

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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### PARAMITAS—DIVINE VIRTUES

IN BUDDHISM there are three great images that convey the vision of existence. The image of the “Wheel of Life,” represents the state of conditioned existence or bondage—mortals tied to the ceaselessly revolving wheel of birth and death. The second image is that of the Buddha, which represents freedom from conditioned existence and attainment of complete perfection and enlightenment. The image of the Path represents the way leading from the conditioned existence to Buddhahood. We find the image of the “path” being mentioned in almost all the religious traditions. The *Bhagavad-Gita* too mentions the three paths—The Path of Knowledge (*Jnana Marga*), Action (*Karma Marga*) and Devotion (*Bhakti Marga*). There is the more popularly known Path of Liberation or *moksha*, and the lesser known Path of Renunciation. *The Voice of the Silence* mentions choosing between the “*Paramita Path*” and the four-fold *Dhyana* or the “Path of Meditation.”

Are there really so many paths? We may look upon these paths as various “ways” of designating One Path, leading to the One Goal, and may well be called the Path of Chelaship. “The Path is one for all, the means to reach the goal must vary with the Pilgrims,” says the *Voice of the Silence*. We may reach the hill-top treading the same path, but one may choose to walk, another may run, and yet another may sit in a palanquin to go there. All seekers may tread the same path but the means chosen will depend upon seeker’s

stamina, his mental make-up, circumstances, etc. The treading of the path, in earnest, begins when the person decides to seek, in this eternally changing and evanescent world, a real and permanent thing. In the context of the *Gita*, a seeker may begin with the Path of Knowledge, Action or Devotion depending upon his temperament. But none alone can take the seeker more than one step onward. In fact, it is not possible to practice any one of them perfectly, without involving the other two. Likewise, in the *Voice of the Silence* the disciple has to choose between the fourfold *Dhyana*, *i.e.*, the Path of Meditation and the *Paramita* Path, *i.e.*, the Path of Transcendental or Divine Virtues. These are not two mutually exclusive paths. The disciple is being asked to choose because in the earlier days people used to feel that *pranayama* (breathing exercises), *asana* (postures), and meditation practices constituted the whole of the spiritual life. But meditation alone cannot form the whole of spiritual life. *Sila* (good moral practices) and *Dhyana* (meditation) must go hand in hand.

A good and pious man practises virtues. But virtue is often understood to mean abstinence from vice, and taken to be synonymous with conventional morality, and disconnected with knowledge. Mere personal good feelings do not take us anywhere. It needs to be recognized that Virtue and Knowledge are the two wings of the Bird of Human Progress. The Paramitas are called *Divine* virtues, transcendental virtues, the virtues of perfection, based on divine, universal and impersonal wisdom. They make possible not some kind of religious life but *spiritual* or *higher living*. They have to become the very essence of the disciple's nature, making it impossible for him to act in any way opposed to them. This transforming of himself from the personally good or virtuous man into the spiritual disciple is so difficult an undertaking that it is said to require an "adamantine will" and a "dauntless heart." Hence the disciple is warned, "The rugged Path of fourfold *Dhyana* winds on uphill. Thrice great is he who climbs the lofty top. The *Paramita* heights are crossed by a still steeper path." If the seeker

is not vigilant then he may end up pursuing only meditation practice, and then as a result might develop certain powers, but he might be still left with anger, envy, greed, sensuality, and so on. There is the story of a *sadhu* who had powers but he had no control over his anger. So when he meditated under a tree, the shit of the sparrow dropped on his head. He looked in anger at the bird and the bird was burnt and killed. He went begging for alms and stood at the door of a woman, who was busy with her household work and was late in bringing him food. He looked in anger at her, but the woman was pious and pure; she said that she was not the sparrow who could be burnt by his gaze! After developing powers through meditation practices, it would be extremely difficult to practice virtues. *Light on the Path*, expresses it a little differently, by saying, "Now, at the threshold, a mistake can be corrected. But carry it on with you and it will grow and come to fruition, or else you must suffer bitterly in its destruction." That is why perhaps it is stated that *Paramita* heights are to be reached by a still steeper path.

An ordinary virtue of love, honesty, truthfulness, becomes transcendental virtue when it is practised to the hilt and internalized. In our modern civilization mental capacity and moral power are allowed to remain dissociated. A gentleman will not cheat at the card-table, but the same man will not hesitate to cut the throat, so to say, of his friend who happens to be a business competitor. The orthodox Hindu, philosophizing, argues and proves that Brahman is in the heart of each, but he does not find it illogical to practice untouchability. We can multiply instances to show how moral principles are set to nought by intelligent minds. The integration of hands, heart and head is the central and fundamental teaching of the *Voice of the Silence*. Occultism demands the constant practice of bringing into juxtaposition moral principles and intellectual doctrines. If it is immoral to cheat at a club, it is immoral to cheat in the office or in the playground. If Brahman is in all men, then untouchability is false and its practitioner is an irreligious man. The man on the path of discipleship is called upon to consult his

code of rules and laws at every turn, writes Shri B. P. Wadia. (*Studies in the Voice of the Silence*, p. 15)

*Through the Gates of Gold* cautions us of another danger. The author says that by practice of virtue we might fetter ourselves into one groove, one changeless way of living the life. For instance, there could be over-anxious insistence on the virtues of accuracy or punctuality, so that there is rigid adherence to an immutable time-table. Some people feel lost unless they get up at the same time, eat at exactly the same time, and follow the same daily routine. These are *slaves* rather than *masters* of punctuality—slaves to automatic action of the bodily atoms. A doctor cannot be rigidly punctual like an office employee, because he may be called upon to attend an emergency case, while on his way to his clinic. Unlike the person who practises virtue *mechanically*, the person who has sinned deeply and is steeped in selfish gratification, stands better chance of entering spiritual life because sooner or later, he wakes up, either through satiation in pleasures, or through severe consequences of his evil actions. Some of us practice our own brand of purity and morality, and look upon it as a ticket to heaven. “It is easy to become a gourmand of pure living and high thinking as in the pleasures of taste or sight or sound. Gratification is the aim of the virtuous man as well as of the drunkard,” warns *Through the Gates of Gold*.

When a seeker is not satisfied by merely talking about being brotherly, loving, honest and truthful but is determined to be loving and brotherly all the time, in all circumstance, by that very resolve he awakens the dormant vices. The disciple notices that as he succeeds in overcoming his faults in their gross form, they appear in their subtle form. For instance, vain display of wealth gets replaced by display of knowledge and then powers. When we become aware of our gross faults and weaknesses and try to overcome them by developing the necessary virtues, we become “good” people with right ethical behaviour. It is like normal cleaning of the house. But when we decide to do spring-cleaning,

or Diwali-cleaning, we come across cobwebs, a lizard here and a cockroach there, suddenly cropping up from behind the cup-board or a table. In the same way, there are ugly, horrible things in our mind and heart, which block us from touching the higher levels of our consciousness.

The imagery given in the *Voice of the Silence* is that of a fort with seven gates. “Gate” is a powerful symbol that is used frequently in spiritual writings. “Gates” often symbolize transition from one state to another. In the olden days, in order to reach the centre of the fort the invader had to cross several gates, guarded by soldiers. *The Voice of the Silence* uses the imagery of such a fort to show that to reach the heart of spiritual consciousness one needs to cross seven gates, guarded by cruel, crafty powers—complex, psychological forces such as anxiety, anger, etc. Seven “Keys” that open the gates are seven transcendental virtues or psychological requirements needed to reach the centre of the fort. A gate represents spiritual requirement, and a key is the virtue by which that requirement is met. At each gate the seeker has to fight some psychological forces or hidden parts of his nature, because each gate is guarded by “cruel, crafty powers.” That which prevents him from going further is not ordinary desires and obvious weaknesses such as lust, dishonesty, fear or anger, but drives like anxiety, which eats him up from inside, and yet it is not even recognized as something unwholesome or detrimental. These weaknesses are described as “crafty,” because they are subtle. For instance, one may be angry because he is feeling insecure inside, or because he finds another person living a carefree life, which he is unable to because of his discipline. But when he is angry, his anger does not tell him the reason behind it. These psychological forces are subtle and complex and hence called “crafty.” To deal with these forces, it is not enough to develop ordinary virtues, which is but adjusting of desires so that they are legitimate by the worldly standards, but to bring about such inner transformation, that it helps us to take a step closer to our divine nature.

Where does the *Paramita* Path begin? “Yea Lord; I see the Path; its foot in the mire, and its summit lost in the glorious light Nirvanic.” The *Paramita* Path begins with ordinary, everyday consciousness of the disciple, where his own Karma has placed him, with the faults and weaknesses of his character, which forms the “mire.” Certainly it is indicated that the Path chosen by the Pilgrim is not to be travelled by him in any objective sense; the path is an inner one, a process of transmutation of himself by himself. It is also hinted that the way to the knowledge is through “ever narrowing Portals.” What can this mean, but that the Pilgrim must get more and more down to the essentials and necessities of his life and lessen his burden of *personal* thoughts, desires and possessions as he travels on?

The *Paramita* Path is also described as the path of perfections—Perfection of Giving (*Dana*), Perfection of Morality (*Sheela*), Perfection of Patience (*Kshanti*), Perfection of detachment (*Viraga*), Perfection of Spiritual Courage (*Virya*), Perfection of Meditation (*Dhyana*) and Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajna*). These virtues are not to be practised one by one, but simultaneously. There can be no spiritual life without love, charity, impulse to help others. So also, without *Viraga* or detachment one is unable to follow any other virtue. For instance, someone who is in the habit of getting up late on Sunday morning, would be able to contribute to some social work on Sunday morning, only if he cultivates detachment so as to forego two or three hours of extra sleep on Sunday morning.

We must consider these *paramitas* in pairs. “Put down your Paramitas like the seven globes of the planetary chain [in the form of a parabola]. You will thus find that *Dana* and *Prajna* make a pair; *Shila* and *Dhyana* make another pair; *Kshanti* and *Virya* make the third pair. Remains the middle Paramita—*Viraga* (*Vairagya*), desirelessness...detachment, but which is also...the spiritual attachment to the parent and the source of all seven Paramitas namely, Compassion Absolute,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE BRIDE OF THE SEA

THE FOLLOWING story, a condensed version of an Arabic tale, is based on the age-old theme of the union of the human and spiritual consciousness, containing appropriate lessons for the present time.

A sultan had three sons. When he had grown old, he asked his sons to travel, and by whatever object each brought back from the world would he judge who was most fitted to rule after him. The eldest son set out with a grand equipage, and when he came to a great hill, he met a terrifying Jinnee, who said, “Though I cannot offer you food, yet I have gold in this hill. Take as much as your servants and pack-animals can carry.” He showed the Prince his caverns inside the hill, all crammed with gold. He asked his servants to load themselves and the animals with gold, for he felt sure this would win him the kingdom.

The second son also set off with vast retinue, and when he came to the hill, he met the Jinnee, who told him to take as much gold as his servants and animals could carry. He threw away his baggage and loaded his followers up even more heavily, to make sure that the throne would be his.

The third son, having bathed and commended himself to Allah, set out alone, with nothing but his mare and his sword. He too came to the hill and, seeing his brother’s baggage, camped there for the night. When the Jinnee came, the Prince fearlessly welcomed him. “Take of my gold as your brothers did before,” said the Jinnee.

But the Prince said, “Nay, I seek not gold. With a sword one needs no gold.” Then, the Jinnee bowed with reverence and said, “Command me to do what you will, for the offer of gold was only a test. It has proved you a man of integrity, unlike your brothers. Shut your eyes, then, and tell me your heart’s desire.” The Prince did so, and desired the hand of the daughter of the Sultan of the Hejaz, whom men called the loveliest princess on earth.

The Jinnee drew forth a ring. "Your search will bring you strange adventures. This ring I hold from her father as a pledge for his life, and it will make him bestow her upon you," said he. So the Prince took the ring and stayed for three days and three nights with the Jinnee. Then he took ship for the Hejaz. But the envious captain drugged his food, to make him prisoner and sell him as a slave. He robbed him of everything, including the ring and dressed him in rags, with chains on both hands and feet, so that the Prince's struggles were useless.

For three days and three nights the ship sailed on; then a great storm came that sank it and threw the fettered Prince into the sea. But as he sank to the depths his plight was seen by some sea-nymphs, who carried him to a cavern where he could breathe once more. And there in the centre, on a golden throne, was a wonderfully beautiful maiden, black-haired, blue-eyed, with a silver-green fish's tail. "I am the Bride of the Sea," she said. "You must be my Bridegroom." The Prince gazed at her incomparable beauty and said, "You blind my eyes with the beauty of the sea, but I am to marry the Princess of the Hejaz, the loveliest maiden on earth."

The sea-maiden said, "Men speak of her beauty of face, but what of her heart?"

"Are they not one and the same?" asked the Prince.

The sea-maiden replied, "You will see. But you must become a girl to be able to know her heart." So she bade her nymphs fetch back the ring to the Prince; then she told him to turn himself three times round whereupon he became a girl. They placed him upon a dolphin who carried him to the land of the Hejaz, where the Sultan, finding the "girl" all alone on the shore, sent him to serve his daughter. The Prince attended her faithfully and, though the beauty of the Princess dazzled his senses, her harshness and cruelty outraged him. The Sultan and the courtiers believed her to be wholly lovely and good, yet she cursed and whipped and ill-treated her servants without a cause.

Then one day as the Prince-girl was drawing water, a fish spoke

to him at the well, "Now that you know the Princess of the Hejaz, do you still love her?"

"No," said the Prince, "I hate her with all my heart."

"Turn round three times," said the fish, and there he was a man again, dressed as a Prince. As he went to buy a horse at the market, he saw there a beggar without any legs. He threw him the ring and told him that the Sultan would give his daughter in marriage to the man who could show this ring. So the beggar scrambled as best he could to the Sultan, who had to give him the hand of his daughter, most unwillingly. The Prince, meanwhile, rode off to the sea, where the nymphs carried him to the throne of his Bride. Her loveliness was fairer than anything on earth, and her nature was beautiful also, so that everyone loved her. When the Prince had become her Bridegroom, the sea-nymphs brought a ship of silver and gold, with two thrones in it. They pulled it to the land of the Sultan, the father of the Prince. And when the Prince lifted his Bride ashore, the moment her fish-tail touched the ground, it changed to two slim beautiful legs, so that she was no longer a fish-girl, but a complete and perfect maiden.

The sons were asked to display what they had brought. When the two eldest showed their stores of gold, the Sultan said, "Gold is but gold and anyone can get that. He who loves gold must live with gold." He commanded the two sons to become treasury clerks, to count gold for the rest of their lives. He placed the third Prince on the throne, and said, "My youngest son has won the best of brides, and proved himself the best of men."

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Here we have a delightful picture of the "gold-grubbers," the collectors of facts, on the one hand, and of the one who gains understanding, the realization of Truth, on the other hand. The terrifying yet benignant Spirit of Life offers a limitless store of information, infinite data about all the innumerable aspects of

existence. A man can spend a lifetime specializing in one subject of study alone, gathering and mastering volume after volume about it, and yet not come to an end. All the information one can possibly collect is only like a few specks of dust brushed from the Jinnee's unending store of gold.

Of the two Princes who gather up the gold because they think it will bring them power, one perhaps has the viewpoint of the arts and other of the sciences, but they both collect the gold with the aid of a vast retinue of servants and pack-animals, which represent the senses, the feeling-desires and mental capacities by means of which data is gathered. But the youngest Prince does not depend on these for obtaining truth. He is carried by one desire alone, his mare (for the horse is the symbol of the vital desire nature), instead of being attached to a thousand and one desires (the pack-animals attending his brothers). He takes with him the "sword of spiritual knowledge," that intuition that pierces through the outer form to the essence of things. With this he goes to the heart of the matter, without the weighing of pros and cons.

Yet his desire and understanding are still engaged in matter. The desire to know, to be one with, and lord of, Nature, is there, but Nature is still thought of as merely physical. It will be noted that the Prince rides a mare (representing the feminine or matter aspect). So, when the Prince is offered his heart's desire, he asks for the hand of the princess—the fairest on *earth*. He wishes to have power over material Nature. Even his intuition of truth is more of the nature of a blind, instinctive awareness than an awakened perception.

The Jinnee presents the ring, representing Man's will, by which he conquers Nature. He can make many ears of wheat grow, where one grew before, and dig out from the bosom of the earth her mineral wealth and jewels for his satisfaction. Nature opens up her other territories of water, air and fire for his explorations. She will change her very climates and contours because of his actions. Such is the power of the ring.

But the search for Nature brings "strange adventures." Everything that Man has created of evil and folly in the past now comes back at him, and enslaves and fetters him. And, paradoxically, he who aspired to power finds himself stripped of everything he has hitherto considered his; even the ring, the will to power, is taken away and he is plunged into the depths, the dark night of the soul. Yet within those depths is the true, divine pure Nature. For, while the sea may sometimes stand for gross matter, here it represents the pure Akasic substance that is the home of the Real Nature, the Soul of the World. But though the Prince responds to her beauty, he is still glamoured by his original aim. Then, by the effect of the divine influence, his relationship to material Nature changes—he is transformed into a girl, which puts him in the same polarity as Nature, so that he sees it from within, free from the positive-negative attraction. He begins to learn that this aspect of it is indeed cold and cruel and heartless.

It is the same great lesson that the Buddha learnt and taught—the fact of Sorrow that shadows all material existence. Thus the Prince comes to his former quest and seeks a horse to carry him to his real love, the Divine Nature. He gives away the power of the conquest of material Nature to the legless beggar. Because, only the materialist crawling on the earth, who begs bounty from life without making any return, values that power.

Meanwhile the Prince has become one with Nature in its real aspect. His human consciousness complements its being, and the two sail back together. As he carries his bride ashore, her fish-tail changes, enabling her to walk the earth. The Spiritual Soul, the Princess of Divine Nature, too pure by itself to make contact with the material plane, is yet able to manifest and rule there, when "carried" by the human self-consciousness. This, indeed, is the best of marriages; and the one who achieves it, the best of men. But for those to whom data is an end in itself, there is only the prospect of arranging and re-arranging it perpetually.

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

## THE BRAHAMANA—III

18. *Him I call a Brahamana who is free from anger, devoted to duties, practises divine virtues, who is without craving and controlled. He wears his last body. (400)*

A CAREFUL study of the qualities of Brahamana enumerated in various verses show us that the term “Brahamana” is used for the one who strives to live spiritual life. Depending upon the level of his spiritual development, he exhibits one or more qualities of a true Brahmin. In Buddhist tradition, the one who wears his last body is called *anagamin*. He *breaks* five of the ten fetters which bind one to conditioned existence, namely, erroneous view of the personality, skeptical doubt, regarding ethical rules and observances as ends in themselves, the desire or urge for sensuous existence and animosity and anger.

19. *Him I call a Brahamana from whom desires drop like water from a lotus leaf or mustard seed on the point of an awl. (401)*

20. *Him I call a Brahamana who, even here, knows the end of his suffering, who has laid aside his burden and is detached. (402)*

The Brahamana practises detachment. His desires drop off like water from a lotus leaf or like the mustard seed on the point of an awl. There is no struggle involved. It happens spontaneously. The similes are indicative of inner relinquishment so that he is able to give up his desires effortlessly.

21. *Him I call a Brahamana whose wisdom is profound, who knows and discerns the right way and the wrong and who has attained the highest end. (403)*

The Brahamana possesses spiritual discrimination. He knows the right course of action in a given situation. He is wise. The

good man has good motive but may not always have the wisdom as to right course of action. “Great though the gulf may be between the good man and the sinner, it is greater between the good man and the man who has attained knowledge; it is immeasurable between the good man and the one on the threshold of divinity.” Therefore, H.P.B. wrote: “It takes a very wise man to do good works without danger of doing incalculable harm.” The wise man has not only the right motive but also requisite knowledge to actualize it. Possessing the spiritual discernment, the Brahamana is an adept and an occultist. He has the knowledge and power to do all that he wants without lifting a finger.

22. *Him I call a Brahamana who is not intimate with householders or monks and who does not frequent houses and who has but few wants. (404)*

Intimacy signifies attachment and hence existence of subtle sense of separateness. When we are close to a few, we are not close to others; this affects our judgment and makes us biased in favour of those who are dear to us. When the Brahamana reaches higher stage of spiritual development through spiritual discipline and wisdom, he becomes like a sage, free from wants and attachments. A true Brahamana is not attached to place or people. Like an illuminated sage, he would regard with equal mind an illuminated, selfless Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and even an outcast who eats the flesh of dogs. This does not signify indifference or hardness of heart or selfishness, but impersonality, which enables one to expand the circle to include all beings. He has to devote himself to the service of the *whole of humanity* unconditionally and without favouritism. The reason for this apparently harsh demand is explained by H.P.B. in her article “Occultism versus Occult Arts,” thus:

Even the love for wife and family—the purest as the most unselfish of human affections—is a barrier to *real* occultism. For whether we take as an example the holy love of a mother

for her child, or that of a husband for his wife, even in these feelings, when analyzed to the very bottom, and thoroughly sifted, there is still *selfishness* in the first, and an *égoïsme à deux* in the second instance. What mother would not sacrifice without a moment's hesitation hundreds and thousands of lives for that of the child of her heart? And what lover or true husband would not break the happiness of every other man and woman around him to satisfy the desire of one whom he loves? This is but natural, we shall be told. Quite so; in the light of the code of human affections; less so, in that of divine universal love. For, while the heart is full of thoughts for a little group of *selves*, near and dear to us, how shall the rest of mankind fare in our souls? What percentage of love and care will there remain to bestow on the "great orphan"?

23. *Him I call a Brahamana who puts away his rod, who kills not, nor causes others to kill any creature, feeble or strong.* (405)

Perfect harmlessness is a mark of a true Brahamana. There is lack of anger in him. This is because he practises compassion towards all beings. He knows that people err because they are ignorant. He knows that the law of karma will bring to him the consequences of evil action and that it would be wrong to add our own bit of punishment for the wrong done to us. He shows reverence for life under all forms, small or large, feeble or strong, considering them all to be an expression of divinity; each having right to live, to be happy and to progress. He puts away his rod which all men possess—physical, emotional, intellectual—with which they inflict pain to one another in their pursuit of happiness. In Buddha's time, ritualistic sacrifice of animals was practiced by people to propitiate god, to gain merit or to obtain the objects of their desire. But a true Brahamana would not prescribe or participate in such rituals. This was also the teaching of the Buddha, who said:

Nor, spake he, shall one wash his spirit clean  
By blood; nor gladden gods, being good, with blood;

Nor bribe them, being evil; nay, nor lay  
Upon the brow of innocent bound beasts  
One hair's weight of that answer all must give  
For all things done amiss or wrongfully... (*The Light of Asia*)

24. *Him I call a Brahamana who is friendly among the hostile, mild among the violent, Ungrasping among the greedy.* (406)

Having established himself in the law, his norm of behaviour does not depend upon how others behave. Brahamana is not swayed by what others do or do not do. His standard of morality is not relative, which may change depending on the treatment he receives from others. This does not mean that he has surrendered his judgment. It is only that he feels compassion for all—including the deluded mortals who sin against him; therefore he responds to hostility, violence or greed with friendliness and generosity.

25. *Him I call a Brahamana from whom lust and ill-will, pride and ingratitude have fallen away like a mustard seed from the point of an awl.* (407)

The feeling of ill-will results from lust, anger and envy. Ingratitude indicates sense of superiority, self-centeredness and insensitivity. The rich who think that they can get from others anything—whether work, service, knowledge, labour etc., in exchange of money and that they are lords who can buy anything, fail to appreciate contribution of others. The poor who receive charity, thinking that the rich can well afford it, fail to see the gesture of brotherliness. Gratitude makes man humble. He acknowledges the share of others in his life. To be ungrateful is to be egoistic. There is law of harmony and interdependence operating in the world. If others cared not for our money, where would we be? The wise Brahamin discards ill-will, pride and ingratitude easily.

(*To be continued*)

## THE PYRAMIDS OF EGYPT

### I

PYRAMIDS have been built at various times in Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, western Asia, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, India, Thailand, Mexico, South America, and on some islands of the Pacific Ocean. Those of Egypt and of Central and South America are the best known. The pyramids of ancient Egypt were funerary edifices. From the 3rd to the 6th dynasty, the pyramid was the regular type of royal tomb. About 80 royal pyramids have been found in Egypt, many of them, however, reduced to mere mounds of debris and long ago plundered of their treasures.

The three Pyramids of Giza, in Egypt, were built for three kings of the fourth dynasty. The northern most and the oldest pyramid was built for Khufu, the second king of the fourth dynasty, and is known as the pyramid of the Cheops. It is also called the "Great Pyramid," because it is the largest of the three. All the three pyramids have been plundered both internally and externally in ancient times. For instance, the pyramids have been almost entirely stripped of their outer casing of smooth white limestone, and hence they no longer reach their original heights. The Pyramid of Cheops is perhaps the most colossal single building erected on this planet. Approximately 2.3 million blocks of stone were cut, transported, and assembled to create the 5,750,000-ton structure, which is a masterpiece of technical skill and engineering ability. The burial room proper is generally termed as King's Chamber. The question of how the pyramids were built has not received a wholly satisfactory answer. The most plausible one is that the Egyptians employed a sloping and encircling embankment of brick, earth, and sand, which was increased in height and in length as the pyramid rose; stone blocks were hauled up the ramp by means of sledges, rollers, and levers. According to the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, the Great Pyramid took 20 years to construct and demanded the labour of 100,000 men. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 519-520) H.P.B. makes a special mention of the temples of Philae, Abu Simbel, Dendera, Edfu, and Karnak. Admiring the beauty and vastness of temples and pyramids of Egypt, Professor Carpenter remarks that they are impressive even after the lapse of thousands of years. The workmanship is incomparable, "the stones in most cases being fitted together with astonishing nicety, so that a knife could hardly be thrust between the joints." We most markedly notice the skill of the Egyptians in quarrying. Modern geographers and geologists have always been at a loss to explain how the Egyptians extracted huge blocks of stone and carried them from the quarry to the site of the pyramids. It can be seen that from a single stone, ninety feet high obelisks and forty eight feet high statues have been hewn. The immense numbers of squared stones show us the unparalleled skill of the Egyptian quarrymen. Instead of blasting out the blocks, the method used for extracting huge monoliths was scientific. "Instead of using huge iron wedges, which would have split the stone, they cut a small groove for the whole length of, perhaps, 100 feet, and inserted in it, close to each other, a great number of dry wooden wedges; after which they poured water into the groove, and the wedges swelling and bursting simultaneously, with a tremendous force, broke out the huge stone, as neatly as a diamond cuts a pane of glass."

Old manuscripts mention that these huge stone blocks were transported across many miles by the help of portable rails. These rails rested on inflated bags of hide. These bags were made indestructible by the same chemical process that was used for preserving the mummies. "Manetho mentions them, and remarks that they were so well prepared that they would endure wear and tear for centuries."

There are other conjectures on the nature of the monoliths and the method of their transportation. For instance, Herodotus, the great historian, believed that enormous labour might have been expended in the transportation of the monoliths, which were

gigantic blocks of granite, measuring thirty-two feet in length, twenty-one feet in width, and twelve feet in height. Its weight he estimates to be 300 tons, which occupied 2,000 men for three years to move it from Syene to the Delta, down the Nile. According to Pliny, in transporting an obelisk to Alexandria, a canal was dug from Nile to the place where the obelisk lay. Two boats were filled with stones that matched the weight of the obelisk, calculated by the engineers, so that when these boats were floated in the canal, they were sufficiently submerged to pass under the monolith as it lay across the canal. When the boats carrying the stones were just beneath the obelisk, the stones were gradually removed, so that the boats rose, lifted the obelisk, and it was floated down the river. There is a drawing in the Egyptian section of the Dresden, or Berlin Museum, which represents a workman ascending an unfinished pyramid, with a basket of sand upon his back. This has suggested to certain Egyptologists the idea that the blocks of the pyramids were chemically manufactured on the site of the pyramid. Professor Carpenter asserts that the pyramids, with the exception of their granite casing are formed of what “geologists call *nummulitic* limestone. This is newer than the old chalk, and is made of the shells of animals called nummulites—like little pieces of money about the size of a shilling.” However, “no one, from Herodotus and Pliny down to the last wandering engineer who has gazed upon these imperial monuments of long-crumbled dynasties, has been able to tell us how the gigantic masses were transported and set up in place,” writes H. P. Blavatsky.

Research from the University of Amsterdam has now revealed that the Egyptians transported the heavy pyramid stones by sledges, pulled by workers. However, they might have moistened the sand over which the sledge was moved. By using the right quantity of water the sand would become stiff enough over which the sledge could easily move and hence they could halve the number of workers needed. The researchers published this discovery online on April 29, 2014 in *Physical Review Letters*. Experiments carried

out in the laboratory revealed that the required pulling force decreased proportionately to the stiffness of the sand. When water is added to sand, something called “capillary bridges” would form. These are extremely small droplets of water that glue together individual grains of sand. It was found that in the presence of appropriate quantity of water, wet desert sand is about twice as stiff as dry sand. A sledge glides far more easily over firm desert sand simply because the sand does not pile up in front of the sledge as it does in the case of dry sand.

It is quite likely that gigantic blocks of granite were transported from the quarries to the site of the pyramid by using the power of sound. According to occult philosophy, Sound is a tremendous occult power and a stupendous force. Electricity generated by a million of Niagaras could not counteract the force generated by sound, directed with *occult knowledge*. “Sound may be produced of such a nature that the pyramid of Cheops would be raised in the air, or that a dying man, nay, one at his last breath, would be revived and filled with new energy and vigour.” (*S.D.*, I, 555)

Who were the pyramid builders, and from where did they acquire the art of building? We are in the fifth sub-race of the Fifth Root Race or Aryan Root-Race. India, or rather, ancient *Aryavarta* has been called the cradle of civilization and the parent-stock of the Aryan Root-Race, which has been in existence for nearly a million years now. During these million years India has been the Foster-Mother, nourishing with her hoary culture the daughter-races in many Western lands. It began with Egypt. Egyptians were called “Eastern Ethiopians.” H.P.B. writes, “Egypt and India were the oldest in the group of nations; and...the Eastern Ethiopians—the mighty builders—had come from India as matured people” (*Isis*, I, 515). Further:

We are prepared to maintain that Egypt owes her civilization, commonwealth and arts—especially the art of building, to pre-Vedic India, and that it was a colony of the dark-skinned Aryans, or those whom Homer and Herodotus term the eastern

Æthiopians, *i.e.*, the inhabitants of Southern India, who brought to it their ready-made civilization in the ante-chronological ages, of what Bunsen calls pre-Menite, but nevertheless epochal history. (*Isis*, II, 435)

It appears that the modern authorities cannot to say with certainty, the purpose for which the pyramids were constructed, under what dynasty the first was raised, nor the material of which they are built. Herodotus tells us that every Egyptian king erected a pyramid to commemorate his rule, and also to serve as his sepulchre. However, the *real purpose* for building the pyramid was very different, writes H.P.B. Externally, a pyramid illustrates the principles of geometry, astronomy, astrology and mathematics. It is a symbol of the creative principle of nature. But internally, “it was a majestic fane, in whose sombre recesses were performed the Mysteries, and whose walls had often witnessed the initiation-scenes of members of the royal family.”

One of the *books of Hermes* describes certain of the pyramids as standing upon the sea-shore, “the waves of which dashed in powerless fury against its base.” This implies that the geographical features of the country must have changed, which in turn implies that the pyramids were in existence even before the upheaval of Sahara desert, and are not just few thousand years old as believed by the Egyptologists. There was a time when the whole of the Sahara desert was a sea, then a continent as fertile as the Delta, and then, only after another temporary submersion, it became a desert similar to that other wilderness, the desert of Shamo or Gobi (*S.D.*, II, 405). A sea rolled over what is now the Sahara desert, in *Miocene period*, as is proved by the shells found upon its surface, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 781-82)

(*To be concluded*)

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## CASTE SYSTEM AND INDIA’S REFORM

MUCH of the social evils which afflict the Indian society arise from one major source, which is the prevailing caste system. Hindu society is divided into thousands of mutually exclusive, often mutually bickering, castes, sub-castes, and tribes. The sole factors for the determination of the caste of individuals are birth, family lineage and occupation. Each of the many such caste groups have also been traditionally assigned a set social function, occupation and status, which are rigidly adhered to. Such caste identities are called *Jati*, which literally means *birth*, signifying that caste system is hereditary and unalterable. Inter-caste mobility is prohibited, and defiance of caste customs invites social ostracism. One of the most inhuman aspects of Hindu society is *untouchability*, in that a certain groups of people who have been traditionally carrying out scavenging functions are considered unclean, and segregated from the rest of the society as *untouchables*. Denied basic human rights and dignity they have suffered degradation for centuries.

Assumption of responsibilities, functions and status, attached traditionally to a particular caste hierarchy by individuals, by the mere fact of being born in it, irrespective of their actual inner character and fitness, is unnatural, and, therefore, can be only unjust. Neither is it an uncommon sight that many an individual of nobler character and qualities, born in lower rungs of caste hierarchy, are prevented from contributing to social good and progress by the constraints of the rigidity of caste barriers and prejudices. Centuries of disunity among castes and injustice have weakened Hindu society, and laid it open to political slavery and numerous other evils. Spread of western science, education and culture have, to some extent, broken the rigid barriers of caste division. But, by and large, caste identities and exclusiveness still continue, even among the educated classes, and exogamous marriages, barring exceptions, are not favoured.

Orthodox Brahminical authority upholds the hereditary caste

system and appeals to *Shastras* for its justification. But proper reading of the *Shastras* in the true spirit underlying them clearly shows that caste divisions of society on the basis of birth as now prevalent is wholly unjustified, and that the priest class has held fast to the dead letter, overlooking the true spirit and meaning of the ancient framers of the religious injunctions, in order to perpetuate its supremacy and traditional hold on the masses.

It is a well-known fact that priest classes have, at various times in the past, interpolated the ancient religious texts with statements with a view to impress upon the masses that caste is divinely ordained. For instance, the famous verse, which occurs in *Purusha Sukta*, which originally is a part of the corpus of the *Rig Veda*, reads: "Brahmana sprang from the face of Purusha, Rajanya (*Kshatriya*) from his arms, *Vaisya* from his thighs and the *Sudra* is sprung from his feet" (*Mantra* 10.90.12). Lower castes are thus made to believe that caste system has the sanction of the Vedas. Renowned scholar, *Veda Kamala*, Professor S.K. Ramachandra Rao has shown that these appellations of castes, *Brahmana*, *Rajanya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra*, have not been mentioned anywhere else in the whole of the *Rig Vedic* corpus, except in this particular verse, and that it is evidently a later insertion into the original corpus. He cites another renowned Vedic Scholar, Prof. P.V. Kane, who in his book, *History of Dharma Shastra*, vol. 2, pp. 18-104, has pointed out the same discrepancy. He further goes on to show that references in the *Yajur Veda* to four social orders are symbolic of the description of various faculties and powers of the Cosmic person, Purusha, and that these have no reference to, nor form a basis for, the hereditary caste system. That the *Laws of Manu* and *Puranas* have also been tampered with by sectarians in the post-*Mahabharatan* period in order to justify the institution of caste, and to buttress their sectarian dogmas, is an undisputed fact. (*Isis Unveiled*, vol. I, pp. 587-588, and *The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, pp. 333-334 and 423)

In order to understand the true spirit and intent of the system of

caste, one must study the ancient texts of India with an eye to their hidden sense, in the light of Theosophy. For instance, the *Bhagavad-gita* speaks of *natural* castes according to predominant tendencies of mind, character and merit of individuals, and the fitness of individuals to perform duties and functions for which each individual is naturally disposed. "Mankind was created by me of four castes distinct in their principles and in their duties according to natural distribution of the *actions* and *qualities*. Know me, then, although changeless and not acting, to be the author of this." (iv, 13)

Actions (*Karma*) and qualities (*Gunas*) which every individual is born with is a result of his deeds in the past lives, which alone determines his caste, and there is no reference to hereditary castes. This is natural caste system which is prevalent everywhere in all societies and nations. Four castes are spoken of because various vocations and pursuits people generally adopt, according to their natural inclinations, fall broadly into four divisions : learning and teaching, governance and warfare, trade and commerce, and, finally, service by manual labour.

Sanskrit word for caste is *Varna*. *Varna* literally means *colour*. Here the reference is not to visible colour of any external thing, but inner psychic and moral nature and character of individuals, represented by various combinations of shades of spiritual colours, which a perfect Seer can easily read. Speaking of the power of *true* clairvoyance and faultless Seeing by which the Seer is able to know the thoughts, the tendencies, motives and the essential character of a person, Mr. Robert Crosbie says:

It was because Wise men could read back of the spoken language, that they knew the very thoughts, feelings and nature of the speakers. That is why in person's motion—even so simple an action as in moving from one chair to another—the quality of the thought, the very nature of the person, is clearly shown by the assemblage of colours produced by the action. The same with any uttered sound or speech, no matter what—the centers

in the body are set in motion, each having its own particular telltale colour and rates of vibration. (*Universal Theosophy*, p. 133)

To the faultless vision of a perfect Seer, the whole *inner nature* of a person is an open book. This scientific fact is also well known to Jaina Saints and Sages. They call it the doctrine of *Lesya*, which they say is an aspect of Karma, in that the whole Karmic results of every individual are accurately preserved in his own inner nature, represented in various colour combinations, and which can be read by those who have reached perfection in spiritual progress. In ancient Indian society individuals assumed the duties and social functions strictly according to their *Varna*, and not on any other considerations. The natural distribution of duties according to the predominant qualities and disposition of individuals is well described in the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

The natural duty of a Brhamana compriseth tranquility, purity, self-mastery, patience, rectitude, learning, spiritual discernment, and belief in the existence of another world. Those of the Kshatriya sprung from his nature, are valour, glory, strength, firmness, not to flee from the field of battle, liberality and a lordly character. The natural duties of the Vaisya are to till the land, tend cattle and to buy and sell; and that of the Sudra is to serve, as is his natural disposition.” (xviii, 42-44)

Division of social responsibilities of individuals according to one's natural character and disposition was called *Varna Dharma*, and this was interwoven with four-fold division of duties of four stages of human life (*chaturashrama Dharma*) and four objects of human life (*Purusharthas*), whole life of individuals and society tending towards one Ideal end, which was emancipation of soul from conditioned existence and human perfection. Life of youth was devoted to learning under the tutelage of great Gurus the science of living the higher life, and practising self-control and continence; after completion of his education he entered the

householder's life, in which he pursued such vocation as best suited his *Varna*, pursuit of worldly prosperity and pleasures, which are natural to man, being regulated by the dictates of the Moral Order of the Universe (*Dharma*); householder's duties consisted chiefly in supporting the three other orders, and in fulfilling the five-fold debt and obligation, which every human being owes to all beings; in the third stage of life man repaired to the forest and lived a life of contemplation of Truth, helping, teaching and guiding those in need of help, and preparing himself for the fourth and the final stage, in which he entirely renounced all earthly ties and strove for final liberation till the death of the body.

The ethos of ancient Indian society rested on the foundation of Dharma—arising out of an awareness of the reciprocal interdependence of all beings and the law of sacrifice by which universe comes into being and evolves—which enjoined duty and obligation of individuals to strive to bring their whole life and nature to accord with the laws of Higher Life. The civilization lived in full harmony with Nature, which was revered by one and all, and Nature provided in abundance the necessary means of subsistence to all. Great Sages established *Ashrams*, moved freely among people, teaching and guiding them in right living, and counselling Rulers in good governance according to Dharma for the well-being of all. A study of the ancient Epics and Puranas of India gives us a glimpse into the perfect social order based on spiritual knowledge which prevailed, and the great heights of perfection the glorious civilization of India of the past had reached in all arts, sciences and philosophy, and the ideal of human perfection. How that perfection is reached is stated thus in the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

Men being contented and devoted to their own proper duties attain perfection; hear now how that perfection is attained by devotion to natural duty. If a man maketh offering to the Supreme Being who is the source of the works of all and by whom the universe was spread abroad he thus obtaineth perfection. (xviii, 45-46)

It was devotion to Truth, and sacrifice for the good of all, which were the moving spirit of society. It is also evident in the ancient texts that there were only four *Varnas*, and that there was free mobility of individuals from one to another, depending upon their progress or decline, due to their own actions, in their inner nature and qualities, and that the social organization and institutions perfectly accorded with the *Varna Dharma*.

India's decline is due to the corruption of the spirit of *Varna Dharma*. There has come about confusion of castes, called *varna sankara*, in the sense that the social conditions and circumstances of individuals, as also of the so-called caste groups, are not in accord with their true inner nature. This naturally led to unworthy people assuming duties of higher castes for which they were not fit, and worthy ones left out without opportunities, resulting in enormous abuses and injustices, which corrupted the society. India's reform consists in nothing short of abolition of the false caste system which prevails today, through spread of true spiritual knowledge and examples of right living.

Efforts at reform of the caste-based society, from as early as the time of the Buddha to recent reform movements, have had little effect. There is little prospect of reform coming from Brahminical priest class through enlightenment and awakening to the spirit of Universal Brotherhood. Therefore, the onus lies solely on individual philanthropists through self-education in the true spirit of ancient sacred texts, which do not justify the prevalent caste system, and to boldly come out of the caste hierarchy, and educate others through precept and personal example. Such an exercise by individuals poses much less antagonism and opposition at the present time than it would have in earlier decades, as the rigid hold of authority and caste customs have softened to a considerable extent in the wake of sweeping socio-economic changes brought on by westernization and progress in India, though the latter have been producing other kinds of baneful effects.

## 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:** Catholics believe in “intercessory prayers,” *i.e.*, praying to a saint to intercede with God for a particular favour. What is the Theosophical position in this matter?

**Answer:** Prayer is defined as communication with the sacred or holy. It could be God or gods, or supernatural powers. Prayer is generally considered to be a means of communicating one's problems, wishes and desires to the Almighty. Whether one believes in an anthropomorphic God or considers It to be an Omnipresent and Omniscient principle, all alike are tempted to engage in purely petitionary prayer.

In intercessory prayers one or more persons pray on behalf of others. In primitive societies, a person or persons expressed through prayers, the needs of others in a family, clan or a tribe. Among Babylonians and Assyrians, priesthood was established primarily to say prayers of intercession. The saints in Christianity, and the dervishes and mystics in Islam, are believed to have special powers, so that when they engage in “Prayers of Intercession,” the same would be efficacious.

Thus, for instance, every year in June, people from different faiths visit the Church of St. Anthony of Padua in Madhya Pradesh, India, to seek the saint's blessings. It is believed that St. Anthony is a great miracle worker and helps find lost things. The believers of St. Anthony of Padua pray to Jesus Christ through the intercession of St. Anthony to find lost things or persons and also receive blessings. There is an instance of a couple who prayed to St. Anthony to intercede with Jesus, and received a baby as the

“gift” of God. Another person was cured of serious ailment. Due to miraculous powers the saints can act as mediators between believers and God, writes Sumit Dhanraj. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, June 8, 2014)

In most cases, success from intercessory prayer is the result of operation of faith. Faith mobilizes the will, leading to desired results. But, we must abandon the idea of prayers as petitions to a God or Gods. Does an Omniscient God need to be told what should or should not be done? “Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him,” said Jesus. Sorrows and difficulties come to us under Karma and the Law of Karma works impartially, unerringly and righteously. When we engage in prayer or ceremonies asking for some particular thing, either personally or through the agency of another, we seek to deviate the course of the law of Karma. We are trying to assert our personal will against the divine will. H.P.B. asks us to replace useless prayers by meritorious deeds.

Petitionary prayers and, likewise, intercessory prayers kill self-reliance. A true devotee must seek to be in *direct* communication with the god within. In a prayer, that which prays is the personal self and that to which the prayer is addressed is the Divine nature. Unless these two are *consubstantial* in nature, no communion can take place. Hence there is need to purify the personal nature so that it is brought nearer to the Divine. This is what seems to happen in Will prayer. In such a prayer, the inner attitude is, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” There is no personal or selfish element and yet it is the finite good that is desired. It seems that for a brief space of time the mind is unfettered and becomes one with the divine and hence it is as if the potentialities and powers of the divine nature, in terms of will power become available, and we find our thoughts and desires translated into action.

Repentance and penance are prayers for freeing ourselves from the Satan of desires. Contemplation is prayer for aspiring to touch the Soul, and to hear its “still, small voice,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

It is useless to pray to any finite gods, who, being embodiments of the Law of Karma, would never contravene the Law.

**Question:** If Universal Brotherhood is a “fact” in nature, then why the first object of Theosophy is to build a *nucleus* of Universal Brotherhood?

**Answer:** There is no contradiction in these two statements. In the lower kingdoms of nature we are able to see that Universal Brotherhood is a fact, in the phenomenon of symbiosis. Whenever two organisms of different species exist in close physical contact to the benefit of both organisms, it is called symbiosis. Symbiosis can occur between animals, plants, fungi or any combination thereof. Each organism contributes something that benefits the survival of the other, and in turn receives a survival benefit of its own. The Gaia theory suggests that Earth itself is a living organism existing in symbiosis with all the other life forms living on it. This theory is used to explain the relatively stable environment on Earth that allows life to thrive.

In the article, “Universal Brotherhood Is A Fact In Nature,” Mr. Judge illustrates oneness of humanity and of the whole of existence. For instance, when it rains over a certain area vast numbers of men are affected in a similar way. The rain has to fall on the fields in order that the harvest may grow, so that afterwards it may be gathered, and all the farmers are affected together by the rain. In a given city, people go to their offices at the same hour, have their lunch at the same hour and in the evening return home at the same hour, and then come home, eat and digest food together at the same hour. In a small way this shows that in the social life we are affected together and united together.

We are all united on the inner and invisible planes, and are continually affecting each other through our thoughts, feelings and actions. Science admits that each one of us exudes or throws out atoms. But these atoms are replaced by the atoms which were used by other men. There is continuous exchange of atoms. “And therefore the atoms of good men go into bad men, the atoms

impressed by bad men go into good men and *vice versa*. In that way as well as others, we are affecting everybody in this world; the people in Chicago who are living mean, selfish lives are impressing these invisible atoms with mean and selfish characters, and these mean and selfish atoms will be distributed by other men, and by you again to your and their detriment. This is another phase of Universal Brotherhood,” writes Mr. Judge. (*The Heart Doctrine*, p. 67)

If Petroleum price rises, it affects even the common man. If there is large-scale deforestation, killing of certain species of animals, it leads to serious ecological disturbances with far-reaching consequences. When there is a calamity, when there is a natural disaster like tsunami, cyclone, earthquake, flood, destroying thousands of homes, killing millions of people, bringing on large-scale destruction and death and consequent poverty and misery, we are touched and shaken. We are able to feel their pain and loss, and respond to their cry for help spontaneously. Sadly, it takes such catastrophes to awaken and arouse our innate brotherly feeling.

*The Theosophical Glossary* defines “Humanity” as the “great brotherhood by virtue of the sameness of the material from which it is formed, physically and morally,” but adds significantly, that “Unless, however, it becomes a Brotherhood also intellectually, it is no better than a superior genus of animals.” Theosophy teaches us that the whole of humanity is an emanation from one source, which is divine. And having come from the same source, we are children of one family. Each one of us is essentially a divine being, though we have forgotten who we really are. Students of Theosophy and those who are aspiring to live the spiritual life must make a beginning by trying to inculcate the feeling of brotherhood among the few and thus forming a “nucleus” or a powerful spiritual centre, where each tries to participate in the joys and sorrows of others and ultimately begins to *identify* himself with others in the group, overcoming the sense of separateness.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

If we are observant and reflective enough we have a chance to convert ordinary moments of life into Eureka moments, like Archimedes, who jumped out of his bath naked, to propound the Theory of Displacement, or like Newton, who arrived at the Law of Gravitation when an apple fell on his head. We can find inspiration in smaller things of life, if we have an observant eye and a mind that is questioning, reflecting, discussing and understanding. A movement of random acts of kindness and generosity was triggered, when a lady in Boston started anonymously leaving blankets for the poor on benches, on cold nights.

At times, the will to fight big battles comes from small things. For instance, German Communist, Alois Pfaller, persistently struggled against the Nazis, and stood up against them despite merciless beatings, for eleven years in concentration camps. He said that the necessary courage and determination came from having competed with his step-sister to win the attention of his step-mother. Though he failed in his attempt, he swore that when he grew up he will always fight against injustice, thus converting his deeply ingrained sense of hurt into something positive. Likewise, Gandhiji experienced racial discrimination in South Africa, when he was thrown off a train, and that motivated him to fight against injustice. In 1871, noted Indian industrialist Jamsetji Tata was denied entry into the all-whites Watson Hotel in Mumbai, and that triggered him to build the Taj Mahal Hotel down the same road. “That is the sign of a great individual, one who is able to elevate himself above present and personal circumstances and rather than avenge personal slights in a narrow, vindictive manner, or allow them to stigmatise him, decides to lock horns with the evil itself. . . . The ability to take on negativity and turn it to a positive learning, to be able to look at little positives and use them to spur you on to greater goodness, and to observe everyday phenomena and find deeper, scientific or spiritual meanings in them—this is the stuff greatness is made of,”

writes Vinita Dawra Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, June 1, 2014)

A poet or a dramatist going down the street sees much more than an ordinary man. He seems to “see” men’s thoughts, emotions, failings, limitations and puts them together in his poem or a play. We can attain to inspiration by developing intuition. It is only when we are able to appreciate things impersonally, transcending the pairs of opposites, that inspiration can reflect itself in us as in a deep, tranquil lake. Inspiration is a matter of being able to exercise higher faculties of the mind, and being able to see and think about the most trifling things from the higher plane of thought. Thus:

The higher part of the mind is connected with the Spiritual soul or *Buddhi*, the lower with the animal soul, the *Kama* principle. There are persons who never think with the higher faculties of their mind at all; those who do so are the minority...and are...*beyond* the average human kind. These will think even upon ordinary matters on the *higher* plane. Certainly it [the habit of thinking on a higher plane] can be developed with great difficulty, a firm determination, and through much self-sacrifice....Why is it that one person sees poetry in a cabbage or a pig with her little ones, while another perceives in the loftiest things only their lowest and most material aspect...? The difference depends simply on the innate power of the mind to think on the higher or on the lower plane. (*Raja Yoga or Occultism*, pp. 205-6)

We must labour to acquire a little inspiration within ourselves by seeing through the sordidness of life, by the control of desires of the flesh, and by the conquest of laziness of body and mind. Coleridge mentioned “esemplastic” or unifying power of the imagination. It is the ability to shape diverse elements or concepts into a unified whole. It is this esemplastic power of imagination which enables a scientist to reduce diverse observations to a guiding principle.

What makes us happy? Why some people are happier than others? Landmark twins research from University of Minnesota, USA found that roughly fifty per cent of differences in happiness from one person to another is genetically determined. We are always going through hills and valleys, but our DNA is responsible for our overall general attitude or what is called “happiness set point.” Ten per cent of difference in happiness levels is influenced by life circumstances and environmental factors which keep changing, says Sonja Lyubomirsky, happiness researcher at the University of California, Riverside. The remaining forty per cent of difference in happiness levels can be taken care of by intentional change in four key areas: *family, community, work and faith*.

The still-ongoing Grant Study launched at Harvard University in the year 1938 confirmed that having a loving childhood predicts happiness in adulthood. “The secret of happiness is giving and accepting love” because people need to establish meaningful connections with other people in order to truly feel joy, says George Vaillant, director of the Grant Study from 1972 to 2004. He observes that it is not possible to feel any of the positive emotions such as joy, faith, hope, love, awe, gratitude, which lead to happiness, without establishing connection.

The community that one builds around oneself, primarily one’s friends, can help boost one’s happiness. “All the happiest people have close relationships—at least a few people you can really count on,” says Ed Diener, psychology professor at University of Illinois. But research has also shown that happiest people tend to think of others, not just themselves. Lonely people with no confidante tend to be unhappy, but surprisingly, it has been found that today, with increased dependence on technology and telecommuting, more people are isolated. To be happy, Diener suggests that one should focus on the *good* in other people and in one’s life.

Work provides meaning and purpose to life and hence is very closely tied with happiness. People can rely on religion (faith) and spirituality to become happier people, partly because following

spirituality often involves belonging to a like-minded group, and thus connection with people. Hope, trust, forgiveness and awe, are the emotions which lead to well-being or happiness, and are generally associated with religion and spirituality. Lasting contentment can be ours if we look in the right places, writes Lisa Fields. (*Reader's Digest*, June 2014)

All of us desire happiness, and we work very hard to get all that the world considers necessary for a happy life, yet none of these things can make us happy. There is increasing realization that getting the desired object or reaching desired goal, or much wealth or gadgets, may give us only *temporary* happiness, but lasting happiness still eludes us. We must admit that human relationship has changed radically. In the ultimate analysis one finds that today more people are unhappy due to lack of meaningful human relationship than due to any other reason. Social connectedness is directly related to health and happiness. In the consumerist culture, some of us try to fill the void by turning to objects that would define one's identity through possessions, while others turn to drinks and drugs. It is our self-centredness that has alienated us from the others. The key lies in not being dependent on others, and yet continuing to remain connected with other human beings—achieving a balance between independence and interdependence.

True happiness results when even for a few moments we forget ourselves, because then we are able to establish contact with our higher nature—God within. When we are admiring a painting or listening to a piece of music or observing a sunset, we do forget ourselves for those moments. We sometimes experience this bliss when we become successful in meditation. We also experience this happiness when we forget ourselves in helping someone or in doing good works without any self-interest. So long as we are searching for happiness, we are bound to be unhappy. But when we cease to make happiness our goal, we shall definitely have it as a kind of by-product.

According to the *Kula Armava Tantra*, it is impossible to get liberated without *diksha* or initiation. Yogic *diksha* is primarily a form of *sancara* or spiritual transmission, by which the disciple's bodily, mental and spiritual conditions are changed through the adept's transference of spiritual "energy" or "consciousness." In the informal initiation, the spiritual process is either awakened or magnified in the practitioner, which involves change in consciousness and conversion from ordinary worldliness to a sacred life. Initiation creates a spiritual connection between the guru and the devotee, which represents a unique responsibility on the teacher's part and a significant challenge for the practitioner.

In another sense, by virtue of great spiritual advancement, the adept-teacher becomes a locus of concentrated psycho-spiritual energy and his body-mind is like a powerful radio beacon. In Plato's works there is a conversation recorded between Socrates and his pupil Aristeides, and the latter confesses that his philosophical understanding increased whenever he was in association with Socrates, and that this effect was most pronounced when he sat close to him and touched him. In Aristotle's case, it was intellectual insight that was deepened by the sheer proximity to Socrates. However, during yogic initiation the initiate is inducted into secret dimensions of existence and he becomes aware that the apparent material cosmos and his body is a vast sea of psycho-spiritual energy. Under the impact of the God-realised adept's spontaneous transmission, the practitioner undergoes spiritual crisis after crisis and gradually awakens, and finds that his egoic impulses, and obsessions have become increasingly obsolete, writes Georg Feuerstein. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, June 22, 2014)

Initiation may be described as a trial or a test, which every earnest spiritual aspirant has to pass through and which helps to determine if the aspirant is ready to take the next step on the Path. In Raja-Yoga tradition, when one aspires to reach perfection and enlightenment, one is faced with strange and awesome trials of

initiation, before he can be accepted as a disciple by the guru. There are levels and levels of initiation, wherein the aspirant is subjected to progressively difficult trials, through which he proves his strength and readiness for spiritual rebirth. But before coming to that stage, writes Mr. Judge, each aspirant has to learn to face “daily initiations,” which come from moment to moment. They are met in our relation with our fellows, and in the way we react to all circumstances of life. And if we fail in these, we never get to the point where greater ones are offered. Further,

When we have learnt to encounter every vexation absolutely without complaint, either internally or externally—if it disturbs us in the slightest degree within, it is just as bad as if we expressed it in words or action—then, and not till then, can we expect to be given the opportunity to take a decided step forwards. For the secret of advancement is the development of the will through its union with the Divine Will. By meeting the ordinary ills of life with unvexed soul we educate and strengthen our will, fitting us for further advancement. Humbleness, Patience and Content are the first three steps that lead to the door.

In Raja-Yoga tradition, there is no “transferring” and “receiving.” For, every step of the ladder of spiritual progress is climbed by one’s own efforts. It is true that great and powerful forces are playing around spiritually advanced beings and when one goes in their presence one’s whole nature would be stirred up. It is said of T. Subba Row, F.T.S., that he showed no early signs of possessing mystical knowledge, but after he contacted H. P. Blavatsky, it was as if a storehouse of occult experience, long forgotten, had been suddenly opened to him. The contact thus, working as some sort of catalyst. Mr. Judge assures the earnest student-seekers, saying, “we may already be initiated into some higher degree than our present attainment would suggest, and are undergoing a new trial unknown to ourselves.”