *Mulaprakriti*, or the lowest nature, and the Pandus symbolize and represent the higher nature of the Universe, or the higher nature of Man, that is the mental principle of human beings. Arjuna is the best among the Kurus which signifies that he has transcended both the lower nature and the divine illusive mental nature, and thus he has achieved the goal, as all disciples must achieve, in his own physical body, while he was in actual human incarnation.

We see that to obtain the ultimate truth one must overcome both *Mulaprikriti* and *Daiviprikriti*, or the higher nature, and this reminds one of the corroboration of this teaching found in the Laws of Manu. They state that the man who reverences his mother obtains for himself this world. He who reverences his father, obtains the intermediate or the mental world, and he who reverences the guru, the teacher, alone attains the world of *Brahman* or the highest world. Those following *Mulaprakriti* attain the world of *Mulaprakriti*, i.e., the manifested objective universe. Those who worship the father, the mental principles of the Universe, obtain for themselves the world which we call *Nirvana*, the world of peace and bliss, and is but a temporary reward however long it may seem to us. Then those only who have worshipped the guru, who have followed the path of the Masters, attain the ultimate world of Truth, the world of *Brahman*. In verse 32 of this discourse, we find the idea of this special position of those who tread the path of chelaship again emphasized when Krishna says that of all the warriors armed for the battle, Arjuna alone will live, and that all the others will perish. Arjuna alone from both the armies, had come from among them and become separate, and he alone has reached the ultimate goal of self-conscious immortality. Again in verse 33, we have the goal of chelaship hinted at: “Wherefore, arise! seize fame! Defeat the foe and enjoy the full-grown kingdom!”

Reference is made to the inner kingdom, the final and supreme truth which we are to find within our innermost nature at the time of initiation. That initiation is conveyed by Krishna to Arjuna, the Divine I is given by Krishna, and so we must also examine all that Krishna stands for. Krishna is the Guru, and as stated in the laws of Manu, the Guru is to be revered by spiritual students above even the mother or father, for the Guru conveys to that disciple the spiritual power which enables him to make of himself a divine being, whereas the father and mother only give him the opportunity of acquiring a body and instruments through which the spiritual work may be achieved. That the Guru must be revered has been made clear throughout the *Gita*. Respect for spiritual instructors was one of the

qualifications of the spiritual life, but the ideal disciple, Arjuna himself, has fallen prey to the great danger that arises from the acquaintance and companionship of the pupil with the personal aspect of his teacher. Arjuna apologizes to Krishna thus:

Having been ignorant of thy majesty, I took thee for a friend, and have called thee “O Krishna, O son of Yadu, O Friend,” and blinded by my affection and presumption, I have at times treated thee without respect in sport, in recreation, in repose, in thy chair, and at thy meals, in private and in public; all this I beseech thee, O inconceivable Being, to forgive. (verses 41 and 42)

All who are acquainted with the history of the Theosophical Movement know that many disciples and pupils fell prey to that same error and danger when the personality of H.P.B. appeared in this world. As she was for some a personal friend, an intimate companion, she became for them only that personality, and they forgot, through their own affection, the higher aspect of the Spiritual Teacher. Here a very practical lesson is given to all of us not to mistake the personality of the Teacher for what he stands for, for the teacher in his higher aspects stands above the Guru himself, as is indicated here by Arjuna, who says: “Thou art to be honoured and revered above the guru himself.”

What can be higher and nobler than a spiritual instructor, or Guru, if not the collectivity of all Gurus? Here again we find the wonderful idea that the teacher and instructor when he conveys initiation to the pupil, he stands not for himself, but for the Eternal Wisdom Religion, and the Great Lodge of the Masters, who are the Preservers of that Wisdom. He is then more than the Guru. He is the final salvation, a channel through which flows the Mahatmic power of the Great Lodge. How this has to be attained is given to us in the verse which tells us that only the path of chelaship, and the dedication of our lives to the Great Masters will bring us to the ultimate goal.

In a more simple way verses 52 and 55 give us the actual application of the knowledge. The teaching has already been

presented to us that the worshippers of Krishna alone, *i.e.*, of the Lodge of the Masters, would come to the Lodge of Masters, and become in their turn perfected men. There is a connection between this discourse and the Fifth, to which it corresponds. In the Fifth Discourse, we were told that though trying to perceive the spiritual archetypes of all manifested types, we can offer our activities, our thoughts, feelings and all of our experiences in terms of the inner essence of things. All visible things stand for and represent inner spiritual truths and realities, and that all activities thus offered to the innermost essence of things, the archetypal counter-parts of the visible manifestation, are true sacraments. But we were still left on our own as we must be until we reached the position of initiated beings, and so we were still liable to confusion in trying to find what the archetypes were for all the visible types. Now we have the Divine I ourselves, contacting the receptacle and mansion of the Universe. We have for ourselves seen what all spiritual archetypes are and therefore we are no longer liable to blunders and mistakes for we know what the universe is in the ultimate analysis. But the lesson to be derived from this discourse is that we ourselves are dependent on Higher Beings for the Supreme Word of knowledge. Hence, the only way that we ourselves can reach that supreme initiation is by taking the course that they took, that is of renouncing the fruits of all actions and by deciding and resolving for ourselves that all the knowledge that we will be in time entitled to is going to be put to the service of Humanity. As a closing note we might consider the ancient pledge which was formulated by other aspirants to the Eternal Wisdom, by other students in honourable China, in ancient days, and which reads as follows:

Never will I seek nor receive private individual salvation.
 Never will I enter into final peace alone; but forever and
 everywhere will I live and strive for the redemption of every
 creature throughout the world.

(Concluded)

THE PLANET SATURN

I

THE PLANET Saturn, also known as *Shani* or *Sani*, is one of the nine planets. These nine planets are known as *Navagraha* in Hindu Astrology. In the Vedas, Aditi is called *Devamatri* or “the Mother of the Gods.” According to Vedic allegory, eight sons were born from the body of Aditi and they are the seven planets and the Sun. *The Secret Doctrine* explains: Allegorically, from the body of Aditi, *i.e.*, *Mulaprakriti* or primordial matter, eight sons are said to have been born, known as eight Adityas. Cosmically and astronomically, these are the seven planets, and the eighth son being our Sun (*S.D.*, I, 99). The occult doctrine rejects the hypothesis that the seven great planets have evolved from the Sun’s central mass. “The Sun and the planets are only co-uterine brothers, having had the same nebular origin, only in a different mode from that postulated by modern astronomy.” (*S.D.*, I, 589)

According to the ancient commentary and the allegory given in the *Secret Doctrine*, eight houses were built by Mother for her eight sons: “four large and four small ones.” Houses or dwellings stand for the physical planets, or physical orbs seen in the sky. These are dwellings of planetary angels or Regents. Saturn is the sixth planet from the Sun. Saturn is the second-largest planet in our solar system, Jupiter being the largest. It is a gas giant with an average radius about nine times that of Earth. Saturn is mostly made up of Hydrogen and Helium, which are two lightest elements, with smaller quantities of other gases, and that makes Saturn, the lightest planet in our solar system. It has even been said that if this planet could be dropped into a vast ocean, it would float! As a result, though the mass is 95 times that of the Earth, the surface gravity is only 1.16 times greater. Saturn being a lightweight planet spins so fast that it completes its rotation in approximately ten and a half hours. Due to rapid spinning, Saturn bulges at the equator or the middle, and is flat at the poles, *i.e.*, at the top and bottom. However its orbital period, *i.e.*, the time

taken to complete a revolution around the Sun is 29.46 years, spending nearly 2.46 years in each of the Zodiacal sign, which makes it a slow-moving planet. Hence, it was natural for the ancients to name it in honour of the God of Time—Kronos, the Lord of the Titans in Greek mythology.

Around planet Saturn is the system of rings, which can be seen with telescope. Saturn's rings were first seen in the 17th century, and were explained by Christian Huygens. But prior to that Saturn had been regarded as a triple planet. There are three main rings, two bright and one semi-transparent; others have been detected by the space probes which have flown past Saturn from Earth; Pioneer 11 in 1979, Voyager 1 in 1980 and Voyager 2 in 1981. These rings are made up of small ice particles.

Saturn has one really large satellite or moon, named Titan, and seven others which are medium-sized, together with a remote satellite, named Phoebe, which has retrograde motion. Eight very small satellites have been found on Voyager images. Saturn's largest satellite, Titan, is larger than planet mercury, though less massive, and is the second largest satellite in the solar system. Some of the icy satellites of Saturn are named, Rhea, Iapetus, Dione, Tethys, Hyperion, Mimas and Enceladus.

Planets or the physical orbs we see in the sky are regarded as the dwellings or the houses of the planetary spirits or planetary gods or angels. Allegorically, these Planetary angels are called "Heavenly Snails," because their own bodies are like breaths and therefore they are described as formless intelligences, which inhabit the dwellings or homes represented by physical orbs or planets, and just as the invisible creature within the Shell of a snail, moves and carries the shell with it, so also, these informing forces carry the planets (*S.D.*, I, 103). Thus, associated with each planet is a planetary god, or Regent, and in Hindu mythology the god associated with planet Saturn is called Shani or Sani. Planet Saturn is named after the Roman god of Agriculture, *Saturnus*.

The Regent of planet Saturn is represented in Hindu mythology

as a black man in black garments. In the Hindu Pantheon he is the son of Surya, the Sun, and of Sanjana (Spiritual Consciousness) who is the daughter of Visvakarman. In fact he is the son of Surya and *Chhaya*, who is the shadow left behind by Sanjana. In this allegory, Sanjana married to the Sun, was unable to endure the fervour or effulgent light of her lord, and so gave him her *chhaya*, i.e., image, shadow or *astral* body, and retired to the jungle to perform *tapas* or religious devotion. The Sun, goes the story, supposing the "*chhaya*" to be his wife begat children by her.

H.P.B. explains that this allegory, which occurs in *Vishnu Purana* (Book III, Ch. 2), refers to *Chhaya-birth*, the primeval mode of *sexless* procreation, in which the first race humanity *oozed out*, so to say, from the bodies of lunar *Pitris* or *Barhishad Pitris* (*S.D.*, II, 174). They are described as "the shadows of the shadows of the Lords," i.e., the progenitors created the first race humanity out of their own astral bodies. Thus, *Chhaya* represents the astral body projected by the lunar *pitris* and "Sun" represents the Monad, or *Atma-Buddhi* unit, from which comes the impulse to evolution. Every ancient scripture, says H.P.B., mentions that man evolved primarily as a *luminous incorporeal form*, over which the physical body was built, by lower forces of nature, just like the molten brass around the clay model (*S.D.*, II, 112). We are further told that the First Root Race humanity, the "Shadows" of the Progenitors, could not be injured, or destroyed by death. Being so ethereal, they could not be affected by any element—flood or fire (*S.D.*, II, 138). The first race humanity was a *pale copy* of its progenitors, i.e., even though ethereal, it was too material to be a hierarchy of gods, but also, it was too spiritual and pure to be MEN, as it was endowed with every *negative* perfection. In other words, the first race humanity was like gods, but that purity was automatic, not merited, not acquired through the struggle of having overcome weaknesses. (*S.D.*, II, 95)

The story in *Vishnu Purana* also mentions that Sanjana had retired to the forest to practise austerities after giving birth to three children, namely, Manu Vaivaswata, Yama and Yami. Likewise, through

Chhaya, the Sun begot three children, namely, Shani (Saturn), another Manu (Savarni) and a daughter Tapti, often identified with river Tapti. It is interesting to note that Surya's two sons Shani and Yama have been regarded as arbiters. Yama is popularly known as the "God of death," and grants results of one's deeds after death. Osiris, the Egyptian equivalent of the Hindu Yama presides over Amenti, which also includes a Hall of Judgement, and decides upon the after-death state of the soul of the deceased. *The Theosophical Glossary* points out that character of Yama as a punisher and a judge, is a later creation. Yama and his twin sister Yami are the symbols of dual mind—the higher and the lower. In this twin character of Yama-Yami, he is depicted as both judge (Higher Mind) and the criminal (Lower Mind), *i.e.*, the restrainer of his own evil doings and the evil-doer himself.

Shani, on the other hand, is described as the giver of *Karma-phala*. He is supposed to give the results of one's actions, through appropriate rewards and punishments. Once Monad or *Jivatma* reaches the human stage, further evolution is by the use of free-will, *i.e.*, by self-induced and self-devised ways and means, checked by Karma. Rewards for good works and punishment for bad actions become necessary for progress and evolution. Evil is normally associated with pain and punishment, while Good is associated with pleasures and reward. Thus, Shani, by bringing painful consequences of wrong actions constantly tries to bring back on the path, the erring person, who may have strayed away from the path of righteousness. Probably, that is the reason why Shani is also known as *Krura-lochana*, "the evil-eyed one."

There are many mythological stories about evil influence of Shani. For instance, when God Shani was born, Surya, his father, was surprised to see his dark complexion. He began to doubt integrity of his wife Chhaya. He insulted her by saying that this was not his son. The story goes that even as a baby, Shani could not bear to see tears in his mother's eyes, and is said to have brought eclipse on his father Surya, to ruin his pride. According to one of the many legends

associated with elephant-head of Ganesa, when Ganesa was born, all the gods came to congratulate Siva and Parvati, to see and bless the child. Shani (Saturn) had also come but he would not look at the child, as his wife had cursed him that whatever he gazed upon would be destroyed. But Parvati gave him permission to look at her son. It is said that a mere side-glance of Shani, led to severance of Ganesa's head from his body.

Interestingly, according to some astrologers, in whatever house planet Saturn is placed, for the affairs connected with that house, Saturn will act as a karmic guru, a stern teacher, and ensure that one learns the necessary lessons and rises up the karmic ladder. Saturn is said to be concerned with the person's work in life, and this not only means the job or work done for a living, but with the job of living itself. In other words, he is concerned with the work of driving a person to be a better human being, using the environment and the physical, mental and moral capacities with which he may be born. Mars and Saturn are considered in astrology to be malefic or evil. However, Saturn, the disciplinarian, is not a negative planet, but is slow in bringing success, which comes after much hard work and struggle.

The position of the Moon in the zodiac sign at the time of one's birth is called one's moon-sign. The planet Saturn remains in each sign for two and a half years. When Shani enters the sign that precedes moon-sign in one's horoscope, it begins its reign of seven and a half years, as it moves across three signs—the moon-sign and the signs preceding and succeeding the moon sign. This period of seven and a half years is called Shani's *sadesati*. In astrology this period is considered to be a troublesome period for the person who is under the *sadesati* influence, having to face many challenges in his life, including accidents, sudden failures, loss of money or reputation.

There is a well-known story of King Harishchandra, who was surrounded by troubles from all sides during *sadesati* period. After giving away all his possessions to rishi Vishvamitra, as *dakshina* (donation), ultimately he had to sell himself and his wife. The story

goes that god Shani, in the garb of a snake cobra, bit their son Rohit. In the last phase of the troublesome period of seven and a half years, when his wife brought their son Rohit's body for cremation, King Harishchandra, working in the cremation ground and being directed to collect fees for every dead body cremated there, demanded fees from his wife, who had nothing to give save her sari, the only cloth over her body. At that moment rishi Visvamitra and Shani appeared before him and stopped his wife from doing so, and returned his kingdom, and made his son come back to life. Thus, *sadesati* is the period of tests and trials which if met with right attitude leads to purification and growth.

It may well be compared with the period of seven years' trial in case of probationary chelas. Chelaship has been defined, by a *Mahatma* as a "psychic solvent, which eats away all dross and leaves only the pure gold behind." Saturn corresponds to metal lead. Mind in its lower aspect is *Kama-manas* and comparable to the base metal lead. Spiritual Alchemy implies transmutation of lead into gold. Alchemists say that Gold represents perfection and it is the highest form that any metal can reach. Gold can withstand action of fire and all known corrosive liquids, except *aqua regia*. Alchemists say that all metals have the *potentiality* of becoming gold. Thus, gold may be taken to be a symbol of spiritual perfection. All human beings have the potentiality of becoming spiritually perfect.

In Cheiro's *Book of Numbers*, it is mentioned that from the ancient times numbers 1 to 9 were given to the nine planets in our system, and number 8 is associated with planet Saturn. We are told that number 8 of Saturn denotes anarchy, revolution, waywardness, and on a lower plane it implies tragic ending to life. H.P.B. writes, "The figure 8... indicates the perpetual and regular motion of the Universe,' says Ragon. But if perfect as a cosmic number it is likewise the symbol of the lower *Self*, the animal nature of man." (*Lucifer*, January 1890)

(To be concluded)

OF SPIRITS AND INVISIBLE WORLDS

IT WAS a universal belief among people of ancient civilizations from remotest antiquity that there are worlds other than the world of our physical existence, on other planes of consciousness, inhabited by beings of various orders invisible to us. This belief persists to this day in the traditions of older peoples and in the religious scriptures of every nation. They are variously called heavens, nether worlds, spheres, dominions, etc. and the inhabitants of which are variously termed as gods, demons, angels and spirits of various classes. Hindus, Buddhists and Jains speak of seven worlds—*Lokas*—of which our world of physical existence is the lowest, grossest, and most transitory, inhabited by men and animals; and of the six higher planes of existence of increasing degree of spirituality and unity of Being. In their cosmogony, each of these seven *Lokas* has seven subdivisions, and each of the latter similarly sub-divided. They believe that the invisible worlds are inhabited by various orders of beings, from the highest divine to the lowest orders of numerous minor gods. In the Hindu Pantheon there are thirty three crores of minor gods. St. Paul says that there are "*gods many and Lords many*" (1 *Corin.*, 8:5) and that there are "*Principalities and powers in heavenly places*" (*Ephesians*, iii, 10). Basilides, the founder of one of the most philosophical Gnostic sects in Alexandria in the second century CE, spoke of a hierarchy of angelic powers, which correspond, more or less, with the notions of other philosophers:

There is a Supreme God, by name Abraxas, by whom Mind was created, whom the Greeks call *Nous*. From her emanated the Word; from the Word, Providence; from Providence, Virtue and Wisdom; from these two again, Virtues, *Principalities and powers* were made; thence infinite productions and emissions of angels. Among the lowest angels, indeed, and those that made this world, he sets *last of all* the god of the Jews, whom he denies to be God himself, affirming that he is but one of the angels. (*Isis*, II, 189)

The Hindu pantheon mentions thirty three classes of gods, and gods who preside over the eight points of the compass—the four cardinal and the four intermediate points. They are called the *Lok Palas*, the supporters and guardians of the worlds, and are said to rule the destinies of our world and men, according to the Karmic and Cosmic laws of which they are the agents, and to which they themselves are subject.

Thus in the ancient cosmogony the universe is considered to be the embodied consciousness, which is symbolized by a Tree, called the *Tree of Life*. It was connected with gods and mystical forces of nature. In India it is the *Ashwattha*, which is said to be the abode of the *Pitris*. With the Scandinavians it was the *Ash* tree—*Yggdrasil*—*Cyprus* tree with the Mexicans, *Fir* with the Egyptians, etc. In the symbolism of these nations man is represented as the Microcosmic tree which grew and developed under the great mundane Macrocosmic tree, and that the prototype of the human race evolved under the former (*S.D.*, II, 97). To be more specific, they regarded the earth with its broad three-fold classification of spirit, soul and outer visible form as the Microcosmic tree which grows under the Macrocosmic tree, the Solar Universe, with the same three-fold division; and man, in his same three-fold aspect of spirit, soul and body, as the outcome, and a perfect copy of the two (*S.D.*, II, 283 fn.). Thus, the ancients considered man and every creature as evolved from the very essence of the hierarchies of conscious, intelligent, impersonal forces of the macro- and the micro-cosmos, and as being indissolubly connected with them—all constituting one vast indivisible whole.

The ancients regarded the four great elements—fire, air, water, earth—as the gross manifestations of the operations of invisible conscious, semi-intelligent secondary causes, called minor gods (Elementals); and that these, in their turn were ruled by still more remote, higher spiritual intelligences—Gods of the Elements—as the primary causes. Modern science investigates only the gross physical elements and forces which are but shadowy or illusionary

effects of psychic and spiritual forces of the higher worlds—the world of reality—of which it is ignorant.

Modern science does not believe in the soul of things and rejects the ancient notions of cosmology. Yet the greatest among the pioneers of modern science believed in the intelligent forces of nature to be the cause of the visible phenomena. They never admitted that orderly, progressive processes of nature could take place without the agency of guiding intelligences, by whatever name they may be called. Sir Isaac Newton, for instance, never admitted that inanimate gross planetary bodies could act upon one another and move in space in harmonious revolutions by their own inherent impulsion. Speaking of his theory of planetary motion according to the law of gravity, he said:

It is inconceivable that inanimate brute matter should, without the mediation of something else *which is not material*, operate upon and affect other matter, without mutual contact, as it must do if gravitation, in the sense of Epicurus, be essential and inherent in it... Gravity must be caused by an agent acting constantly according to certain laws. (*S.D.*, I, 490-1)

This “agent” Newton called “God.” Kepler held that the constant motion and restoration of the sun’s energy and planetary motion are attributable to a spirit or spirits (*S.D.*, I, 499). Tycho Brahe believed stars and planets to consist of triple force—divine, spiritual and vital (*S.D.*, I, 493). Alfred Wallace, who formulated the theory of evolution independently of Darwin, always held, unlike the latter, that the theory of Natural Selection alone cannot account for the evolution of species and emergence of physical man without the guiding action of higher intelligences, which, he said, are part of the great laws which govern the material universe. Dr. Pirogoff, the great Russian scientist believed in an organizing life-principle ruling and directing cosmic substance in obedience to the plan in the Universal Mind (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 20*, p. 8). That the material universe is embodied consciousness is now accepted as a proven

truth by modern research in the Quantum Field Theory by such eminent scientists as Henry Pierre Strapp of the University of California, Berkeley. Inter-disciplinary research by scientists from physics, neuro-science and quantum physics are now compelled, by the remarkable phenomenon of the effect of the observer on natural phenomena and on quantum wave, to postulate the reality of the independent Individual Mind-Spirit continuum endowed with Free-Will. Thus we see the prophecy of H.P.B. that the progress of physiology itself is a sure warrant that the dawn of that day when science will come to recognize the universally diffused mind to be an accomplished fact, is fulfilled. (*ibid*, p. 9)

In order to better understand the rationale of the ancient pantheistic notion of animated nature, and the relation of man to gods we may briefly consider a few axioms of Theosophy. It teaches that just as no external activity in man can take place unless impulse arises from his inner self as thought, will or feeling, which are hidden from view, so it is in the universe.

The whole Kosmos is guided, controlled, and animated by almost endless series of Hierarchies of sentient Beings, each having a mission to perform, and who—whether we give to them one name or another, and call them Dhyan Chohans or Angels—are “messengers” in the sense only that they are the agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws. (*S.D.*, I, 274)

As to the nature of the gods and their relation to man, it is said that our sentient universe is one of the endless series of cycles of evolutions proceeding ceaselessly from Absolute Causeless Cause, like the ebb and flow of tide in the ocean, and that the object of this evolution is production of Man, the Eternal Thinker, and his perfection. “Each of these Beings [gods] either *was*, or prepares to become, a man, if not in the present, then in a past or a coming cycle (Manvantara).” (*S.D.*, I, 275)

Therefore, the hierarchies of celestial beings may be broadly divided into two classes : sub-human Elemental forces, who will

come into human stage in a future cycle, and who may be called *incipient men*; while the other class of gods are those who have passed through human stage in prior evolutionary periods, and have evolved into *perfected men*; who, as spiritual beings, have become conscious, intelligent co-workers with Nature in the governance and evolution of worlds according to immutable Cosmic Laws. Both these classes of gods being devoid of gross bodies and human feelings, they are impersonal intra-cosmic intelligent forces. Nor do they have individualities but have their identity in the hierarchy they belong to. They are immortal so long as the life of the manifested universe lasts, but at the end of the cycle of life of the universe, forms of their cosmic organization, however sublimated, must perish. But their inner divine principles, like those of man, being one with the Supreme Spirit of the universe, are imperishable.

Theosophy teaches that gods are not to be worshipped nor appealed to for protection. Because, firstly, they are as much as man himself is, the slaves and creatures of Cosmic and Karmic Laws; and secondly, they have no element of personality or personal qualities like men on earth, as believed in by the followers of popular religions. But man himself being a potential God, having the principles of his inner self and nature constituted of the very essence of the celestial hierarchies, can become not only as one of them but spiritually rise even superior to several classes or hierarchies of gods even while living in his earthly body. The true Self of man, as well as the highest essence of the Gods, being the Supreme Spirit itself which is One and indivisible, the object of man’s whole existence and his destiny is to realize it, and merge his self with the Supreme, like a drop in the ocean. If, instead, man seeks knowledge and powers by entering into relationship with one or another of the many Gods he will then be falling from the true purpose of his existence, and his reward will be temporary, because Gods themselves are temporary, having to be indrawn into the Central Spiritual Sun at the end of the life cycle of the universe. This is why Sri Krishna, in the seventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, warns against worship

of gods, and, instead recommends, devotion to, and seeking union with, Him, the Supreme Spirit, the Self of All. “Those who worship the Gods go to the Gods, those who worship me come unto me.”

“Man can neither propitiate not command the *Devas*,” it is said. But, by paralyzing his lower personality, and arriving thereby at the full knowledge of the *non-separateness* of his higher SELF from the One Absolute SELF, man can, even, during his terrestrial life, become as “One of Us.” Thus it is, by eating the fruit of knowledge which dispels ignorance, that man becomes like one of the Elohim or the Dhyanis; and once on *their* plane the Spirit of Solidarity and perfect Harmony, which reigns in every Hierarchy, must extend over him and protect him in every particular. (*S.D.*, I, 276)

The true object of human life and the highest Ideal towards which man ought to be ever striving is unequivocally stated by the great Teachers of humanity to be the following :

Man ought to be ever striving to help the divine evolution of *Ideas*, by becoming to the best of his ability a *co-worker with nature* in the cyclic task. The ever unknowable and incognizable *Karana* alone, the *Causeless* Cause of all causes, should have its shrine and altar on the holy and ever untrodden ground of our heart—invisible, intangible, unmentioned, save through “the still small voice” of our spiritual consciousness. Those who worship before it, ought to do so in the silence and the sanctified solitude of their Souls; making their spirit the sole mediator between them and the *Universal Spirit*, their good actions the only priests, and their sinful intentions the only visible and objective sacrificial victims to the *Presence*. (*S.D.*, I, 280)

WE begin to see light by the very affirmation of the spiritual nature.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

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: Can you explain, in the light of Theosophy, the psychology of a man born blind, with reference to his attitude towards life? Can we say that he is nearer self-realization?

Answer: No worldly circumstance or bodily condition is an indication of the inner soul’s spiritual growth. There are substantial marks and signs which manifest naturally *pari passu* with spiritual development, but these are invisible to ordinary vision, and are even unknown to their bearer in earlier stages when he is a neophyte. Therefore we may safely assume that bodily defects like blindness, or their reverse like keen sight, are not in themselves signs and omens of a spiritual character.

Everything a man possesses or lacks, including present ill-health and deformity of any bodily organ, is the result of Karma. To regard such deformity as a manifestation of evil karma is as unphilosophical as to look upon it as good karma. The evil or the good of any karma does not inhere in the past, but in the person’s present attitude to that karma. Blindness is an effect from past causes and the present attitude of the blind man to his blindness makes it either beneficent or maleficent karma. For instance, Helen Keller used her blindness in a manner which made her karma a beneficent piece of destiny. Blindness is like money which in itself is neither good nor bad; by our use we make it either good or bad.

This principle of the Law of Karma is very important, especially in India where Karma is mistaken for unalterable fate or predestination, fixed and immovable. That is not the teaching either of Theosophy or of ancient Indian philosophy. It is taught that “As by elimination of oil in the lamp its light is extinguished, so is the

influence of destiny by the abatement of one's own present deeds." And the contrary also, "Even when fire of small proportion, when fanned by the wind, becomes of mighty power, so does destiny increase in force when joined to individual exertion." In these aphorisms we find instructions as to one's correct attitude towards all things in life. What is that attitude? Whatever the cause, in the present the effect properly handled would not only enable us to pay our debts and remove the offending cause but further, that effect in itself would become a channel for improvement and growth. Life is a school in which every event and experience yield a lesson, and the learning of the lesson is the most important factor.

From this we can deduce another principle of the Law of Karma. The only evil karma is that in which a man has no control over himself due to intoxication of some kind, so that he is disabled from learning the lesson of the karma, *e.g.*, a drunken man, or a lunatic of certain type. As long as an individual is able to understand that he can learn a lesson out of what he calls a piece of ill-luck, or evil fortune, or bad karma, he really is not out of luck, is not unfortunate and his karma has beneficent potentialities. Therefore it is said, "One's own present acts are like the soil, and destiny is the seed, the result of past deeds."

The attitude of the man with sight towards the blind is important. For there is an occult law of attraction through neglect, fear, hatred or selfishness. Many a person attracts to himself blindness, deafness, and other ills by neglect of consideration for those now in that condition. To make fun of the half-witted, to quietly pass by the blind without lending a helping hand, to take advantage of the weak, of any type or kind, is to sow within ourselves the seeds of that type or kind which will germinate in the future. The law of attraction functions *via* hate as well as love, *via* fear and neglect as well as *via* emotional identification through pity. So, if the blind man has a duty to himself, others also have duty to him. Destiny is stubborn but exertion is greater and more powerful than destiny.

Question: The teaching is often cited, "Come ye out and be ye

separate"; on the other hand, it is said, "Separateness is the origin of all sin." How to reconcile the two?

Answer: The first quotation is from the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Ch. vi, 17): "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." The second is based on the teachings in *The Voice of the Silence*, which speaks of the "Great Heresy" or the belief in the separateness of Soul or *Self* from the one Universal Infinite SELF.

In the earlier verses St. Paul distinguishes between idol-worshippers (*i.e.*, those who look for God outside of themselves) and God-worshippers (those who seek the Self within). Now idols are not only of mud, metal or stained glass. Customs, habits, as well as religious dogmas and a hundred other varieties of idols exist, and contact with them pollutes the soul.

Ordinary man lives according to routine established for him; unconsciously to himself he is a slave to family, communal, religious, national and racial taboos. Without seeking any rational basis for his actions he is guided by what is done and what is not done in his own set or circle. The aspirant who earnestly resolves to emancipate himself from the slavery of the lower self becomes an extraordinary man if he daily attempts to purify himself, to give up non-rational living, and be guided in all circumstances by philosophical principles only. His enemies are twofold: his own innate weaknesses, and his affinities, who in shape of relatives and friends persuade and coerce him to "be normal and natural," *i.e.*, to be as they are. The second enemy strengthens the first, and hence the advice of St. Paul.

What are the specific "unclean things" belonging to the order of the second enemy of the aspirant to higher life? They are not souls of people but tendencies inherent in the affinities, with which the aspirant's own weaknesses are intimately related. Hence, he is not called upon to separate himself in thought from the Souls whose weaknesses belong to them as his own belongs to himself. The aspirant must learn to distinguish between his friends and kin and their evil tendencies. Each person has within him the Higher Self;

and all divinities are but aspects of the One Divine Self. But these men and women are befogged and their divinity does not shine forth. They have to be helped and served and not to be condemned. When we rise above our limitations, we make it easier for others, with whom we share Karmic affinity, also to rise.

What are those tendencies which we must overcome in ourselves and which demand that we “come out from among them” who are surcharged with them?

Religious tendencies which we must shake off include (a) looking outside ourselves for salvation; (b) belief in the efficacy of any priest or ceremony to purify or elevate us; (c) evading the consequences of our acts and (d) the false belief that we are inherently weak and sinful creatures instead of Gods in the making.

Social tendencies to be transcended by the aspirant include (a) habits of life which cannot meet the challenge, “Is it necessary?”; (b) indiscriminating acquiescence in what is expected of him by his family, his club, his college friends, his social set (Did not Jesus exclaim, when his mother wanted him to interfere in a matter that was no part of his duty, saying, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?”); (c) customs which mean nothing and are without a purpose.

Prominent among the wrong *national tendencies* to be overcome is unreasoning patriotism, so called, which champions the interests of one’s own country, irrespective of the abstract demands of right and justice.

The Great Masters love the race of men, but in helping it to overcome its weaknesses They do not lower Their own standard of life or method of service. Humanity has to rise to Their level; They do not descend to its. The aspirant cannot afford to trifle with his own discipline to suit the idiosyncrasies of others or to placate friends and kin. A Master once wrote: “*If they [people] do not want the whole truth and nothing but the truth they are welcome. But never will they find us—at any rate—compromising with and pandering to public prejudices.*”

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

One of the stories closely associated with the festive season of Christmas is Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*. Marguerite Theophil analyses the book once again to find that in childhood it was a story all about the surprising change, in the miserly, nasty, old Ebenezer Scrooge, who was unable to find joy in anything, and hated Christmas time and all that goes with it socially. But at the end of the story he is found to be a kind, generous and a loving man. But now as an adult she tries to analyse the three “ghosts” who visit Scrooge and effect this amazing change. The Ghost of Christmas Past shows him his friendless childhood. The Ghost of Christmas Present shows him the current hardships and also simple joys of others. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come allows him to see his grim and lonely end, and the possible consequences of his past and present, thus giving him the opportunity to make choices and change. He learns that though he has successfully buried the memory of his past bad choices, he is forced to face the consequences of the same in the present, and likewise his present choices will influence his future. The book warns us: “No space of regret can make amends for one’s life’s opportunity misused.”

Theophil points out that interestingly, Dickens developed the idea of a ghost-teacher in another book with a Christmas theme, namely, *The Haunted Man and the Ghost Bargain*. She observes that Scrooge’s disconnection with his past memories makes him unable to feel for others, or to plan for the future. Unlike Scrooge, Professor Redlaw, in the second book, is obsessed with his past and its unhappy memories, and hates Christmas time. The Ghost that appears to Redlaw realises that this man cannot be at peace unless he forgets his past, and therefore suggests erasing his memory. Redlaw agrees. With the past memories erased he seems now at peace, but his anger is intact, and in fact worsened, and he knows not its source. As a result, those around him become affected by his anger, and become more rough, angry and harsh themselves. Here again, because

Redlaw is cut off from his past memories he is devoid of empathy, and unable to forgive and forget. In this context there is a last line in the book: “Lord, keep my memory green.”

Theophil points out that some of us are too enmeshed in anger and pain to let true spirit of Christmas touch our hearts. Christmas can be an occasion “to go back in memory and forward in hope, to reflect and review our lives, forgive, make amends, share, help those around us and find real peace,” writes Theophil. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India, December 25, 2016*)

Christmas is the festival which reminds us to turn to the Christ within us. It is a festival which precedes New Year, and what applies to Christmas also applies to New Year. The first of January was sacred to god Janus, the presiding deity over the month of January. He is a double-faced god with one face old and another face young. The old face represents the past and the young represents the future. Each human being is a striving and progressing Janus-like being. The good and the bad in each one of us are wrestling for victory. Man, too, is double-faced. The two faces represent our two natures—higher and lower. The old face which looks from the region of past memories and the new which peeps from the region of hope still has hold over us. We begin the New Year with hope, looking forward to pleasure and happiness. These hopes are frustrated. Hopes, fears, memories and anticipations keep the human consciousness in a non-integrated state. The suggestion is to forget the emotional experiences attached to the past events that tend to take control of our mind and colour the present and the future. Once we have extracted the lesson from an event, we must let it pass without brooding over it. Our capacity to do good in the present is adversely affected when we dwell over the past, which drags us down from our present level of consciousness.

The face that looks enquiringly and expectantly to the future represents hope. Hope is a theological virtue, which suggests that if we struggle, we can be better. From wherever we are, there is a way leading to a state of unconditioned happiness. As a first step,

we must *resolve* to be better. A resolve is a promise made to oneself.

When interpreted correctly, dreams can give us major insights into our life and situations. Most dreams are forgotten but some dreams leave a vivid impact on our minds, lingering even after waking up. There are recurring dreams and nightmares, which compel people to look for their meaning and message. While most ancient cultures had their own theories of nature, function and meaning of dreams, modern experimental psychology ignored everything beyond the waking consciousness, including dreams. However, with the emergence of psychoanalysis it was beginning to be recognized that a large part of our mind is mostly unconscious, and that it contains all the wishes, desires, fears, hopes, traits and potentialities that we push out of awareness, either because they are too threatening to confront or because they are socially unacceptable. These influence our waking consciousness and often lead to conflicts. Dreams are a bridge between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis referred to dreams as “the royal road to the unconscious,” as dreams allow us to work with and understand the unconscious.

It is believed that during sleep the unconscious mind is predominant, and yet, the conscious mind is a witness and therefore dreams are often a mix of both these minds. The contents of the unconscious mind are often expressed symbolically. Likewise, in the process of condensation, several unconscious feelings, wishes, conflicts are fused together and represented as a single image. For instance, a person who had lost his mother dreamt that an old woman wearing his wife’s bridal dress was running away, which depicted that person’s fear of losing his wife as he did his mother. Then there are dreams in which the dreamer projects his feelings and impulses onto another person.

In psychoanalysis, a dream is broken down into various small parts, and the patient is asked to consider each part and say what

associations arise in his mind. After the process of free association to the dream is over, the therapist integrates all the inputs and looks to common underlying theme, in relation to the personality, symptoms and life history of the dreamer. “If we can develop the skill of interpreting dreams, they are a huge asset in understanding our own selves as well as others. They carry the potential of offering a new perspective and transforming us,” writes Pulkit Sharma, a Clinical Psychologist and Spiritual therapist. (*Life Positive*, October 2016)

Ordinary dreams or idle visions are the physiological dreams provoked by indigestion, or they may be caused by some idea or event strongly impressed upon the brain during waking hours. There are dreams that reflect thoughts and desires of waking state, and hence can be termed as idle dreams, having its basis in the psychological nature. Freud has dealt with such dreams at length wherein he speaks of repressed desires finding expression in dreams. We might say that real dreams are reflection of what is witnessed by our Ego on its own plane. H.P.B. writes, “The nature and functions of real dreams cannot be understood unless we admit the existence of an immortal Ego in mortal man, independent of the physical body.”

Dreams may be roughly divided into seven classes, which include “prophetic dreams” or “dreams of premonition,” Warning dreams, Allegorical dreams and Retrospective dreams, of events belonging to past incarnations. Even if one is able to bring back the memory of dreams, it is very difficult to interpret the dreams. It is said that a dream that is not understood is like a letter that is not opened. We are the only ones who can interpret our dreams. Just as in waking life, thoughts of different people are different, so also dream is peculiar to a person. Symbolic dreams are most difficult to interpret.

In his book, *Man and His Symbols*, Carl Jung remarks that it is plain foolishness to believe in ready-made systematic guides to dream interpretation, as if one could buy a reference book and look up a particular symbol. “No dream symbol can be separated from the individual who dreams it, and there is no definite and straightforward

interpretation of any dream. Each individual varies so much in the way that his unconscious complements or compensates his conscious mind that it is impossible to be sure how far dreams and their symbols can be classified at all.”

A symbol can be interpreted in various ways. If two people dream about snake, it might signify different things for each of them. One can never be sure what exactly the symbol represents when interpreting another’s dream. Each symbol has seven meanings. A certain amount of intuition is necessary for dream interpretation.

Has anything really changed? We all fear stagnation and lack of growth. What are the signs of change and growth in our everyday lives? We seem to be engaged in the same activities, day after day, and year after year. We wonder, has anything changed at all? Movement and change are the only ways to grow and prosper, and therefore, we panic at the monotony and sameness. Pictures capture milestones in our lives, and yet, even after having achieved many things, and after many triumphs, we wonder if we can create the more of the same or move on to create something better. If we look closely at our pictures, we find that over a period, there have been subtle changes, such as, the eyes may have become more knowing and soulful over the years, and may be the shoulders are more relaxed with a greater poise. It is the smaller, subtler changes that have the greatest impact over the years. A big change comes but once in a while and has an immediate impact. The smaller changes take place all the time without even our noticing.

“We all change in many more ways than the superficial that gets captured in photos. Do you feel mellowed and more understanding with regard to human foibles...? Are you slower to take umbrage and quicker to forgive? Are you easier on your own self? Normally, these are the changes that come with age and maturity,” writes Vinita Dawra Nangia. Over a period we all find that we have grown and

moved on when we notice, for instance, that we no longer crave for things we hankered after a few years ago. We may appear to be engaged in the same battles, activities, the same conquests and adventures, but we notice subtle changes within, which help us to deal with situations better. These changes make us better and stronger—more loving, more accepting and more knowing, and that is the meaning and purpose of life, writes Vinita Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, December 18, 2016)

Change is the only constant thing in our lives. Our body changes slowly and imperceptibly. The body undergoes complete alteration and renovation every seven years. In fact, from childhood to maturity and until death, we find that we have changed mentally, morally and emotionally, for better or for worse. We can accelerate the change by firm determination, by making a resolve, by taking charge of our lives. To overcome a single defect in our character or to develop a single virtue takes enormous effort and time. The Buddha said: “Far hath he gone whose foot treads down one fond offence.” We change for the better in proportion to our ability to learn from our experiences.

It is very important that we learn to be patient with ourselves and with others. We do not meet the same old people. People change with time. We should learn to take a fresh look at people, every time we meet them. George Bernard Shaw very aptly remarks, “The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them.” An aspirant, who resists change from the fear of suffering it entails, invites stagnation. H.P.B. writes: “Woe to those who live without suffering. Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change. And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage.” (*S.D.*, II, 475)