

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE VIRTUE OF MODESTY

THE WORD “modesty” comes from the Latin word *modestus* which means “keeping within measure.” The standards of modesty as regards dress and conduct vary widely, from culture to culture. In some societies it may be considered immodest or inappropriate to reveal certain parts of the body, while in some other, modesty may involve women covering their bodies completely and not talking to men who are not immediate family members. Conservative women often look down upon and very unfairly judge less conservative women to be immodest or improper. Old-fashioned people should be very careful and not assume that young or “emancipated” people are immodest by their old standard, and likewise, young people should not call their elders pruders or puritanical because they would not easily adopt new standard, writes Professor C. S. Lewis. However, in recent times, with popularity of short dresses, swimsuits and the clothing which tends to expose more of the body, has given rise to issues of modesty and decency.

But there is a far deeper sense in which the term is used and means humbleness, humility, lowliness and meekness. The term is variously defined: It means not having exaggerated view of one’s abilities or worth, and which means freedom from pretensions and boastfulness. It means showing regard for decency of speech, behaviour, dress, etc. Lastly, it implies moderation. According to the analysis of various shades of modesty, by Aaron Ben-Ze’ev (*American Philosophical Quarterly*, July 1993), when a person

knows his self-worth but still does not show it in his speech or behaviour or even seeks to distinctly underplay then one is being *insincere*. When a person is just not aware of his self-worth then he is *ignorant*. However, when the person is aware of his self-worth but does not over-estimate or over-value it then he is being *realistic*. The fourth account of modesty is when a person evaluates his fundamental human worth as similar to that of other people; and in this sense he is a kind of *egalitarian*.

It is very difficult to practice modesty in a culture which forever drives people to cultivate high self-esteem. At office, clubs, parties, social gatherings, people are only too eager to impress others either by their clothes, gadgets, witty remarks, intelligence or bragging about their achievements and possessions. Somehow modern man feels that life would be too insipid if he were not allowed to show off his possessions and brag about his achievements. Modesty, in its most important aspect, is anti-bragging, and it is then that modesty may be regarded as an important virtue. However, a modest person is not necessarily the one unaware of his good qualities, though we do come across some unassuming people, who are not aware of their kindness or beauty or intelligence. Awareness that one is better looking than others or more talented than others does not make one immodest. Modesty is all about our attitude towards our good qualities.

A modest person is free from comparative superiority arising out of comparative judgement. The kind of comparative concern associated with immodesty is deeply self-centred, wherein everyone else's status is compared with yours. A modest person, on the other hand, does not care about comparison and his experience is not coloured by self-centred concerns. The modest person knows that he is better than others, but he will not spend much time thinking about it until someone brings it up. "There is a difference between wanting to be a great mother and wanting to be a better mother than your neighbour. . . . It is no accident that these comparative goals often seem less noble and more petty than simply caring about the

underlying value itself. . . . You can just feel good when somebody else has good fortune. You can help others achieve their goal without the feeling like you are losing out in some zero-sum game," writes Nicolas Bommarito, an assistant professor in philosophy at the University at Buffalo in New York.

The virtue of modesty requires us to strike a balance between boasting of our accomplishments and hiding them from others. The Normal Curve in statistics is a bell-shaped curve that tapers off on both sides, showing that most of us are average, and that there are very few who fall into the category of being "extremely good" or "extremely bad." To be modest, those with high self-esteem must reduce self-enhancement, whereas those with low self-esteem must reduce self-effacement.

Philosophically, the virtue of modesty is directly related to our concept of who we are. Our self-worth is generally measured by others, and also ourselves, on the basis of derived "self." 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. 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. "I" am not a poor, miserable sinner, either. I have the *potentiality* of creation, preservation, destruction and regeneration. By the same token, others also possess, in germ form, the skill, power or virtue,

in which we excel, and can cultivate the same. Spiritually, a true egalitarian is the one who knows that deep down, at the level of our true nature, we are all of equal worth and dignity.

“Perfect humility dispenses with modesty,” writes Professor C. S. Lewis. When one is modest they have a moderate view of their own abilities, but humility goes beyond this. It is a virtue that allows the individual to look into himself and accept his limitations and flaws. A perfectly humble person is perfectly self-effacing. In the spiritual sense, when someone with power, knowledge and virtues, is self-effacing, they do not have low-esteem, they are not being insincere, but they do not want people to be in the awe of them. It is to protect themselves from the demands and curiosity of the worldly people who are deceived by their simple exterior. They are not just modest, they are humble. We are told in *Light on the Path* that “that power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.” If it is mere pretension or mock modesty, then it will get revealed. For instance, if we feel resentful when someone holds us in low esteem, takes us to be less than ordinary, then we should ask ourselves, “How genuine is my humility?” In one of his letters written to a student, Mr. Judge cautions him not to think highly of him. In perfect humility he writes, “I am, like you, struggling on the road. Perhaps a veil might in an instant fall down from your spirit, and you would be long ahead of us all.” As *Light on the Path* puts it, in its highest sense, humility implies surrender of “personal humanity.” It means surrendering the pleasant consciousness of self-respect and virtue. It means never raising one’s voice in self-defence or to criticize and condemn another person, but regard one’s self as a mere grain of sand that can be washed hither and thither by the sea of vibratory existence.

Then there are those great individuals who have remained humble in spite of their achievements, recognizing that an individual is bound with the race, and that he achieves nothing without the aid of others in the human family. *Through the Gates of Gold* puts forward this profound thought: “On the mental steps of a million men Buddha

passed through the Gates of Gold.” This hints at universal unity and interdependence. The statement suggests that there is never growth in isolation. The Buddha drew inspiration and teachings from the Vedas and Upanishads and writings of Rishis, Sages and other perfected beings. Einstein’s explanation of his genius, “In science...the work of the individual is so bound up with that of his scientific predecessors and contemporaries that it appears almost as an impersonal product of his generation,” is more than an expression of modesty, says the great American novelist, E. L. Doctorow. Einstein grew up in a culture where many scientists in Europe—Albert Michelson, Edward Morley, Hermann Helmholtz, etc.—had been indirectly hinting at the theory of relativity by questioning the concepts of absolute motion and absolute rest. These concepts were the building blocks and provided Einstein with the tools with which to think. The English poet and essayist Matthew Arnold says that the work of literary genius is the combination of the power of man and the power of the moment, *i.e.*, of a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere. Newton said: “I appear tall because I am standing on the shoulders of the giants.”

However, modern man is ever eager to claim fame and glory for the ideas, inventions, discoveries and achievements that he sincerely considers to be the result of *his own individual effort*. He knows it not that he has received much from those lesser beings who are less expressive, less articulate and apparently less intelligent. We are often guilty of appropriating to ourselves the credit that rightfully belongs to others.

To appear in our own eyes far more important persons than we are, is, very common. Therefore, to cultivate humility, Mr. Judge suggests that it is good to remind ourselves that each one of us is “a very small affair in the world” and that those around us do not value us at all and grieve not when we are absent. Sincere humility, not thinking of oneself, or rather, of one’s personality, more highly than one ought to think, is a beautiful quality, without which Wisdom cannot be obtained. Says *The Voice of the Silence*, “Be humble if

thou would'st attain to Wisdom. Be humbler still, when Wisdom thou hast mastered." Krishna includes humility among *daivi sampat*, or among the marks of him whose virtues are of a godlike character.

Lowliness and Humility is a grand concept put forward by Lao Tzu, which forms the basis of the paradoxical concept: "One must stoop to conquer." Robert Greenleaf, a retired AT&T executive, writes of *Servant Leadership* in his book under that title. A servant is able to become a leader because his motive is to "serve"—first, last and all the time. According to Greenleaf, a servant-leader is *servant* first and hence different from the person who is *leader* first, who is motivated by the desire for power or material possessions. Mahatmas—Great Souls—describe themselves as "servants of humanity." *Tao Te King* teaches that qualities of lowliness and humility are necessary for all great leaders and rulers. Thus: "He who is great must make humility his base. He who is high must make lowliness his foundation....Therefore the Sage, wishing to be above the people, must by his words put himself below them; wishing to be before the people, he must put himself behind them. In this way, though he has his place above them, the people do not feel his weight....Therefore all mankind delight to exalt him, and weary of him not." (*Selections from the Upanishads and the Tao Te King*, pp. 112-14)

Egotism or strong sense of selfhood which separates man from man, is the opposite of Humility or total self-effacement. Egotism or pride works at various subtle levels. A spiritual aspirant may engage himself in the work of humanity, or undertake religious observances, disciplining of his senses, and consider himself superior to others. He may refrain from being at the forefront, but may like to mastermind the work from behind the scene, displaying ambition for power. The innocent and seemingly natural desire, to love and be loved, is rooted in egotism. To love unconditionally, whether or not your love is required or returned, is not easy. "When he has learned the first lesson, conquered the hunger of the heart, and refused to live on the love of others, he finds himself more capable of inspiring love," says *Light on the Path*.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES

"THE MAN Who Could Work Miracles" is a short story written by H. G. Wells. It is about an ordinary man, George Fotheringay, who is a clerk. He is a skeptic and does not believe in any miraculous powers. He asserts the impossibility of miracles during an argument in the Long Dragon bar. He says, "Let us clearly understand what a miracle is. It is something contrariwise to the course of nature done by the power of Will, something that could not happen without being specially willed." By way of example, he explains that the oil lamp lighting the bar could not burn upside down. If it were to do so, that would be a miracle. To prove the impossibility, he commands the lamp to turn upside down and burn with a steady flame. To his own astonishment, it does so. For nearly three seconds the lamp remained still. But when he says that he cannot keep it up any longer, the inverted lamp falls. His acquaintances think it a trick and quickly dismiss it. He is thoroughly perplexed.

Later, alone at home, he tries to understand what exactly had happened. He realizes that at the moment he gave the command for the lamp to turn upside down, "he had inadvertently willed the thing he said," and then it had seemed to him that somehow it depended on him to maintain the lamp in that position. He tests his theory with several simple experiments, such as, commanding a lighted candle to be raised up in the air, and it does so. He commands a comfortable night's sleep for himself.

Fotheringay continues to explore his new powers, first at home, by preparing his breakfast, by just willing, and then at office. Though he is unable to do any work at office the whole day, he magically accomplishes his daily chores in the last ten minutes. He learns that "the gift required caution and watchfulness in its exercise." As, for instance, when in a park, he commands the dry wood of the walking-stick to blossom, and then instead of asking it to "change back" to original form, he ends up saying, "go back." The stick begins to move back and accidentally injures a constable. When this

policeman discovers his powers, he begins to annoy Fotheringay, who curses him and tells him to “go to Hades [hell]!” The policeman finds himself surrounded by flames, swirling smoke, and sulphur. Fotheringay is shocked. He realizes that it is an extremely powerful gift. He relocates the policeman safely to San Francisco.

Unnerved by these miracles, Fotheringay attends local Sunday church services. The clergyman, Mr. Maydig, who took interest in occult matters, preaches about “things that are not lawful.” The sermon throws an entirely new light on these “gifts.” Fotheringay decides to consult Mr. Maydig. In his presence, Fotheringay turns a tobacco-jar into a bowl of flowers, and which he further turns into a bowl of fish, and next into a blue pigeon, and at last, restores back the tobacco-jar. Fotheringay wants to know whether such things are possible. He asks, “Is that a miracle, or is it black art, or what is it? And what do you think is the matter with me?” The clergyman answers, “The power to work miracles is a gift—a peculiar quality like genius or second sight—hitherto it has come very rarely and to exceptional people. But in this case....I have always wondered at the miracles of Mahomet, and at Yogi’s miracles, and the miracles of Madame Blavatsky....Here we plumb some profounder law—deeper than the ordinary laws of nature.”

After the clergyman narrates his housekeeper’s shortcomings, Fotheringay is able to turn her into a better woman. After that the clergyman becomes enthusiastic and suggests that Fotheringay should use these abilities to benefit others. That night they walk the town streets and reform every drunkard and change all the beer and alcohol to water, heal illness and vice. The clergyman plans to reform the whole world. He suggests that they could disregard their obligations for the next day if Fotheringay could stop the night altogether. Fotheringay agrees and stops the motion of the Earth. Fotheringay is not aware that the Earth spins so fast that when her rotation was stopped abruptly, everything had been jerked violently forward “at about nine miles per second—that is to say, much more violently than if they had been fired out of a cannon.” Everything

has been jerked and smashed and utterly destroyed, except himself, as he miraculously ensures his own safety back to the ground. Pandemonium ensues.

He is unable to return the Earth to its prior state. He repents and wishes that the power be taken from him and the world be restored to a time before he had the power. Fotheringay immediately finds himself back in the Long Dragon bar, discussing miracles with his friends, as before, without any recollection of previous events. “And among other things of course, he still did not believe in miracles.”

H. G. Wells was an English writer who has written many books which include novels, short-stories and history. He is now best remembered for his science fiction novels and often called the “father of science fiction,” along with Jules Verne. His most notable science fiction works include *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man* and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. “The Man Who Could Work Miracles” is considered to be a science fiction as well as fantasy-comedy. It is a humorous story which blends commonplace with fantastical events, and yet conveys a serious message concerning miracles and miraculous powers, as the author explores the theme of miracles. Can miracles really happen? A miracle is defined in the story as a supernatural event that takes place, contrary to the laws of Nature by the power of human Will. The clergyman’s understanding is that the power to work miracles is a gift, and that it involves “some profounder law, deeper than the ordinary laws of nature.”

The Old and the New Testaments mention the miraculous phenomena performed by Moses and Jesus. Western travellers in the east have given vivid accounts of miraculous phenomena performed by fakirs and yogis. In the face of such vast testimony, one cannot continue to take an obstinate stand that seemingly miraculous events are all imaginary, sleight of hand, trickery, superstition, mere human credulity or hallucination.

Theosophy says: “There is no miracle. Everything that happens is the result of law—eternal, immutable, ever active....There may

be laws once ‘known,’ now unknown to science.” The performance of magical feats and miraculous phenomena require extensive knowledge of the various and now forgotten branches of natural science; expertise in occult chemistry, physics, psychology, as well as physiology; intimate practical knowledge of the laws of electricity and magnetism and their effect on human and lower kingdoms of nature. And above all, it requires a perfected human will, combined with powerful imagination and faith.

Thus, for instance, the law of gravitation is only half of a law. It is the law of attraction, the other half of the law may be expressed as repulsion. Earth is a magnetic body charged with one form of electricity, say positive. All the organic and inorganic bodies on earth are charged with the opposite form of electricity, *i.e.*, negative. Hence, there is an attraction between earth and all the bodies on earth. Changing the electrical polarity of the object on the earth, from negative to positive could counteract this attraction. This change of polarity can be achieved by a well-regulated will. Thus, “Theosophy does not deny nor ignore the physical laws discovered by science. It admits all such as are proven, but it asserts the existence of others which modify the action of those we ordinarily know. Behind all the visible phenomena is the occult cosmos with its ideal machinery; that occult cosmos can only be fully understood by means of the inner senses which pertain to it; those senses will not be easily developed if their existence is denied.” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 153)

Behind the visible, tangible world, there exists an invisible, but real world which has not yet been explored by our science. Man as well as nature posses this invisible “astral” nature. It has its own laws. Just as there are laws governing physical nature, there are laws governing super-nature. One of the constituents of invisible man is the astral body—*sukshmasarira*. Astral body is *design body* or model body on which physical body is built. The real centres of sense organs for seeing, hearing, etc., are within the astral body. The powers of seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing and the sense of

touch are all in the astral body.

Each one of us has in him the germ of every power exhibited by the so-called supernaturally gifted people and even those in possession of spiritually advanced persons. Mr. Judge mentions that great musical ability is not usual or common but it is natural. Any person with proper training can learn music and even become a good musician. Likewise, with proper training of astral and spiritual senses, and following the necessary discipline, one can develop, or rather unfold, the psychic and spiritual powers.

Powers are of two types, lower and higher, psychic and spiritual. While one can obtain lower or psychic powers without becoming morally chaste or having highest altruistic motives; the spiritual powers cannot be acquired unless these conditions are fulfilled. Some men develop powers through excessive ascetic practices like standing on one leg, or keeping one hand raised or piecing one’s cheeks, or through various *asanas*, or through regulation of breath. The practice of *Hatha Yoga* involves mastery of the body as a way of attaining spiritual perfection. It is the physical or psycho-physiological training in asceticism. Such a person may be able to read mind of another, know facts of his life or see future events, etc. Development of these powers without corresponding moral purity is likely to lead them into Black Magic by misuse of these powers. Therefore, Theosophy asks us to purify our motive, live altruistic life and work upon ourselves to eradicate every vice and personal desire. Powers are the *by-product* of spiritual development. Then, when the powers come, we would be ready for their judicious use.

There are several reasons why acquirement of powers is considered secondary as compared to altruism and purity. These powers are sure to be used for money-making or for some other selfish or evil purpose by men. By purifying our will, imagination and magnetism we can benefit others around us. A true occultist with spiritual discrimination can do the good he desires, apparently even without lifting of a finger, by using spiritual powers.

RESIST WITHOUT RESISTING

TO RESIST means to defy, to oppose, to rebuff or to defend oneself against an attack. It is common to both man and animal to actively undertake self-defense when threatened with attack from without, and to even launch a counter attack on the opponent on the principle that attack is the best form of defense. We take precautions, in anticipation of possible threats coming from unseen quarters to our security, property, reputation, etc., and lay up for the rainy day, as it were. Nations raise armies to deter external attacks against their sovereignty, and enter into arms race to maintain military and economic superiority over their adversaries. We live in a state of tacit anxiety to preserve our possessions, acquire more, if possible, and are distraught, if by a stroke of misfortune, were to lose them. This is the way of the world, and is considered as normal human behaviour. Whatever is seen to be antagonistic to our self-interest is considered as evil, and the received opinion is that it is to be resisted.

Strange and paradoxical as it may seem to the man of the world, human history, from remote antiquity, is replete with preaching of great personages, sages, saints, and reformers against resisting evil, and, instead, to forgive the offender in a spirit of love and charity, and to even do good to the adversary in return—which they pre-eminently exemplified in their own lives. “An eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth,” is the normative behaviour of the world—the law of retaliation and vengeance. Jesus of Nazareth came to abolish the law of retaliation and preached and practiced the higher and diviner ethical conduct of unconditioned Love, the Law of higher humanity. Thus, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have

heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy. But I say unto ye, Love your enemies; bless them that curse ye, do good to them that hate ye, and persecute you.” (*Matthew 5:43-44*)

Such an ethical precept is considered as impractical, as said by some preachers themselves, and the Christian nations have never made it a guiding principle of their national policy, which, on the contrary, is based on the more convenient Mosaic law of retaliation. A wholly new perspective is needed to appreciate the scientific basis of the law of Love and forgiveness preached by Jesus, Buddha and other great teachers, and to become aware of the great harm that comes from abiding by the law of retaliation and vengeance. So long as the animal element in man’s nature is not raised to be human, and the aspiration of the human-man to elevate himself to be assimilated to, and governed by, the divine Self, which broods over the human self, is not enkindled, so long will reign in the kingdom of man the combative spirit of his animal nature; and such exalted ethics taught by great Teachers go unheeded. But as one’s perception and understanding of the nature of the true Self and of the essential unity of all life grows, the virtues of charity, generosity, justice, which are essentially human qualities, naturally take root and grow in the human heart, and will have sway over the lower combative animal nature. Man will then know better than to give in, to baser animal proclivities in the face of challenges and temptations, for he would have realized his moral responsibility and accountability for the effects produced by his thoughts and actions. Distinction between the evanescent and perishable earthly personality subject to birth and death, on the one hand, and the divine Individuality, the Real Immortal Man, or Soul, on the other, has to be well learned. We are Souls essentially, not the evanescent body with name and form. Scientific basis of the ethics taught and practiced by great Teachers is found in the knowledge of the Soul, the Real Man, as unborn and deathless, one with the Universal Over-Soul, and his higher evolution by means of assimilation of experiences of life through a long series

of cycles of reincarnations governed by the law of Karma. The principle of Universal Brotherhood, and the twin laws of Karma and Reincarnation, which are the fundamental truths of our being, are to be well learned and realized for the law of universal Love to become a spontaneous guiding principle of one's life and conduct—a self-compelling basis of ethical conduct.

We come to take birth on earth again and again in an innumerable series of births and deaths to enjoy and suffer in each as the just deserts which are the effects of the causes which were produced by ourselves by our actions in past incarnations. Therefore, there is nothing accidental or chance-happening in our lives, nor is there any predetermined course of our lives—destiny—ordained by any god or demon, except such as are determined in ignorance by ourselves by our actions in our many past embodied lives on earth. “There is not an accident in our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or another life.” (*S.D.*, I, 643-44)

Inasmuch as none lives and acts in isolation but always and everywhere do so in the company of fellow-humans and fellow-beings of whole of nature, affecting all for good or ill, reactions from those so affected must necessarily and unavoidably flow back to the one who produced the cause, and that one experiences the reactions coming to him as pleasure or pain, help or hindrance, happiness or sorrow, just as his past actions were productive of harmony or otherwise. The wise man who understands the law of absolute Justice, Karma, will not resist or retaliate in any way, nor allow such negative feelings as resentment, hatred or anger to envelop his heart against the one who may be harming him. For he would have learned that the harm to which he may be subjected by the action of another, willfully or otherwise, could not be otherwise than the result or effect of his own action which caused harm to the other in some previous life on earth; and that the offender was just the agent of Karma through whom the just punishment he himself earned by his own inharmonious action came to him.

In the light of such an enlightened understanding of the absolutely just law of ethical causation how could anyone entertain feelings of resentment, anger, and permit intention to retaliate to take hold of his heart. Even when such resentful feelings arise, as is natural to man, the wise man, through exercise of higher reason based on the understanding of the Karmic Law, expels them from his heart, persuaded that the hand that smote him was his own. Not only will he forgive the offender but love him as a kindred soul—his own self—and would do or cause to do something good to him in turn. Such exercise of charity and forgiveness of mutual offences, as against giving-in to baser course of nursing grievance with an intention to settle personal score, will wipe away clean the moral cause of mutual antagonism, cleanse hearts of the canker of hatred and anger, and develop the spirit of friendship, mutual help and cooperation. Exercise of love, charity and forgiveness in the face of opposition—resisting without resistance, in other words—has beneficial effect not only on the one who practises it but also tends to increase the sum of good in the world.

“He reviled me, he beat me and conquered and then plundered me,” who express such thoughts tie their mind with the intention of retaliation. In them hatred will not cease. “He reviled me, he beat me and conquered and then plundered me,” who do not express such thoughts, in them hatred will cease. In this world never is enmity appeased by hatred; enmity is ever appeased by Love. This is the Law Eternal. (*The Dhammapada*, verses 4-5)

Two-thirds of world's woes will disappear of itself like the morning mist in the warm rays of the rising sun, and transformed into garden of happiness if the Law of Love and Charity—the Law Eternal—were well understood and practiced. No one can hate another without hurting oneself and the one hated. The victim of our hatred, in some future life, will be the means of causing injury to us. The cycle of discordance between the two will grow more and more vicious in each recurrent impulse for mutual destruction,

unless, one of them, if not both, breaks the cycle of violence by exercise of charity and forgiveness, and conquers hatred of the adversary by love. Giving play to Love and Compassion which are innate divine attributes of human Spirit resident in every human heart overcomes hatred and inspires Love in the adversary.

The many who know not this also forget that in this world we shall one day die. They do not restrain themselves. But those who recognize the Law end their quarrels soon. (*Ibid.*, verse 6)

Macabre dance of sectarian violence, inter-ethnic conflicts, communal rivalries, bloody wars, which have stained the pages of history, and continue to darken our contemporary world, have all one common source: darkness of ignorance which envelop souls of men. Human ignorance needs to be dispelled with the light of knowledge and soul wisdom which unveil to man the truths of Universal Brotherhood, of the Law of Karma and Reincarnation, and reveal the one true universal panacea of all ills which afflict man—the Law of Love.

Who or what is to be resisted is not the one whom we see is adversely disposed towards us but the enemies within ourselves—anger, hatred, feeling of vengeance born of ignorance—by not heeding the promptings of these base passions; and, on the contrary, to think, feel and act towards the apparent outside enemy from the basis of our knowledge and scientific understanding of the law of Love. In that higher light even our enemy is seen to be our benefactor, a part of ourselves, and we owe a duty of gratitude towards him for providing opportunity to us to practice and develop virtues of Love and charity. This is an exercise in resisting without resistance, which, fortunately, all of us have abundant opportunities in everyday life to practice.

It is natural for average man of the world to be elated when basking in the sunlight of life, and downcast and forlorn when despair and disappointments descend on his life. But the wise man knows that our embodied existence on earth consists of pairs of

opposites—of pain and pleasure, good and evil, light and darkness—which ceaselessly swing from one to the other in which we get caught to be chained to endless cycles of birth and death through self-identification with ever changeful flux of life. He tries to free himself from the bondage by maintaining the state of equal-mindedness while experiencing unavoidable fluctuations of opposites, neither elated by the one nor downcast by the other, and aspires to rise above them to rest on the Spirit in the body, the true Self, beyond all change, alone eternal and universal. When happy tidings come he is happy, shares his blessings with others, utilizing the opportunity to do good to the world, knowing that he is only a trustee of his possessions, renouncing inwardly attachment thereto. When surmounted with challenging and distressing circumstances he knows that it is the just fruit of his past Karma and accepts it with grace and responsibility—as that which he himself desired—neither lamenting nor complaining nor resorting to devious means to escape the consequences. Placing reliance on the Great Self within and the just Law he wipes away so much of his past bad Karma by experiencing it, and becomes free. Life is a school in which we learn. Purpose of life is to learn the art of right thought and right action. We can only learn when we train our minds to be ever in calmness and place reliance on the Self and Law of our being. A mind ever in turmoil caught in passions and desires is the one source of greatest evil in human life. Mr. Judge, speaking of the art of resisting without resistance, said:

That means, among other things, that too great an expenditure of strength, of “fortitude,” is not wise. If one fights, one is drawn into the swirl of events and thoughts, instead of leaning back on the great ocean of Self which is never moved. Now you see that. So, lean back and look on at the ebb and flow of life that washes to our feet and away again many things that are not easy to lose nor pleasant to welcome. Yet they all belong to Life, to the Self. The wise man has no personal possessions. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 126)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS
STUDY, APPLICATION AND PROMULGATION—IX

IN REPLY to your question regarding followers of H.P.B.—of course what you say is true. There are blind followers of H.P.B., but they are no better than the blind followers of Mrs. Besant; those who followed H.P.B. later followed Mrs. Besant, Mr. Judge, Mrs. Tingley and others, and some are still following blindly. Let me repeat what I have said to you before: Follow the Immemorial Wisdom-Religion of Theosophy and you will find H.P.B. and her Masters; you will find Jesus Christ; you will find the Buddha and his Sangha; you will find Arjuna and Krishna. From the Teachings to all true Teachers. Reverse the process and you run the great risk of losing yourself in the wilderness of our civilized world. Study the Teachings and serve the Lodge, without following “teachers” and doing the bidding of self-styled “agents of the Lodge.” Live the life according to the Teachings; teach what you have learned; serve, banishing the desire to be served, and you will attain that to which you aspire. The problem of the student of Occultism is to find out what relation his own problems bear to the problems of Eternity and Cosmos—for therein only lies his progress.

In answer to your remark, “Bind us very close, those of us in whom you see any hope of labourers for Their Work”: well, as you know full well, this is being done. People, however, have to learn first that the only true way is that of self-energization. You and your like would fly to the end of the world if I requested thus; but what good would that do? Nothing of good but much of harm would result. The best method is to present the principles, to point out the teachings and leave the rest to the individuals themselves. I know that dozens fall by the wayside under this system and they put the blame on Theosophy and its expounders; but those who go through are worth the effort. Adaptability is a very rare virtue in Occultism; in a subtle way our likes and dislikes work havoc and we fail to practise and to realize that co-disciples, co-workers and co-students *have* to march forward together.

The first test of an earnest aspirant, the first manifestation of descending Karma on his head, is always around this quality—Adaptability. To adapt oneself to one’s teacher means conquest of doubt in the first and of despair in the second instance; further, the accomplishment of throwing away the contents of our consciousness, wherever and whenever necessary, and the reconstructing of our entire nature in conformity with the requirements of the Path and Its Service and not only Its treading for our own sake. Then the person has to learn to be adaptable to his co-learners and co-servers. This is much more difficult than the first step. Each one among us desires to be the nearest to the Teacher and Master, to be the most liked by him. Petty jealousies show themselves and a hundred insidious devices are resorted to. When a fellow has survived these must come the binding together of people by the love of wisdom and devotion to the Teacher thereof. There you have the stages roughly given. Impersonality, coupled with love and devotion to one’s chosen teacher, and therefore sincere affection—also impersonal—among *all* who are in the same position to the teacher, are the necessary steps. It is difficult but *has* been done and therefore *can* be done—and why not by you?

What we want to get at is how many of the followers of self-styled “leaders” have seen through these “leaders,” and of these how many will earnestly take up the real work. Leaving dissensions alone, who will follow the path of self-abnegation and devote their time, money and energy in the furtherance of the Sacred Cause of the Masters? Such have to be taught, prepared and trained into the fundamentals of the philosophy of Theosophy; they have to be shown the Lines laid down; they have to be instructed in how to stick to those Lines and how to follow them. Weeks, nay, months, will have to be spent in work that does not show itself but which is real and the only thing that counts, and the only thing that will produce results.

Towards this end perhaps it would be opportune now for you to translate the U.L.T. Declaration and read it *privately* to those who seem to you to be ready as also earnest. We do *not* want to form a

U.L.T. yet. We want to find out how many and who are they who accept the principles of our Declaration. Remember, it is one thing for people to be enthusiastic—that is good; but it is altogether another thing to be earnest. Those who are willing and accept the Declaration will have to be trained and weeks of work will show their real nature—earnest and devotional, or lukewarm, or indifferent, and so forth. Only when we have at least seven to ten people who are all afire, ready to sacrifice in different ways, can we plan to form a U.L.T.; not before that. Those who are truly desirous of doing this Work for the Masters have to equip themselves with: (1) a true understanding of the nature of Their Work and the Method by which it has to be done at this time—and this a proper study of our Declaration will afford; (2) a knowledge of the basic tenets of our philosophy, *i.e.*, the Three Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine*, Reincarnation, Karma, Masters, the Law of Brotherhood—and this a study of our books will give; this will involve an *un*-learning of false doctrines imbibed in other organisations calling themselves Theosophical, on the part of those who have been members of such organizations; (3) a right attitude towards themselves: are these people willing to devote their time and energies to the Work and are they earnest enough to put their hands in their pockets and find money for rent, advertisements, literature for propaganda, etc., etc.? This will show their sacrifice-attitude, without which work is impossible to achieve.

From all this you will see the need for a group of people who will first prove and not only talk of their earnestness and devotion, and the very first test is their own effort to study together and assimilate each other. In the past, Masters' work has suffered through two things—lack of Theosophic knowledge and lack of solidarity among students who want to serve the Holy Cause. Therefore, *before* the public work begins, a group of people have to evince their genuineness by studying the philosophy and by assimilating each other as co-students of the Wisdom. When this has been done, more than half of our work is accomplished, and the rest is bound to succeed, in spite of any and all difficulties. So, Theosophic education and solidarity among Theosophists—first and foremost.

(To be continued)

ZODIAC—A LOST KEY

II

THE SECOND sign, as seen, is *Rishabham* or Taurus. In the Upanishads and the Veda, at several places, the word *Rishabham* is used to mean *Pranava* or AUM. As these signs represent various stages in the evolution of the universe, turning to the explanation given in *Isis Unveiled* we find that AUM represents the first Triad. *Parabrahmam* is the Eternal Cause, One Reality, the beginningless, endless, Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Immutable Principle. During *Pralaya* or the “Night of Brahma,” *Parabrahmam* was absorbed in his (to us) eternal, (to himself) periodical sleep. When the “Night of Brahma” ended, *i.e.*, when the hour of manifestation struck, It sends from Its Essence an active Power, known in Hindu Philosophy as Aditi, the infinite and Boundless, which is female at first, but subsequently becomes androgyne or the “Father and Mother Aditi,” because when she assumes the office of a creator she becomes male. Aditi is also described as the “Infinite” androgyne. We are told that the “Infinite” androgyne with the Eternal Cause or *Parabrahmam* forms the first abstract Triad, represented by AUM. Thus, the first Triad designated as Upper Triangle, contains the Ineffable Name, AUM. In the Kabalistic philosophy the first Triad representing the “mystery name” was composed of En-Soph (*Parabrahmam*), Sephira and Adam Kadmon. Sephira and Adam Kadmon are one under two aspects. (*Isis*, II, 266-67)

In *Transactions* (pp. 2-4) we read that in all cosmogonies the first differentiation was considered feminine. The first emanation becomes the immaculate Mother, but which is called “Eternal Mother-Father” in the Stanzas of Dzyan, because it is androgynous. It is Vedic Aditi, and also Vedantin Mulaprakriti and the Svabhavat of the Buddhists. There resides in and issues from the Mother Goddess, the Unmanifested Logos, known in the Hindu Philosophy as *Narayana*, the Self-Existent Lord. Thus it appears that the Upper Triangle designated as Aum consists of *Parabrahmam* and the Infinite Androgyne, namely, *Mulaprakriti* and *Unmanifested Logos*.

The Third sign of Zodiac is Gemini or *Mithunam*, which means a pair or twins. At the cosmic level it represents the Divine Androgyne or the *Ardhanareeshwar*, the bisexual Sephira-Adam Kadmon. Metaphysically, even before differentiation or polarization into male and female, there is the stage of androgynous deity, known as *Ardhanareeshwar* or “bi-sexual lord.” Esoterically, it represents the unpolarized state of cosmic energy, symbolized by *Brahmaprajapati*, Ormazd, Adam Kadmon, etc., in various philosophies. In this stage, the relationship between spirit and matter is like the relationship of sesame to oil which is immanent in it. As heat is inseparable from fire and sweetness is inseparable from sugar, so also, matter is inseparable from Spirit.

Thus, the previous sign Taurus represented the Unmanifested Logos or Narayana the Self-Existent Lord (*Swayambhu-Narayana*). In the next stage of evolution Narayana penetrates into the Mundane Egg and emerges from it, at the end of divine incubation as Brahma, which is androgynous, Purusha and Prakriti, Spirit and Matter. Mundane Egg is *Hiranyagarbha* or Golden Egg and is the sphere of our universe. The Mundane Egg is simply the first stage of manifestation, and undifferentiated primordial matter.

The fourth sign Cancer (*Karkataka*) represents the sacred *Tetragram*, when the the syllables of Sanskrit name are converted into corresponding numbers, by applying the numerical key. Tetragram, Tetrad or Tetraktys means four. There are two Tetraktys. “The true Pythagorean Tetraktys was the Tetraktys of the invisible Monad, which produces the first Point, the second and the third and then retires into the darkness and everlasting silence; in other words, the Tetraktys is the first Logos [unmanifested Logos]” (*Transactions*, pp. 90-91). “In occult and Pythagorean geometry the Tetrad is said to combine within itself all the material from which Kosmos is produced. . . .Kabalistically Kether, or Sephira, the Point, emanates Chochmah and Binah, which two, are the synonym of *Mahat*, in the Hindu *Puranas*, and this Triad, descending into matter, produces the Tetragrammaton, *Tetraktys*, as also the lower Tetrad.”

In Hindu Philosophy this trinity corresponds to Brahma-Vach-Viraj. Brahma divides his body into two parts, and becomes with one half male, and with the other half female, and it is through the female aspect (*Vach*) that he created “male Brahma” or Viraj. Perhaps that is why this sign is also supposed to represent *Parabrahmadharaka*—a term coined by T. Subba Row—the bearer of *Parabrahmam*, in the sense of being reflection of IT on the plane of emanations.

This sign also represented Pranava (AUM) resolved into four separate entities corresponding to its four *Matras*. *The Voice of the Silence*, a Mahayana Buddhist text, describes AUM as the GREAT BIRD, *Kala Hansa* or Swan. The syllable A is considered to be the bird Hansa’s right wing, U, its left wing, M, its tail, and the *Ardha-matra* (half-meter) is said to be its head.” The Swan out of Time and Space, represents *Parabrahmam*, while the Swan in Time, represents Brahma the manifested Logos. (pp. 5-6 fn.)

As the *Pranava* is resolved into four separate entities corresponding to its four *Matras*, this sign also corresponds to the four *Avasthas*, such as the four states of consciousness—waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep and *Turiya*. Also, four conditions of the Sacred Word or four forms of *Vach*—*Para*, *Pashyanti*, *Madhyama* and *Vaikhari* which in one sense, refer to the mystic voices and sounds heard by the Yogi at various stages of his meditation. *Para*, *Pashyanti*, *Madhyama* represent the sounds that can be heard only through development of highest spiritual senses. *Vaikhari Vach* refers to uttered sound that can be heard by physical sense of hearing. *Vâch* is also the “mystic secret speech” of the Rishis, *i.e.*, “creative speech.”

At the base of every word there is thought. Thus speech is the faculty which is directly related to the mind. Speech is the *logos* of the thought. *Logos* means outward expression or effect of the concealed cause. Thus, on the higher plane, *Manifested Logos* is the expression of Divinity. The plan for the phenomenal universe resides in the Divine Mind, which is like unexpressed thought. Brahmâ is the male *logos* and his female counterpart is *Vâch*, female

logos, or the female creator, Saraswati of the Hindus. At the cosmic level, what the four forms of *Vâch* represent has been explained by T. Subba Row, thus:

Parabrahm is the *Para* aspect of *Vach*...*Pasyanti Vach* corresponds to the *Logos*, is *Chit* [Consciousness]; *Vaikhari Vach*, which is a symbol of the manifested cosmos, is *Achit*, and *Madhyama Vach*, which represents the light of the *Logos* [Fohat], is *Chidachit*....When Patanjali speaks of *Madhyama Vach* as *Chidachit*....When Patanjali speaks of *Madhyama Vach* as *Chidachit*, he refers to it as a link between the mental form (in the *Logos*) and the manifested form (in matter). The Universe exists in idea in the *Logos*, it exists as a mysterious impression in the region of force, and it is finally transformed into the objectively manifested cosmos, when this force transfers its own image or impulse to cosmic matter.

This sign also represents four states of Brahma called *Vaiswanara*, *Hiranyagarbha*, *Pragna* and *Iswara*. In his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* Subba Row explains these as four principles in the manifested cosmos, and gives these four principles as *Vaiswanara*, *Hiranyagarbha*, *Iswara* and *Mulaprakriti*—the *veil* of *Parabrahmam*. It is from these first three principles, having as their one foundation, *Mulaprakriti*, that the whole manifested solar system, with all the various objects in it has started into being.

T. Subba Row in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* (p. 27) explains that *Vaiswanara* is not to be looked upon merely as manifested objective world, but as the one physical basis from which the whole objective world starts into existence. Beyond this is *Hiranyagarbha*, which must be looked upon as the basis of the astral world. Beyond it is *Eswara*, which may alternatively be called *Sutratma* and may be looked upon as *Karan sarira* of the Cosmos. Beyond these three is *Parabrahmam*. We might perhaps compare this with three aspects of the Universe: the *Ever-existing* from which evolves the *Pre-existing*, and the third aspect is *Phenomenal* which is the reflection or shadow of the last, mentioned by H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 278). We might look upon “Ever-existing” Universe to represent *noumenal* or

archetypal world or *Akasa*. We are told that “prototypes or ideas of things exist first on the plane of Divine eternal Consciousness (*Akasa*) and these become reversed in the Astral Light.” In the astral light, we have the subjective picture, which develops into physical, objective tangible form in the phenomenal world.

The fifth sign is Leo or *Simha*. The word *Simha* contains a world of occult meaning within itself. The two terms synonymous to *Simha* are *Panchasyama* and *Hari*. The term *Panchasyama* shows that this sign is intended to represent the five Brahmas, namely, *Isanam*, *Aghoram*, *Tatpuruasham*, *Vamadevam*, and *Sadyojatam*, as also the five (Dhyani) Buddhas.

We get some idea as regards the meaning of term *Panchasyama* by referring to p. 213 (*S.D.*, I). We are told about there being twelve great orders of Creative Powers recorded in twelve signs of the Zodiac. Of these, seven orders of Creative Powers are esoteric. The seven which are manifesting are connected with seven planets. This host of Creative Powers may be divided into divine Spiritual, semi-Spiritual and ethereal beings. The Orders of Creative Powers which are said to be esoteric, are described as 4 and 3. Of which the Quaternary or the four hierarchies are considered to be Chief. These are connected with the “four bodies and three faculties of Brahma,” and with five Brahmas or *Panchasyama*, as also with the five Dhyani Buddhas of Buddhist system.

Brahma represents collective creators of the World and Men. On pp. 58-60 (*S.D.*, II) we are told that the four bodies of Brahma are Dawn, Night, Day and Twilight, and the three faculties or qualities seem to represent three qualities of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. There are four orders of beings issuing from the four bodies of Brahma. We are told that Demons or Asuras were the first to be produced. H.P.B. explains that in Rig-Veda, *Asuras* are *spiritual divine beings*, shown to issue from Body of Night. From the body of Day and from his breath he produced gods, who are endowed with the quality of passivity or negative goodness. From the body of Twilight and from his side, Brahma produced the *Pitris*. Lastly, from the body of Dawn was produced Humanity.

(To be continued)

APHORISMS ON KARMA—SOME REFLECTIONS

VIII

[Preface to the *Aphorisms on Karma* by Mr. Wm. Q. Judge (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*) reads: “The following, among others not yet used, were given to me by teachers, among them being H. P. Blavatsky. Some were written, others communicated in other ways. To me they were declared to be from manuscripts not now accessible to the general public. Each one was submitted for my judgement and reason; and just as they, aside from any authority, approved themselves to my reason after serious consideration of them, so I hope they will gain the approval of those my fellow workers to whom I now publish them.”]

APHORISM 13: “*The effects may be counteracted or mitigated by the thoughts and acts of oneself or of another, and then the resulting effects represent the combination and interaction of the whole number of causes involved in producing the effects.*”

A careful reading of the aphorism brings out several important, subtle aspects of the working of the Karmic Law: that Karma is not blind fatalism to which man has to passively submit; that the destiny which rules his individual life as well as that of his nation are self-made, and not the arbitrary fiat of an extra-cosmic God; that it is within his power not only to mitigate to a more or less extent the undesirable consequences of his past actions but even to nullify them by instituting appropriate counter-action by thought and action in the present with intelligence and understanding of the working of the Karmic Law, or by the thoughts and acts of another; and that it is not that every cause or causes produced by us result in effects in the same sequential detail as first caused in the previous life but that events, as effects, follow the balancing of several sorts of Karmic causes produced by the Ego in many past lives which may come to fructification through the body acquired.

Every event, even the smallest, such as, a passing thought, an impression made on our minds by another, feelings engendered in us on meeting, or on hearing words uttered by someone, etc., are all

influenced by the effects of past Karma of ours which we had produced by our thinking, feeling and action in relation to, and affecting others, either in the present life or in a past life. If we recognize the truth of this proposition, we then can see that we have a substantial degree of freedom in relation to how we react to events. We may overlook them as of no value or consequence and dismiss them; or, be indiscriminately influenced by them and act accordingly; or examine value and worth of the impressions so received and decide on the course of action that seems most appropriate in view of the fact that what we think and do now has consequences which we have to face. As we choose and act so we make new Karma in the present which will come to fruition in the future either in the present life itself or in another subsequent one. There is nothing known as chance happening or accident in our lives but are experiences that come to us as effects of causes we had produced in the past in a concatenated series.

The only way one can nullify bad karma is by setting into motion right or good karma. If one has erred by lying, stealing or backbiting, one has to set into motion good causes by resolving and learning to abstain from repeating the same wrongs. True repentance must lead to inner transformation. We are then sowing new causes that can counteract or mitigate the bad effects generated by previous causes. What we experience is the resultant or sum total of the old, bad karma and new, good karma.

There is the law of parallelogram of forces, wherein the good and the bad cause may either partially or completely counterbalance each other's effect and then what we experience is the resultant. There is also the *doctrine of nullification of Karma*. According to the well-known law in physics, two equal forces opposing each other, lead to equilibrium. “Thus, a person may have in his Karmic account a very unpleasant cause and at the same time a cause of opposite character. If these come together for expression at the same time they may so counteract each other as that neither will be apparent and the equilibrium is the equivalent of both,” explains Mr. Judge.

What is it that determines that a pleasant cause will precipitate at

the same time when an unpleasant cause comes into operation? Probably, the explanation of the term “Karmic Stamina” might help. What we call as karmic stamina is the effect or fruit of past unselfish good Karma that has ripened. The ripening of the past good Karma depends upon stock of unselfish good thoughts in the present life. Thus, a spiritually advanced person might have an immense quantity of past unselfish good Karma stored up. Yet, if during the crisis there is not sufficient number of present unselfish good thoughts to ripen the past good karma, then he may find himself destitute of necessary stamina. “Few are they who have already laid up a good quantity of unselfish good Karma; and fewer still are they who have the requisite degree of unselfish and spiritual nature during the period of trial.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 34*, p. 13)

Another way of understanding the mitigation of karma is in terms of learning the lessons of life. When the lesson is learnt the necessity ceases. Even when the unwholesome stored up karma are not completely nullified, if the person has evolved spiritually and morally, then when the unwholesome karma precipitates, he is able to give right response to the circumstances or people that come to him as a result of these Karma.

Of the many diseases we suffer from some are hypochondriac in nature and caused by unhealthy imagination, a tendency which had been acquired by habitual negative thinking. No medication helps to cure the hypochondriac ailment but once the one suffering, recognizing the cause of it in his thinking and attitude, takes his mind off the body and personal self, diverts his attention and thinking with deliberate effort on things and interests which are impersonal, and engages in benevolent activities, the cause of the ailment will be mitigated and health restored, for the body has the innate ability to heal itself if the mind is taken off it.

Going into “blues” or depression and suffering from it is a common mental disease in our times. This is again an effect of the past habit of constantly dwelling on dark side of life and pessimistic attitude. Sufferers make it worse by resorting to anti-depressant drugs.

The true remedy however lies in changing one’s pessimistic attitude towards life to one of optimism, and cultivating the habit of dwelling on and cherishing cheerful side of things and happy moments of life with deliberate effort each time the periodical attack of mental depression recurs. If the effort is persistent and continuous, the blues are weakened each time they recur by the counteracting power of the opposite mental state engendered, and finally it is mitigated.

More important application of the truism of this aphorism is in our moral life, which has a direct bearing on our character, our true happiness and spiritual progress. It has been clearly stated by Jesus: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shall love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (*Matthew*, V, 43-44). The practical value of this profound ethical injunction is not generally recognized, and people habitually harbour resentful feelings towards those who may harm them. But the one who knows the Law is aware of the fact that harm or injury coming to him from another is the reaping of the injury he had caused him in the past, the adversary being the agency through whom retributive justice, earned by himself, is meted out to him, and that he could not have been injured otherwise. Thus, with this higher knowledge, he will not entertain any feeling of ill-will or thought of revenge, but instead will encourage in himself feelings of good-will towards his adversary, and do something good in return to him. He will even feel a sense of gratitude towards his enemy for affording opportunity to put into practice the virtue of forgiveness and charity, as that is the path of higher evolution of man.

If a man thinks and feels towards his fellow-men under all circumstances without either hatred or feeling of revenge in him, no hatred or evil will ever come to him. “No evil is to him who does no evil” (*The Dhammapada*). One acting on the principle of this ethical injunction, practicing good-will towards all, especially towards those ill-disposed towards him, purifies his whole nature of the moral taint

of ill-will, and mitigates a whole range of retributive Karma which otherwise would visit to torment him, and draws to himself beneficent influences from all sides. Such acts of charity towards one ill-disposed towards us may or may not mitigate the action of the adversary. It depends on the nature and sensitivity of the person, but we get the benefit of our charitable attitude. Our acts of charity often have beneficent influence on the adversary, if his nature is responsive to higher influences. In such a case the antipathic relation between the two is reduced in intensity, and would be entirely mitigated, if charitable attitude is persisted in. Thus, enmity is turned into friendship.

Thought is the real plane of action and is the prolific generator of Karma, producing a crowd of circumstances. Merely bodily action is of little consequence. For instance, one may harbour ill-will towards another in the heart which he may not show in physical act, or may even be outwardly courteous towards the one whom he hates. But the outer gesture is of no consequence. Thoughts, feelings and motive or intent we engender in our hearts are the prolific generators of Karma which bind the Soul. The sum of the thoughts of the whole of the life of an individual—“mysterious power of meditation” of a lifetime, as it is called—added to such life-time thoughts of many reincarnations in an immense past constitute a vast store of unexpended Karma, to be worked out in many weary cycles of rebirths. Affinities, antipathies, loves and hatreds, attachments and aversions, attitudes, acts of omission and commission, engendered in relation to fellow-beings remain as what the teachers term as “delayed Karma” and “Unspent affinities.” These come into play in degrees and phases when the Ego is reborn with others in relation to whom he had so acted in the past, and is swayed by the power of these tendencies affecting his life in various ways—the invisible Karmic cause underlying vicissitudes of fortune.

(To be continued)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

It appears that the real test of parenting is not what one’s children achieve, but who they become and how they treat others. We find parents focusing more on their children’s achievements and neglecting to nurture kindness. They seem to regard their children’s accolades as a personal badge of honour and their children’s failures as a negative reflection on their own parenting. They see kindness as a source of weakness which may prevent kids to stick up for themselves in this highly competitive world, failing to realize that it is possible to be both generous and self-respecting. When children are encouraged to be kind there is a chance that gradually they will learn the norm of reciprocity.

If people have become less caring and helpful than they were, say, twenty-five years ago, some of the blame lies with the values parents have elevated. We are less concerned about those who are treated unfairly, and those less fortunate than ourselves. If parents are failing to pass down the virtue of kindness to their kids, it is because children learn not by listening to what their parents say but by noticing the values they emphasize. Today, most children say that their parents value achievement and happiness over caring. Thus, for instance, when children come home from school, parents normally enquire: How did the test go? Did your team win? To demonstrate that caring is a core value, at our family dinners, we now ask our children what they did to help others. “At first, ‘I forget’ was the default reply. But after a while, they started giving more thoughtful answers. ‘I shared my snack with a friend, who did not have one,’ or ‘I helped a classmate understand a question she got wrong on a quiz. They had begun actively looking for opportunities to be helpful, and acting upon them” write Adam Grant an organizational psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business, and Allison Sweet Grant, a writer. They say that they have tried to share their own experiences of helping and also those instances when they failed to help. There is an innate understanding in even little children of others’ needs. If

parents praise and recognize their helpfulness then they are encouraged to help again. Children could be encouraged to keep company of kind and helpful children. We are not required to choose between caring and individual achievement, because “in fact, teaching children to care about others might be the best way to prepare them for a successful and fulfilling life,” write Adam and Allison Grant. (*The Atlantic*, December 2019)

“Educate! Educate!! The children are our salvation. Just as the student of occult nature can imbue the new atoms of his body which momentarily replace the old ones, with less vicious tendencies and thus regenerate himself by moral Alchemy and attain the ‘Elixir of Life,’ so can a nation work its own regeneration by educating the new atoms of its national body, its children....Children should...be taught...love for all men, altruism, mutual charity,” writes H. P. Blavatsky. This education can be imparted by both parents and teachers. One of the duties of a householder is to bring up a family with right views and high purpose, and in doing that the parents contribute a service to humanity. Confucius said that “those who would order their national life must set about ordering their home life....When the individual families have learned kindness, then the whole nation has learned kindness. When the individual families have learned courtesy, then the whole nation has learned courtesy.”

An index of a nation’s progress is not its technological development, but character of people. The downfall of every civilization is caused by the weak morals of those who live in it. It is not as if men of moral integrity, kindness and altruism are rare in our days, it is only that their acts are not highlighted. “Our civilization, built up of shams and appearances, is at best like a beautiful green morass, a bog, spread over a deadly quagmire. Because this century of culture and worship of matter, while offering prizes and premiums for every ‘best thing’ under the Sun, from the biggest baby and largest orchid down to the strongest pugilist and the fattest pig, has no encouragement to offer to morality; no prize to give for any moral virtue,” writes H.P.B.

Who do you think you are? Most of us are convinced that we are coherent individuals continuous in time. We feel that we have free will and we are making choices. But this sense of self is an illusion. “You are actually a collection of conflicting messages and signals and thought processes. And these are somehow brought together to experience as unified self,” says Bruce Hood at the University of Bristol, United Kingdom, and the author of *The Self Illusion*.

The sense of self develops gradually. Though our thoughts are different from someone else’s thoughts and the ability to reflect on our own thinking emerges at the age of 3 or 4, the brain areas involved in our experience of the self do not fully mature until we become adults, says Megan McClelland at Oregon State University.

Martin Conway at City University in London connects sense of self with autobiographical memory and observes that children have little sense of self and also limited autobiographical memory. “If we suffer amnesia, the self becomes frozen in time because it cannot form new memories,” says Conway. According to Hood most of us have distorted self-images, as we think that we possess above average intelligence and sense of humour, etc.

So why have a self at all? Because, according to Hood, it is the interface between the complex outer world and a complex inner world. According to Conway, it allows one to behave as an individual and be part of a group, having the choice to make one’s own individual contribution to the group, and thus allows us to form complex human societies. Thus, the sense of self, even if it is an illusion, it is a useful illusion, writes Catherine de Lange. (*New Scientist*, December 14, 2019)

The sense of “self” may just be an illusion created by 100 billion neurons at work, wrote Johnston professor of Psychology at Harvard, Steven Pinker. Neuroscientists locate our consciousness in the brain and not in the soul, saying that sensations, thoughts, joy and pain are the result of physiological activities in the brain tissues. Thus, science seems to locate the sense of “self,” and the sense of “I” in the brain—making “mind” redundant. Theosophy teaches

that there are two selves in man—Personal and Individual. The personal self is the complex feeling, “I am Mr. Smith or Mrs. Brown” which arises out of a long series of daily experiences strung together by the thread of memory. These experiences produce the sense of *Egoity* only while they last, which we call *personality*. In a child this sense of self grows gradually. There is a subtle but important shift from “John wants the ball,” to saying, “I want the ball”—showing the consciousness of an internal self. However, as we grow, we tend to derive our sense of self from what we are not. This sense of self is derived by identification with the body, mind, feelings, ideas, education, etc., and it is lost when memory is lost.

Self-consciousness belongs to man alone and proceeds from the higher Manas (Mind). Hence, unless science admits the existence of lower (animal) and higher (divine) mind in man, free will and higher manifestations of mind will remain a riddle to it. It is the higher mind which enables us to say “I am I” and in conjunction with *Atma-Buddhi*, becomes the Individuality or Reincarnating Ego or “Hidden Self.” When one wakes up in the morning one does not feel that one is a different person. There is a continuity of consciousness. Even in case of loss of memory, a person may forget his name and address but he still feels that “I am myself and no other.” A schizophrenic may say “I am Napoleon,” or “I am a railway engine,” or “I am poached egg,” thus showing confusion at the level of personality, but the sense of “I-ness” remains.

When the basic necessities of life are taken care of what keeps us going through life is our need to stay relevant. It appears that we care about those who are relevant to us, and in turn are cared by those for whom we stay relevant. But the day we are not relevant to anyone or anything we cease to exist. Thus, we are relevant to those who depend on us for their happiness, security, success, entertainment or their incomes, as also to those who are dependent on us for their well-being or for the fulfilment of their emotional needs. “Love is the universal way of staying relevant; we are of

importance to all those who love us, and to those who we love as well,” writes Vinita Dawra Nangia.

The need to feel needed is irrefutable. The degree of our success and popularity is directly proportional to the extent of our relevance and usefulness to others. It may sound selfish but we are relevant when we fulfil the needs of others, and that leads to the fear of becoming redundant. It is a universal truth that someone who was very important, at one point in time, loses relevance along the way. Thus, for instance, a nanny whom we depended upon as kids loses some of her relevance once we have grown up, and the same applies to our school teacher whom we admired.

Our psychological well-being is connected with meaning in life. The chance of experiencing depression is lesser for those who find life meaningful. The more relevant and purposeful we feel, the better our mental and psychological state is. We can ensure that we stay relevant through family bonding, by giving and receiving care and love. There are those who remain relevant by incessantly working for the happiness and well-being of others, writes Nangia.

But above all, the important factors in keeping us relevant and meaningful are the strength and power of our minds, through the “intensification of inner life.” Austrian psychologist and Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl, says that those who can transcend the need to stay relevant to others, and align themselves to the purpose of life and to their own spiritual evolution, feel and stay relevant under all circumstances. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, December 22, 2019)

It is very important for us to grasp that Life is intrinsically meaningful, worthwhile and valuable, and it is left to each individual to realize and sense the value and meaning of life. The only alternative to life is “death,” and we then have to weigh the worth of living against the worth of dying. Mr. Judge says, “Life is better than death, for death again disappoints the Self” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 34). Yet, we tend to associate meaning and purpose of life with staying relevant or with pursuit of some goal or the other.

Theosophy says with sage Patanjali that the whole universe exists for the experience and emancipation of the soul. Life is a long journey, and we are all pilgrim souls, emanations from the divine and going back to the divine. It involves the process of inner transformation from being an ordinary human being to reaching the stage of a perfected being, a *Tathagata*, who goes out of this world with wisdom and yet returns to it out of compassion. The highest “meaning of life” is to attain peace and bliss of *Nirvana* but to renounce it, in order to help the suffering humanity. Then every life is meaningful, provided we change our attitude towards what life brings to us, irrespective of whether we are relevant to others or not. Life of a teacher, a businessman or a sweeper could be meaningful, provided each lives his life with the aim of self-actualization and self-transcendence. The possibility of change and the capacity to change gives meaning to human life. No matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, if we regard them as opportunities to learn from, then we grow. The purpose of life is to learn and it is all made up of learning. In what may appear to be the most hopeless situations in life, there is scope for learning.

It is equally important to remove the misconception that a person’s life is meaningful if he has devoted himself to a cause. So Gandhiji, Thoreau, Lincoln, Mother Teresa and all those with some dominant overall goal seem to have lived a meaningful life. Is the life of an ordinary person meaningless? The answer is “No.” If we do our daily duties for their own sake, without concern for name, fame, money, power, etc., or looking upon it as useless drudgery, then those very mundane, repetitive actions would fill our life with meaning.

WHAT do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other?

—GEORGE ELIOT