

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India  
email: [ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in](mailto:ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in) ♦ Phone : 22039024  
website: [www.ultindia.org](http://www.ultindia.org)

### ON APPEARANCES

WE LIVE in the world which goes by “appearances.” White skin glamourises us, while a dark skinned person is discriminated against. Beauty of complexion scores over beauty of character. When a certain good-looking criminal was arrested, many women felt that he was too handsome to go to jail! We feel that a physically attractive person is bound to possess noble, or at least, socially desirable personality traits. “Your looks definitely help you get away with a lot,” says former Miss World, Diana Hayden. It is good to ask ourselves, “To what extent beauty influences our minds and warps our judgement?” Our eyes tend to rest on a beautiful person in the crowd. This undue influence of exterior beauty is termed “halo effect” or a cognitive bias, in psychology. A study in the United Kingdom (UK) revealed that good-looking criminals can turn the jury in their favour. In “The Qualities of the Prince,” Machiavelli states that one of the traits that is necessary for a leader to obtain and retain his position, is his appearance.

In our world “anything that would achieve success has to be built on *appearances, not on reality, on self-assertion, not on intrinsic value,*” writes H.P.B. Our civilization is built up of shams and appearances, and we offer prizes and premiums for every “*best thing*” under the Sun—for the biggest baby and the largest orchid—but offer no encouragement to morality. Beautiful appearance has an almost hypnotizing effect on both children and adults, and

advertisers take advantage of it. In an advertisement, when a beautiful girl in silk gown recommends buying soap or toothpaste of a particular brand, we are induced to buy it, without thinking that there is no earthly connection between the merits of the toothpaste and the beautiful girl in the silk gown advertising it.

Beauty of form does not guarantee beauty of character. In some other context, Mr Judge remarks, “We are aware that an unhandsome or deformed body often enshrines a glorious mind and pure soul, and that a beautifully formed exterior—such as in the case of the Borgias—may hide an incarnate devil in character.” And yet, especially in India, boys prefer fair girls, and in arranged marriages it is extremely difficult to get a match for dark-complexioned girls. Appearance versus Reality is the central theme of the Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*. One character says, “There is no art to finding the mind’s construction in the face,” meaning thereby that a person’s face can hide anything, and that it is impossible to tell what a person truly is. And then there is a thought-provoking line, “Fair is foul, and foul is fair.”

We know by experience that appearances can be deceptive. All that glitters is not gold, and there could be a Wolf in sheep’s clothing. Small in size, need not be small in might. There is this legend of a mighty demon king called Bali who took care of the well-being and prosperity of his people. It is said that he was trying to trap Laxmi and get her to his kingdom from Vaikuntha, in order to bring prosperity exclusively to *his kingdom*. Vishnu then decided to teach him a lesson and took the form of a dwarf and went to Bali, who was conducting a great sacrifice. Now Bali welcomed this dwarf wholeheartedly and requested him to have anything as a sacrificial gift. Vishnu asked him to give him land which he could cover in three strides. Thinking, how much land this dwarf could cover in his three strides, Bali consented. Then the dwarf-Vishnu assumed a huge form and with his first step he covered the earth, with the second he covered the heavens, and for the third step Bali had to allow Vishnu to put his foot on his head. Thereupon, Vishnu, who

is also called *Trivikrama*—the Lord of three strides—became extremely pleased with Bali and put his foot on Bali’s head and pushed him beneath to *Patala*, the nether region, where he was given a kingdom exclusively for himself. In the *Rig Veda*, Vishnu says that he is the dwarf seated in the centre of all beings.

In the *Mahabharata* we read about Hall of Illusions (*Maya sabha*) which was constructed as a palace for the eldest of the Pandavas, King Yudhisthira, by the great architect Mayasura, an Atlantean. The divine palace with its reflective, illusory and brilliant features caused confusion. When Duryodhana, a proud and arrogant Kaurava prince, jealous of the material prosperity of the Pandavas, entered this palace, he walked into a wall taking it to be a door. Next he came upon what looked like a giant glassy pool of crystal-clear water, but taking his first step he realized that it was a crystal floor. Few steps ahead, when he came across another crystal floor he confidently walked ahead, only to find that he had stepped into a pool of water. This story is wonderfully symbolic of our obsession with illusive material world, which engulfs us completely. At every step we are reminded of having mistaken shadows for realities.

Since people and things are judged more by appearance than their inner worth, we spend more energy in improving the external appearance. Every few months there is a new brand of soap, shampoo, coffee and biscuits, from the same manufacturer, carrying a tag, “new and improved.” We are lured to buy the “new” product that appears in a “new” container or a wrapper, definitely looking more attractive, but with very little change in the quality.

Saki writes humourously in “The Story of St. Vespalus,” who is quoted as saying, “I don’t mind being revered, honoured and greeted; I don’t even mind being sainted in moderation, as long as I am not expected to be saintly as well.” Cant and hypocrisy are called unpardonable sins. Cant is insincere moral talk. It is easy to speak of morality without attempting to practice. There is always the danger of deluding others and ourselves into believing that we have made great progress, just because we *preach* morality.

Today, there are several self-proclaimed “Babas” and “saints” who wear saffron robes, keep long beard and claim to cure diseases, and are able to draw crowds, which the gullible take to be the yardstick to gauge their Spiritual Quotient. We get carried away by externalities like charm, charisma, good looks and magnetism. An enlightened soul is devoid of personality. The most important tool on the spiritual path is cultivation of intuition that would enable us to judge the quality of a person’s soul. The real mark of an enlightened soul is freedom from desire. A true guru makes one self-dependent by helping to awaken the inner guru, the powerful guide within. The best policy is to go from the teachings to the teacher. A Master of Wisdom says that if you want to know us, know our philosophy, and if you want to serve us, serve our humanity. A true philosophy must be impersonal, universal in its application and must be true at all times. It must enhance the feelings of goodwill and brotherhood. Similarly, a true teacher always presents the truth in the spirit, “Thus have I heard,” and leaves it open to be accepted or rejected.

The Mother says that a stick dipped halfway into water appears to be bent in the middle, but that is an illusion. If you pull the stick out, you will see that it is straight. Whether it is an object or a person you should trust appearances as little as possible and never judge anyone lightly. It can happen that one judges too respectfully and trustingly those who least deserve it. So also, by trusting to appearances one is tempted to make hasty and uncharitable judgments on others.

We are advised not to judge any action based on externalities. The sin or polluting effect of an action, as well as the merit or purifying result of an action are not in the nature of mere action performed; they are found in the inner feeling that accompanies that act. Often a so-called good action is performed with an impure or ulterior motive, and an apparently bad action is found to have an underlying good motive. Every action has a soul and a body—the inner feeling and the outer performance. The motive with which

the action is performed constitutes the soul of the action. A spiritual aspirant has to be ever careful to look at the inner motive and not judge the outer deed. One may give away millions of rupees in charity, but if the same is done with the intention of earning name and fame, the act will fail to benefit his real character in the least. It is motive, and motive alone, which draws a line between White and Black Magic.

It is by purifying our thoughts, words and deeds that we are able to cultivate true or spiritual discrimination, to see things as they are. When Yudhisthira, the eldest Pandava, of noble character, was asked to find one *bad* person in a gathering, he came back saying, “There is not a single bad person. All are good.” When Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, and of meanest character, was asked to find one *good* person in the same gathering, he came back saying, “I searched high and low, but could not find a single good person. There are only bad people.” It shows that as a person is, the world appears to him to be like himself. However, it also shows extremes in perception. It is good to be honest and upright and try to see good in others, but one must also be able to distinguish between good and bad. Shri Krishna had that sort of discernment, which both Duryodhana and Yudhisthira lacked. We ought to be able to see evil as evil, and good as good. In *The Dhammapada*, Lord Buddha draws attention to warped psychology, thus:

They who feel shame when there is no cause for shame and they who feel no shame when they ought to be ashamed—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines....They who fear when there is no cause for fear and they who do not fear when they ought to fear—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines....They who discern evil where there is no evil and they who see nothing evil in what is evil—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines. (verses 316-18)

Mind is the Slayer of the Real, and “he who awakes illusion.” We say that our perceptions are coloured by our conceptions. We

are not able to see things as they are because our mind is covered with dust of attachment, dust of passions, dust of prejudice and biases. The reason why we fail to understand our own true nature is because of our false ideas, false conceptions of life and false ideals. It is man's false conceptions of life that prevent him from knowing the truth. He is then afraid or ashamed when in reality there is no need to be afraid or ashamed. We tend to judge things based on our limited ideas and start seeing evil where there is no evil; or we may fail to see evil in what is evil. *The Voice of the Silence* speaks of "the right perception of existing things, and the knowledge of the non-existent," which means being aware that we are all fragments of the divine. The absence of spiritual discernment is delusion. "The deluded despise me in human form, being unacquainted with my real nature as Lord of all things," says Krishna. (*Gita*, IX)

In philosophy, the concept of "appearance" implies an opposition between the perception of a thing and its objective reality. Many philosophical systems have posited that the world as it appears is not the world of reality. Thus, in the Advaita Vedanta School of Shankaracharya, the finite phenomenal world is regarded as an illusion, and the unchanging *Brahman* to be the only Reality. Immanuel Kant distinguishes between the *noumenon*, or the unknowable reality, and the *phenomenon*, or the appearance of reality. Scientists claim to know reality as opposed to appearance, but their reality is relative reality, the world of appearances which we apprehend through our five senses. Though this world is not completely false, Plato argues that above and beyond this world of appearance there is a super sensible world, called archetypal or noumenal world, on which the phenomenal world is based. The ultimate realities that the metaphysician seeks to know are precisely the *things as they are*, which are exempt from change. It is through a series of progressive awakenings, when our consciousness has blended with the Absolute consciousness that we will rise beyond appearances, free from the delusions produced by Maya.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT PILGRIM'S BUNDLE

IN JOHN Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* the pilgrim carries a bundle which hinders his advance and only when it is shed is he free. But there is another kind of Pilgrim's Bundle, a Burden which is lifted and carried by another kind of Pilgrim. That Burden cannot be dropped by this Pilgrim; it can only remove itself from the Pilgrim's back and walk alongside.

Such Burdens are ourselves; such Pilgrims are the Great Ones. Mr. Judge's phrase, "Masters need companions," put side by side with the phrase, "Let the sins of the whole world fall on Me," should bring us up with a start. Am I a Burden or a Companion?

All of us would admit that we are Burdens, for, having accepted the idea of working in and with the Theosophical Movement, our blunders and mistakes, conscious and *unconscious*, are an added weight on the Pilgrims behind the Movement, and none of us are free from blunders! So, what shall we do?

The first step towards any improvement is intellectual honesty, *i.e.*, admitting to *ourselves* first and foremost, and then to others when necessary, that we are burden in spite of our best endeavours.

The second step is to follow Mr. Judge's hints as to the best way to become truly devoted to a Great Teacher. He tells us that if we do not truly evaluate our daily teacher we shall not be able to evaluate truly the Great Teacher; if we do not reverence our immediate teacher we shall fail in reverence towards the greater Teacher. So, if we remain a burden to our immediate teacher we shall remain a burden to the Greater Teacher.

We are fond of saying that Life is a School. So it is, but there are schools within Life's School. Each Lodge is a School, the Movement is a greater School, Chelaship is a higher School still. We are mostly concerned with the School of our Lodge, for therein are the ingredients which will enable us to take our part in the Great School of the Lodge.

Let us remember that the U.L.T. is the first stage of that School wherein servers of Humanity are trained to work for it under the guidance, and along the lines, of the Great Workers for Humanity whose hands hold back the awful Karma of the world. It is a kind of nursery school where we are much concerned with learning how to control our vehicles and how to react properly to other students and to our surroundings. Secondly, though simultaneously, we are concerned in the Lodge with learning the Abc of the Great Work, the mathematical tables and the geometrical axioms and postulates and with the practice of the expression of those in words and acts.

All Schools have teachers, and most Schools have a motto, or what is called “the honour of the School.” The Lodge has a motto; it too stands for something. Its motto is “There is no religion higher than Truth.” Every student who does not live up to this motto fails to honour the School, and in so failing lets down the School. Truth as a religion is much more than not telling a barefaced lie; it includes what is for us the most important of all the aspects of Truth, intellectual honesty. That is, to admit the truth to ourselves without excusing away falsehood. Intellectual honesty is the base of the statute of Truth; it is the foundation on which integrity is built. It means being true to ourselves and true to all and at all times. This does not mean bluntness, but has its root in the law of Necessity. If we are intellectually honest we will not find ourselves taking the position that we go about telling others the truth! Truth to anyone is what he finds out *for himself*, not something someone tells him. Truth stated by us is accepted by others in proportion as we *live* it.

Each School has a Head. Has a Lodge a Head? Just as H.P.B. said the Society had her attributes and magnetism, so a Lodge has within it the life and magnetism of those who started it and took on themselves the responsibility for its working along the Original Lines. Some such betray their trust; some do not. As a Lodge grows it depends not only on the founders but also on the teachers and the pupils to hold true to the lines laid down.

It is here that we are mostly burdens. The student who does not

prepare properly his platform work, places an added burden on the one in the chair; the student who does not turn up to give his assignment is an added burden likewise. The student who says, “Oh, I can’t do that,” and makes no effort, is another burden. Negative burdens are those who say they have no time to do odd jobs of work to help. It is unfortunately still true that few people will work from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. unless they have to for money to live on! How many excuses are made by those who do not need the money! Everything that they find it necessary to do is also necessary for the one who goes out to earn his living. Yet it is the lack of the time and energy of those who need not work for money which lays such a heavy burden on the shoulders of the few who do work, not from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. but far into the night, though they not only take no money for their work but indeed give of their money as well as of their energy and their time. Odd jobs, *reliability* in odd jobs, willingness to take a book and study if there is nothing to do at the moment, but to be there, in case there is something that is needed to be done—what a boon in a busy Lodge!

If, selfishly, one is looking for personal advancement there is no speedier method than *right* performance of such acts. To work in the Movement or in the Lodge demands more than kindness, friendliness or knowledge; it needs the capacity to sense the plan, to become part of it. It is true that the more we know the better we know how little we know. The more we sense the great Plan and its ramifications the less inclined we are to rush in and act; the more inclined we are to watch and to seek the advice of those who know more than we do of the Plan and its immediate relationships.

Let us remember that to work for Theosophy implies that we work in the Theosophical way. When we have learnt *that*, we are Companions, however little advanced—but that will take many lives to acquire. For many lives, by our personal stupid and arrogant actions we add to the burden of the workers; we increase their work. We think we are trying to learn to think before acting—why not really do so by asking advice before acting in anything which affects

the Cause? A true teacher will not say “Do this,” or “Do that,” but will give the principles which apply in any specified case. It is better to learn by following such principles than by following our own immature ones, provided we do learn so that the next time we ourselves shall know what to do!

Every ounce of burden lifted from the shoulders of our working comrades not only frees their hands for further efforts but is also so much burden lifted from the Great Ones, for the Work is Theirs and They carry the burden of all who link their efforts up with Theirs.

Am I a Burden or a Companion?

[Taken from *The Theosophical Movement*, January 1949.]

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Unity—Study—Work, as a Triad, will make any associate of the United Lodge of Theosophists, an earnest *working* member. Such an associate will help the work, and he should try to do so by every means in his power. H.P.B. wrote that “No one is asked to give more than he can afford, whether in devotion, time, work or money,” but she added that “No fellow has a right to remain idle.” However, “The earnest working members are few,” writes H.P.B. A working member works and thinks of the work all the time. The service of human souls is his objective.

The statement: “To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou can’st not then be false to any man,” is seen to be the key to living the Higher Life. Thus, gradually, study and exemplification of the philosophy become one effort, despite our failure to wholly live up to the highest we perceive. As we understand more clearly the workings of the personal self, and bases of its actions, in the light of our True Self, our desire to work for a wider spread of the Theosophical ideas grows stronger, and becomes the one prime motive in life. Each person is a tiny lever. We must be careful that our words do not obstruct any of these levers. It is through these levers, ramifying in all directions that greatest results are brought about.

## JUSTICE—VIRTUE OF THE SOUL

THE IDEA of justice, and the question of the origin of the idea of justice, are complex. Ordinarily it implies a quality of being just, equitable, unbiased, impartial and moral rightness. It is clearly an innate moral principle of the human consciousness. Therefore, the idea pervades every aspect of the life of individuals as well as that of the body politic. The many contexts, such as, natural, ethical, religious, social, political, and so on, in which the idea is sought to be practically applied and its value realized, are so vast, subtle and complex with many ramifications that no one simple definition of it can encompass the whole gamut of the idea of justice. Various theories are propounded by thinkers from different perspectives to account for the origin of the idea of justice. They have discoursed on the principles of justice, and indispensability of their applications in good governance and a just social order. It would of course be out of place here to discuss the various theories, and their relative merits. It will however be, not out of place, but necessary and edifying, to consider in brief, in the light of Theosophy, the salient features of the idea of Justice discoursed by Plato in his *The Republic*. For did not Emerson say, “Out of Plato comes all things that are still written and debated among men of thought”? And we can confidently say that it is to Plato that the modern scholars have to turn for the rectification of the shortcomings of their respective theories and conceptions of justice.

Plato strenuously contends with the superficial and erroneous ideas of the sophists about the virtue of justice in his discourse in *The Republic*. He demonstrates with dialectical reasoning the conception prevalent in his day, which is held by some political thinkers even at the present time, that it is no more than a set of rules of behaviour which early human society evolved by mutual consent in order to secure harmonious social life, and that it is not an intrinsic quality of human consciousness, to be incorrect. He shows that governance based on a legal system established for the good of the

civil society with an implicit assumption that justice is just a social contract, a political expediency, extrinsic to human nature, is self-defeating. But when justice as the intrinsic virtue of the human soul is understood, recognized and given full expression to, through the right education, it will spontaneously lead to human perfection and make the civil state an ideal republic.

Interestingly, the very faulty notions of justice which in the days of Plato were popular, and which the then writers and poets fortified with their rhetoric, thus corrupting the minds of youth, are prevalent to this day. *The Dhammapada* truly says: “Easy it is to do evil; deeds which are harmful to oneself come easy. Exceedingly hard it is to do that which is beneficial and good” (Verse 163). To live by an abstract principle, having found it to be true and good, requires much thought, discrimination, determination, conviction, concerted effort, and sacrifice. Justice, in its true sense, is one such principle. The general tendency of men of the world, therefore, is to view justice in the latter sense to be disadvantageous and, on the contrary, to regard injustice as advantageous, and more powerful, than justice for a happy life, and for gaining the world. This is well demonstrated in *The Republic*. Those who commend injustice believe that a just man would be scourged, tormented, subjected to all manner of evils and will be crucified; and that, therefore, he should not desire justice but feign appearance of justice, which will give him the advantage of having the reputation of being just in the eyes of the world, and at the same time enjoy the benefits of unjust conduct. If justice is commended at all, it is for the sake of the rewards it confers on those who feign it. Parents, shows Plato, exhort their sons to be just, not for the sake of the virtue of justice itself, pure and simple, but for the sake of honour arising out of it; so that reputation of being just brings to man many privileges, like magistracy, marriage, good report, religious merit, favour of the gods, and so on. Homer, the poet, is cited by those who favour the easy way of injustice, that gods can be appeased and made to atone suppliant’s sins, and thus overcome the negative effects of unjust conduct. In short, the ways

of the worldly is that justice without reputation is unprofitable, one who feigns justice is said to have a divine life, and that appearance surpasses reality. What should be the effects of such rhetoric on young minds, rues Plato. But such of them as are discriminating and intelligent, are able to examine the doctrines presented to them and deliberate on the best course they may follow, soliloquize, says Plato, in the words of Pindar:

Whether shall I the lofty wall  
Of justice try to scale;  
Or, hedg’d within the guileful maze  
Of vice, encircled dwell?

Plato says that no one is willingly just unless one is convinced that the popular opinion, as said above, is false, is persuaded that justice is better, and abhors to do injustice from a divine nature or from acquired knowledge. But the essential point Plato makes is that none of them who have called themselves commanders of justice have sufficiently examined justice as a thing subsisting by its own power in the soul of man, concealed from gods and men, so as to show, by contrast, that injustice is the greatest of evils which the soul has within it, and justice the greatest good. Such a man who has realized it in himself would do no injustice, even under most trying circumstances. So, persuaded from youth everyone would be the best guardian over himself, and knows that to do injustice is to dwell in greatest evil. Such are the self-governed sages.

Plato demonstrates the difference between one who adheres to the principle of justice for its own sake, unmindful of the opinion of the world, on the one hand, and the one who feigns justice for the worldly advantages it brings, on the other, by resorting to the allegory of the ring of Gyges. If two rings of Gyges were given, one to a confessedly unjust man, and the other, to the one who is reputed to be just but not actually so; it would then be most likely that both would unhesitatingly use the ring, which makes the wearer invisible and his deeds undetectable, for the commission of crimes for their

personal gratification and profit. Hence, the conclusion is that no one is just by choice, but by constrain. Plato says that the most complete injustice is, to seem to be just, while not being so actually. In other words, as H.P.B. shows, cant and hypocrisy are the worst of human vices.

But the one truly just, however, even when endowed with such liberty as complete anonymity as the ring of Gyges confers on him who wears it, such an one, even then, would never do any injustice, nor touch the things of others, though he would be deemed a wretched fool by men, or even when falsely implicated in unjust deeds, but would not yield to reproach, nor deviate from the principle of justice even in the face of death. Such is the truly just man.

Qualities of justice and injustice arise from the dual soul of man. Plato says that the expression, “Master of oneself” implies a man superior to himself and also inferior to himself, which both appear in the same person in respect of his soul. One part is better and more excellent in his nature, which governs the inferior part. The inferior part is the worse part of the soul, which, if through ill-education, conquers the better part, then man is a slave to himself and is licentious. Just man, therefore, is a self-governed Sage, and he who is not self-governed is necessarily unjust and licentious. Just as salutary and noxious are in the body, justice and injustice are in the soul. Such things that are noxious produce disease and such as are healthy constitute health. Similarly, says Plato, doing justly by following the dictates of the higher part of the soul produce justice, which is source of all good and happiness; and doing unjustly, following the dictates of the inferior part of the soul, produce injustice which is productive of much evil. One is virtue and the other vice. “Virtue then, it seems, is a sort of health, and beauty, and good habit of the soul; and vice the disease, and deformity, and infirmity. . . . Do not then honourable pursuits lead to the acquisition of virtue, and dishonourable ones to that of vice?” (*The Republic of Plato*, by Thomas Taylor, p. 126). Plato teaches the principles of true education which builds character by inculcation of the virtues of the soul in

the young, and thereby lay the foundation of an ideal city-state based on justice.

There are three distinct parts of the soul: the rational, the irrational, and the principle of passion or anger. Though anger has affinity to the concupiscent part of the soul, it also sometimes allies itself with reason, and becomes its auxiliary. The irascible part may therefore be trained to ally with reason and to compel appetites of the irrational part to conform to the dictates of the rational soul. The part which reasons about good and evil reprehends the other part which unreasonably angers.

The same set of principles govern a city also as they do individuals. Justice is such a virtue or power of the soul as to produce such men and cities in which each of these three parts does its own work as governing and being governed. By this means, the irrational part being obedient to the rational soul, guards in the best manner against enemies from without by its influence over the whole soul and body—one deliberating, the other fighting in obedience to the leader, executing things with fortitude the things deliberated. Virtues of *bravery*, *wisdom* and *temperance* will be the ruling powers in such an individual as well as in an ideal city-state.

*Brave* is he who through all pains and pleasures of life preserves the opinion dictated by reason as to what is good and what is evil; he is called *wise*, from that small part, which governs in him, dictates these things, knowing what is advantageous for each one, and for the whole community of the three; *temperance* is no other than this in the individual and the state. *Justice* consists in these.

A city rightly established is perfectly good, and will of necessity have *wisdom*, *bravery*, *temperance* and *justice* as the governing principles. City governors will be wise counsellors who deliberate not on any one particular thing in the city but the whole—how it may in the best manner behave towards itself and towards other cities. Such wise guardians or governors will of necessity be fewer than wise men of any other vocation, who, each of them, devoted to their own functions to which they are best fitted by their own

nature and genius. *Bravery* is that fortitude through right education which is not swayed by pleasure, pain, fear or desire, but preserves the right and lawful opinion as dictated by reason. A city is *temperate* if its better part governs the worse, and is master of itself. In such a city the baser part is governed by the smaller and more moderate part.

*Wisdom* makes the city wise, and *fortitude* makes it courageous. *Temperance* pervades and diffused through the whole city producing unison between the weakest and the strongest and those in the middle—all in one accord. Unanimity is *temperance*—a concord of that which is naturally the worse and the better part, whether in a state or in an individual. *Justice* is that which remains when the other three are found. The three virtues stated in the foregoing do good in greatest measure when justice prevails. Justice consists in minding and being devoted to one's own affairs, and not be pragmatic; it is the habitual practice of one's own proper and natural work. Intermeddling or intermixing of natural duties and responsibilities causes the greatest hurt to the state. Such a state is unjust, depraved, which is the greatest evil. One can readily recognize in this teaching of Plato the philosophy of *Swa-dharma* taught in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "Men being contented and devoted to their own proper duties attain perfection." (XVIII, sloka 45)

Plato lays strong emphasis on right education. His discourse on right education is worthy of highest regard and consideration by our modern educators and parents. Children, he says, ought from infancy to receive education agreeable to the constitution of the state whose laws proceed from *Justice as the virtue of the soul*. They will then embrace that amusement which is according to law, grows with them, become worthy men. If education is otherwise, they will not grow up to be worthy men. Right education builds character. So the educated, discover for themselves regulations in right behaviour, laws of right governance, and of ethical business.

## EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS STUDY, APPLICATION AND PROMULGATION—II

TO BENEFIT mankind knowledge is the first necessity. Without knowledge no practice; without practice no service; without service no knowledge. It is a triangle with three sides. Lopsidedness is almost universal and the Esoteric Philosophy gives the only way of lasting cure. Man's constitution must be correctly understood if this defect is to be overcome; and, furthermore, man's identity with the Macrocosm. Man, the small cosmos, will remain lopsided till each of his limbs acts as part of the limbs of Adam Kadmon, the Supreme Man. Much of the genuine application of ethics—Divine Ethics—is intimately connected with the study of Man, as a unit. Therefore *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Ocean of Theosophy* devote so many pages to the study of the human constitution.

Without the basis of right study the life cannot be lived. This lack of study is the real weakness of many social-service programmes. The repetition of *Ram-nam* becomes mechanical and farcical without mental study. The development of love and compassion cannot take place. And what about detachment? How can anyone perform action rightly without *Vairagya*? So also among our students. How many understand the deeper aspects of Karma? How many consider: "This is not only what I deserve but also what I desire?" But the cultivation of that attitude must be undertaken.

Theosophical instruction from others, including books of the recorded message, stops when application of what is acquired falters. The *pranic* or vital connection between study and application is not understood. People eat but understand next to nothing about digestion and elimination; still less about assimilation. The properties of foods for bone, flesh, blood, nerves and brain are not fully known even to doctors. Would a doctor familiar with occultism give a patient suffering from neurosis meat foods? The same is true of mental-moral food. Our people read, listen, but neither digest, eliminate nor assimilate, for these three have to do with application. Therefore we must insist on application. It is good that they are learning to quote the texts; as a first step it is necessary. They cannot be truly moral

without real knowledge.

I do not think you will find it very difficult to handle questions from the platform. What you now need is the background of Theosophical knowledge. This you are now acquiring. Regular methods are: (a) study, (b) making notes, (c) using knowledge in correspondence, in conversation, on the platform and through our periodicals. There is an Esoteric or Occult method and that is enshrined in the word "Application." Crosbie is a good example of knowledge acquired mainly through application. Now, Judge says, "Through Brotherhood we receive the knowledge of others"; and, again, "It is not high learning that is needed, but solely devotion to humanity, faith in Masters, in the Higher Self, a comprehension of the fundamental truths of Theosophy and a little, only a little, sincere attempt to present those fundamental truths to a people who are in desperate need of them." So do not be dismayed but just go on studying a little, applying daily, and doing what comes your way of Theosophical service. When you are answering do prepare yourself by the necessary study, but rest your body and have a calm, cool and collected mind. The rest your devotion to the Blessed Holy Ones will bring forth. They will never fail you if you keep your mind-heart collected and your devotion untarnished by personal vibrations.

As *The Secret Doctrine* is the Textbook of the 20th century, and as you will be working for that and the coming century, we would advise you to make the two volumes your daily companions. Not only is the book informative and instructive; it is written purposely in a style which develops the intuitive faculty.

You request for instruction about your Theosophical study. While you are studying *The Secret Doctrine*, which enables the personal mind to reach up to the Higher Manas or the Ego, its full benefit will not come your way unless you add to your study the *Voice of the Silence*, *Light on the Path*, the *Gita* and the *Dhammapada*. Metaphysics and ethics are the two wings we must use to soar upwards. There is, however, a connecting link between the two wings, and that is to be found in the writings of W.Q. Judge. His *Letters That Have Helped Me* and articles are priceless for our task.

They sound simple and make easy reading. But you will find them illuminating many a passage in *Isis Unveiled* and in *The Secret Doctrine*. His simplification is for our lower Manas, but it has within it the power to link us up to Buddhi-Manas. Many students of Theosophy miss out on this aspect of Mr. Judge's writings. So please take note of this point. Then, further, you will find as you study that Crosbie is a real psychologist, and he has been able to explain so lucidly because he made full use of the writings of Mr. Judge, whom he regarded as his own Link with the World of the Masters.

It will help you considerably in shaping your own life in the present, which includes your own mental attitude and behaviour towards those in your environment, and you will derive strength and energy, if you will take to reading carefully every morning *The Voice of the Silence* and *Light on the Path*. These two are especially meant for aspirants to the higher life in this century and cycle, and to understand *Light on the Path, Through the Gates of Gold* is a great aid. I am not recommending these for the purpose of the service of the Great Cause, to which you have dedicated yourself with such insight and perception. I am recommending these readings every morning so that you may prepare yourself for the rendering of adequate service to that Cause. Heart energy comes from practice and from the application of the teachings with which both these books abound. These books are more for individual reading and reflection, individual study and meditation. What is read and *applied* will bring sweet fruits in the improvement of your own character and especially in deepening your insight into men and things. Then, of course, for intellectual study you can go on with *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* at your convenience and according to what time you may find. Peace and power always go together, and, therefore, you must practise calmness within during the active period of contact with others and work with and for them. I am glad that you have not many commitments.

Your next point is that you do not find yourself capable of applying the great truths. Application always follows study, and practice cannot be undertaken unless the theory is well mastered. Quick

appreciation of great ideas, both metaphysical and moral, can only come through a faculty higher than that of the reasoning mind. Intuitive perception can only come when by study we have put in our own mind the seeds of metaphysical and moral principles. Intuition has been sometimes compared to rain which falls from above and fructifies the soil. We cannot have intuition unless in the soil of our consciousness mental seeds are sown. Rain falling on sandy desert or stony ground cannot produce any result in the shape of a sprout or a tree. Even when the soil is fertile, unless seeds are sown no amount of rain falling on the soil will produce the crop needed. The function of study and meditation is primarily the preparation of the soil. When our soil or field is weeded out and prepared and the seeds of mental study are sown, then only we can wait for the rain to fructify the seeds sown. Now here the analogy stops for the bringing down of rain does not depend on man's volition only. There are natural processes which bring down rain.

In this psychological process above described, it is possible for the human mind to attract to itself the rain of intuition. We gather knowledge and use it in the ordinary world with the help of logic and reason, of course added to what we ordinarily speak of as common sense. But reason is not able to gather the truths which are synthetic and to unify the many branches of knowledge. Therefore occultism and esoteric philosophy advocate the use of another method of study, which is the right use of the law of correspondence and analogy. The celebrated example of Swedenborg who utilized the law of correspondence must be known to you. But note that the use made by Swedenborg of this law was very much vitiated because of the wrong mental seeds due to a wrong philosophy of life that he had. Swedenborg was a mathematician and a psychic, a scientist and a supersensitive. But in the absence of proper knowledge he did not succeed, though he got hold of the faculty to invoke intuition by the use of correspondence; but the use that he made of analogy and correspondence was related to partial truths and even wrong ideas. Therefore in your study you will have to think of meditation along these different lines.

## DEATH IS SLEEP

“DEATH is sleep,” says H.P.B. Among the ancient Greeks, Thanatos (death) is the twin brother of Hypnos (sleep), and from this seems to have arisen the view that death is merely a state of sleep in the passage from this life to an afterlife. What are the similarities between these two conditions? During sleep our physical senses and faculties are paralyzed, physical memory and imagination are passive, the brain and memory are asleep, and the consciousness of the sleeper is passive. However, the Ego or Soul is free and acts on a different plane. Similarly, death implies cessation of all the bodily and mental functions, releasing the Ego to work on its own plane. Hence, the Upanishads say, “Death is not dying. It is waking into another life.”

Almost one-third of our life is spent in sleeping. Why do we fall asleep every night? Generally, we say that when the body becomes tired and depleted of vitality, we fall asleep. But Theosophy says that we are more full of life energy when we fall asleep, than when we wake up in the morning. This life energy exists around us like an ocean, and when we are awake the life waves try to rush into the body with greater intensity every hour. Since our power to resist the force of life waves is limited, it overpowers us and so we fall asleep. During sleep, equilibrium is reached, because during sleep we *absorb* life energy instead of resisting it. While sleeping, the life energy adjusts itself to the molecules of the body; and when the equilibrium is reached, we again wake up. We fall asleep when we are unable to resist the waves of life energy which rush into our body. Likewise, when our small human frame reaches a point, when it is no longer able to bring about this adjustment through sleep, overpowered by the life energy, we die. Our body and brain are rested during sleep. So also, death makes it possible for the soul to enter a state of consciousness called *Devachan* or *Swarga* or Paradise, and get rested. “For if the average man returned at once to another body in the same civilization he had just quitted, his soul would be completely tired out and deprived of the needed opportunity for the

development of the higher part of his nature,” writes Mr. Judge. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 117)

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. mentions three kinds of sleep: the dreamless, the chaotic, and the one with vivid dreams. After the dissolution of the body, the Ego is in one of these three states of consciousness in *devachan* or *swarga*.

After death, the soul passes through three states, namely, (1) *Kamaloka*, when it is still under the influence of lower passions and desires. (2) *Rupa-devachan*, when the soul is still identified with the personality in the last earth-life. (3) *Arupa-devachan*, when the Ego exists as formless entity, as true individuality, shedding the illusion of personality.

At the moment of death, every person, without exception, sees his whole life, in its minutest details. This is called “review” or “retrospective vision.” This is similar to what happens when we fall asleep. As we fall asleep, the brain begins to throw out, like sparks from dying embers of a fire, the impressions, which were gathered during the day or waking state. These are seen as ordinary dreams. Likewise, at the moment of death, the dying brain dislodges the memory with a strong, supreme impulse and presents to the soul, by a series of pictures, the whole life just ended, from the time of approaching death to the events of childhood.

One kind of sleep is the sleep with chaotic or idle dreams. This state may be compared to the *kama loka* in which the animal man lives freely giving expression to his animal propensities *without any control or constraint*. Hence, H.P.B. mentions that though death is analogous to sleep, there is a very great difference between the two. In sleep there is still a connection between the lower and higher mind, however weak it may be, so that the higher nature is still able to guide the lower, animal man. But, once the body is dead, the animal man, or *Kama-rupa* is left to its own devices, without any control of the higher, because the Ego goes to *devachan*. H.P.B. says that our lower principles of passions and desires and lower mind, are like wild beasts which are kept in check by the higher, the

divine nature. However, while a tamed animal or a pet takes time to return to its true animal nature in the absence of its master when it is freed, the lower personal man *returns instantly* to its animal nature the moment it is free from the control and guidance of the divine nature, on account of its separation from that higher Ego. Thus, during sleep, the lower nature of man is like a person who is gross, materialistic animal, but a sober man. But after death, the lower man is like a person incapably drunk, and hence unable to distinguish between various objects in his surroundings.

Thus, after death, the desire nature in man runs riot without restraint of his higher nature. A glutton is restricted from indulgence in gluttony by the limitation of his body which cannot consume beyond a limit. But after death, in *Kama Loka* there being no such limitation, his gluttony can express itself unchecked. After death, the Ego may remain in the *Kama Loka* for a few minutes to a few hours or few days and sometimes a few years depending on the force of inner conviction of good and evil. An average human being does not stay in *Kama Loka* for very long. If a person has thought much of murder, cruelty, and all sorts of crime during his life, then, when he dies and his consciousness is on the plane of *Kama Loka*, which is full of such visions of the dark side, where he sees crime, gluttony, iniquities, lust etc., he is not shocked because he is used to it. The Ego of such a person may stay there for many years. But when an average human being, who had *occasional* thoughts of murder or rage or wickedness which revolted him and made him throw them out of his mind, dies, the same visions of dark nature confront him in *Kama Loka*. When he sees himself participating in the murder about which he rarely thought when alive, the moral shock will be such that it wakes him up, and the Ego gets out of *Kama Loka* right away. *This may also happen in dreams*. If there is something in the dream that revolts the moral sense of the person, it wakes him up immediately, as if he saw a nightmare. So, when a person who is not bad or sensuous by nature sees himself raping a girl, he would get a moral shock and awaken at once. Mr. Crosbie

writes that the Ego, in case of most of the averagely good persons, leaves the *Kama Loka* almost immediately and goes to *Devachan*.

The soul of an averagely good person passes through *Kama Loka* and then enters into the heaven world clothed in an ethereal vesture or celestial body, which is impressed with good karmic record, or the noble ideas, aspirations and thoughts of the last personality of earth life. It is this good karmic record of the last personality which enables the soul to continue believing that it is the Mr. X or Miss Y it was on earth. Thus, the entity in *Devachan* firmly believes that it never left the earth. When a mother dies, leaving behind her children, her *post-mortem* spiritual *consciousness* enables her to live in the world of her own making in which she finds herself surrounded by her children and all those whom she loved. Thus, there is no gap, and life in *Devachan* is a continuation of life on earth. But in *Devachan* there is an *absolute* oblivion of all that produced pain and sorrow during earth life. The Soul in *Devachan* lives “surrounded by everything it aspired to in vain, and in companionship of everyone it loved on earth,” writes H.P.B. Both *Kama-loka* and *Rupa-devachan* may be compared to dream state, while *Arupa-devachan* is comparable to Dreamless sleep state.

*Rupa-devachan* is a state in which the Ego, being free from the limiting circumstances of life in a physical body, is able to give full expression to its unfulfilled aspirations, and assimilates noble qualities so as to make them part of its nature. If the person has lived a morally pure life and loved arts, music, painting, mathematics, etc., for their own sake, then there is assimilation and development of these qualities, so that the ego comes back to the earth, enriched.

Thoughts and actions of the whole day influence our sleep and dreams. Similarly the last thoughts of the dying person affect his stay in *devachan*, writes Mr. Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. But the last thoughts are not likely to become spiritual if the person has spent his entire life in the opposite direction. It is the *line of life's meditation* which determines one's last thoughts. So also, the state of mind before we fall asleep is influenced by our state of mind

during the day. Therefore, dreams are often induced by the waking associations which precede them. Coleridge is said to have composed his poem *Kublai Khan* in his dream when he fell asleep after reading about Kublai Khan.

In illusory dreams we only re-live the experiences of the waking life or try to satisfy unfulfilled desires. Hence, Freud considered dreams to be the avenues of the unconscious. So also, after death we live out or expand our unfulfilled aspirations. All the good things we aspired to achieve but could not, remain stored up as energy in the *manas* and find their expression and expansion in *devachan*. Thus, a person who aspired to work for the blind, or build houses for the poor but could not achieve it due to financial constraints, would live out these aspirations in *devachanic* condition till the psychic impulses generated in that direction have been exhausted.

But the stay in *devachan* may be conscious or unconscious. It depends on the belief or disbelief of the person in the existence of the soul. It is stated that a person who lived a morally pure life and believed in the existence of the soul, which survives the death of the body—for him there will be *conscious devachan*. For such a person *devachan* is an idealized and subjective continuation of his earth life, where he feels himself to be the same person, Mr. X or Miss Y—but as an *ideal reflection* of the human being he was on earth before death, devoid of all the evil. Thus, the process of *conscious* expansion, development and assimilation is possible only for the person who has believed in the survival of immortal soul after the death of the body. If we compare death to sleep, then the one who believes in the survival of the soul after death will be in the state of full consciousness—like sleep full of vivid dreams. On the other hand, a materialist who may be good, but has denied the existence of the soul or surviving consciousness, will not have *conscious devachan*. He will be plunged into a deep sleep without dreams, without consciousness, till he is born again. He is like a person who falls asleep during a long railway journey, missing many stations and then waking up without slightest recollection of the

stations he missed, and continues his onward journey.

In the dreamless sleep state the Ego is on its own plane, and in that state, the past and future are as present for the real Ego. Likewise, when the Ego comes out of the state of *Rupa Devachan*, the illusion of personality is discarded, and the Ego resumes its own true, spiritual, divine nature. The Ego is now ready to take birth. But before that happens, there is a pre-view of all the lives lived up to that point.

The Self wakes from the dream, it is borne swiftly off to a new body, and then, just before birth, it sees for a moment all the causes that led it to *devachan* and back to the life it is about to begin, and knowing it to be all just, to be the result of its own past life, it repines not but takes up the cross again—and another soul has come back to earth. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 124)

As for the spiritually advanced persons, they are *conscious* after the death of the body, but in their case the Ego does not enter the states of *kamaloka* or *devachan*. In their case there are no impure desires which can form *Kamarupa*. Their ego does not need rest. In their case, the process of assimilation takes place while on earth. *Devachan* is an illusion, and since Adepts and initiates have risen above illusion, they have no *devachan*. Likewise, dream is an illusion and since an Adept has overcome every form of illusion, no advanced Adept dreams. During sleep he paralyzes his lower nature and is completely free, living on a higher, more real plane.

We can reach that point in our evolution where we are really capable of renouncing *devachan*, by fulfilling our obligatory and self-chosen duties and responsibilities; by not rationalizing or even unconsciously ignoring the failures, faults and errors of ourselves and our loved ones; by aiming to acquire knowledge and strength for the purpose of being the better able to help others, and by cultivating enthusiasm, necessary to sustain our efforts, as we work for Theosophy.

## APHORISMS ON KARMA—SOME REFLECTIONS

### I

A SUTRA or an aphorism is concise and compact expression of a general truth or principle. No word is superfluous. Many philosophical works have been presented in the form of aphorisms, which serve as an aid to memory. Aphoristic writing involves the need for elaboration and commentaries. In the “Aphorisms on Karma” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*) Mr. Judge has given us some key ideas through which we learn much about the ramifications of the Law of Karma. He says that these aphorisms were communicated to him and “were submitted for my ‘judgement and reason.’” We can see that he has submitted the same to the earnest enquirers for their serious consideration to enable them to get deeper understanding of the Law of Karma. The law of Karma is generally explained by the analogy of sowing and reaping: “As you sow, so shall you reap.” If we sow a mango seed, we will get mangoes only and not strawberries or roses.

The first aphorism says: “*There is no Karma unless there is a being to make it or feel its effects.*” Karma means action. There can be no action without an actor, and so also, there can be no effect without an experiencer of that effect. If action ceases, *pralaya* (dissolution) sets in. As Shri Krishna points out in the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, “If I did not perform actions, these creatures would perish.” Here, the Lord represents not only the Law governing the outer world of things and beings, but also the Law that governs the inner world of thoughts and emotions. Deity or *Parabrahm* is symbolised by the Great Breath. It is described as universal and eternal *perpetuum mobile* (perpetual motion). The one Absolute attribute of the Deity is eternal, ceaseless Motion or Great Breath, which motion does not cease even during *pralaya*. The appearance and disappearance of the universes are symbolized by out-breathing and the inbreathing of the “Great Breath,” which is eternal.

The second aphorism says: “*Karma is the adjustment of effects flowing from causes, during which the being upon whom and*

*through whom that adjustment is effected, experiences pain or pleasure.*” The Law of Karma is the law of cause and effect. When a ball is thrown against the wall, it comes back to the thrower. Likewise, the reaction or effect comes back to the actor. Good actions bring good results and bad actions bring bad results. Mr. Crosbie says, “We should know that Karma does not castigate (punish); it simply affords the opportunity for adjustment.” Man creates causes, and Karmic law only adjusts the effects. H.P.B. illustrates it by an example of a stone thrown into a pond. When a stone falls into the water, it creates disturbing waves. These waves oscillate backwards and forwards, and then finally brought to rest, by the law of dissipation of energy. The surface of the water returns back to calm condition. However, since each disturbance starts from some particular point, the equilibrium or harmony can be restored by the re-converging to *that same point*, of all the forces which were set in motion from it. Likewise, the effects come back to the actor. If a person bends down a branch of a tree with great force, it will rebound with equally great force, in trying to assume its natural position. In that process, if the person who bent the branch dislocates his arm, shall we blame the branch for dislocating the arm?

Aphorism 2 must be considered along with Aphorism 3, which says: “*Karma is an undeviating and unerring tendency in the Universe to restore equilibrium, and it operates incessantly.*” Since the essence of unity is harmony (equilibrium), disharmony is caused by any action, thought or feeling which disturbs that unity. Thus, unity or equilibrium, from one point of view, is stagnation, which is the opposite of growth. Growth means expansion, a breaking away from one thing or state or vehicle (body) and entry into another thing or state or vehicle. This breaking away causes pain or suffering of some kind. A mother experiences pain in giving birth to a child. We speak of “growing pains” of childhood. We know that these things are necessary. Likewise, the seed breaks and there must be something analogous to “pain” in giving birth to the tiny leaves. So also, all things “die” when the form they inhabit has been outgrown.

These are natural happenings, which lead to final harmony and equilibrium on a higher scale.

But when there is disharmony, or disturbance of equilibrium, which is caused by the wrong actions of a human being, we experience “unnecessary” suffering in the effort of Nature to re-establish equilibrium. In the lower kingdoms, Nature does not have to restore harmony, for the disturbance caused is along the line of natural evolution. But man causes disturbance by going against that natural evolution. Thus, reward and punishment may be seen as compensation for preserving or disturbing the cosmic harmony. This adjustment of the effect to the cause is sometimes quick, and then we are able to relate the effect back to its cause, as when we suffer from a stomach-upset as a result of overeating, or eating stale food. Sometimes the actions in childhood or youth bring their consequences in old age. A person indulging in chain-smoking or chewing of tobacco might experience cancer of the mouth or lungs in old age. However, some actions do not bear fruit in this life, and for which the person appears to have gone scot free, but that is not true. Such actions in one life are like the arrows shot from the bow, acting upon us in some later life, producing our rewards and punishments. Thus, when we are unable to see the cause for the effect or the karmic consequences, it is because we might have generated those causes in one of our past lives.

We might say that Karma is the natural law of action and reaction, and also the law of moral retribution, bringing happiness or suffering to the disturber. In the lower kingdoms, the law of action and reaction becomes applicable. But since man can think and choose, he can choose to go with or against nature, and thus keep or disturb the harmony, for which he experiences *moral retribution*.

It is easy to see that “moral retribution” should not apply in cases when actions are committed by human beings that are either not progressed enough, or are unable to act with deliberation and make choices. Thus, crimes committed in ignorance, as by children, idiots, savages etc., involve physical but no moral responsibilities or karma.

For instance, if a blind and helpless person accidentally hits another in the eye, causing injury, it is usual for the injured person to excuse the act and feel no resentment. But when the same action is done purposely, it arouses hatred and resentment in the other person, and that person on dying carries with him the seed of hatred, and in some other life it will sprout and bring the reaction, pain and also the opportunity to learn the lesson. In the first case there will be consequences on the physical plane, but no moral suffering, which is involved in the latter case.

Mr. Judge tries to explain the *rationale* of the operation of the Law of Moral Retribution or the Moral Law of Compensation in the case of an idiot boy, born of wealthy parents, but with a malicious nature. He mutilated flowers and killed insects, in his state of idiocy. The insects and flowers, not knowing his state of idiocy, turned their eyes upon him with pain, as he tortured them. In dying, his spiritual picture, together with that pain and the desire for revenge, were photographed, so to speak, upon their spirits (elementals). These elemental spirits being impressed with his image kept a link with him and when he was born again, these elementals precipitated down his glance, when he directed his glance on any thing or a person. They saw what he looked upon and brought about disaster. But gradually the old impressions wore off and he found success in all that he did. Thus, an idiot boy, who knew know better, and could make no deliberate choice for good or bad, was still punished for his evil actions, but only at the physical level. It appears that moral compensation would involve painful realization that a particular act was wrong.

Karma is called the doctrine of Responsibility, and aphorisms 2 and 3 show how *we* create our suffering and pleasure through our actions. We are not punished or rewarded, arbitrarily, by any outside God or Devil. People and circumstances that happen to bring suffering are but agents of the law of Karma.

*(To be continued)*

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

ARE human beings really free? The 20th century political philosopher Isaiah Berlin distinguished between negative and positive freedom. *Negative* freedom concerns what others might do to limit your actions. It is freedom from interference, such as by the state or legal authorities. *Positive* freedom deals with what you can do to control your own life. You are positively free if you enjoy mastery over yourself so as to achieve your goals or ambitions. The concept of positive freedom is connected with the autonomous self, which is the self identified with higher-order desires. However, the concept of autonomy has been challenged, particularly from traditions that consider how social and political forces shape us, so that any apparent self-mastery is little more than an expression of how we have been disciplined. We enjoy no true options; either we conform, or we are punished. Is it freedom when a woman chooses to keep quiet about sexual violence, for instance, for fear of being judged by the disciplinary institutions of her society? Surely not. All the same, in one sense, the person keeping quiet about sexual violence, qualifies as exercising freedom on the condition that she could have done something else. Philosophers have termed this simple idea, the Principle of Alternative Possibilities (PAP) which involves choosing.

Perhaps freedom is not about options at all. According to the views put forward in 1969 by the philosopher Harry Frankfurt, some people are able to enjoy true freedom without needing any options. For instance, it is possible to choose a particular path after consulting your own personal values, and thus enjoy freedom, even without having to choose from any options. We are asked to consider a scenario in which a soldier witnesses a senior officer committing a war-crime, but decides against reporting it, out of a sense of loyalty to the reputation of the army. He never once hesitates in his decision to stay silent, and so even though there are no options to choose from, it is a choice based on personal values. This shows that simply

having more options does not equate to more freedom.

“In my view, freedom has more to do with how you conceive of yourself—and of how you arrive at that self-conception....More specifically, you exercise your freedom most strongly when you reject or push back against a label or descriptor that others urge upon you,” writes Mariam Thalos, a distinguished professor of the humanities and department head of philosophy at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

People who respond to stereotype threat end up conforming to expectations rather than acting from genuine self-conceptions, and so are unfree. We need to fight against internalized bias. To achieve real freedom, we must work towards moulding our self-image in the face of oppressive forces. “True freedom is fundamentally about self-fashioning: you are free when you act out of your self-conception. More than false choices and options, the highest freedom lies in being true to oneself and defying the expectations of others,” writes Mariam Thalos in the article “Resist and be Free” that appeared in *Aeon* magazine.

We talk about freedom of speech, failing to realize that we have not learnt to think for ourselves. More than any external authority, our own fears, compulsions and public opinion are more potent enemies of freedom. It is this slavery which is difficult to detect. We are slaves to our desires, being bound by hundred cords of desire. We are continually influenced by the ideas of the people around us. We are free, but we have used that freedom to choose those things which have consent or approval of the majority around us.

In his essay on “Civil Disobedience,” Henry David Thoreau poses the question: Can there not be a government in which the majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience? Otherwise, why are we endowed with conscience? An undue respect for law makes an automaton of a man. Such men would act according to law, going against their will, common sense and even against their conscience. *Light on the Path* says that only he who is untameable, who is not influenced by the opinions of people around

or by facts, but is guided only by his divine nature can arouse and develop in him the faculty of intuition.

True freedom stems from self-reliance. H.P.B. suggests that our schools, besides teaching altruism and mutual charity, should teach *self-reliance*. “We should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things *unselfish*.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 268)

Since Biblical times we have puzzled over the origins of language. It is one of the distinguishing features between man and animals. Archaeological records have not been useful in tracing the origins of language. For many years, scientists have considered the search for the origins of language to be pointless. By combining findings from archaeology, anthropology, cognitive science and linguists, modern evolutionary theorists are beginning to track down, “when” and “why” we found our voice. Based on many converging findings, it is believed that speech of some kind had emerged by at least 400,000 years ago, and possibly far earlier.

According to Charles Darwin, human ancestors passed through a kind of musical protolanguage, wherein calls were made by males to attract mates. However, the claim that music and language emerged through sexual selection is found to be weak. Some believe that sign-language or gestures may have been the means of communicating ideas at the beginning of language evolution. The third suggestion is that language first emerged through onomatopoeia, or imitating the sounds of things, and it is considered to be the most intuitive of the three possibilities. There are pros and cons for each of these three hypotheses of protolanguage, so that it is quite possible that each of these ideas contains elements of truth. Anthropologist Jerome Lewis of University College of London is proposing that instead of offering competing explanations, these three ideas might work together to provide a unified theory of the origin of language. “I think the musical protolanguage in tandem with iconic gestures and iconic vocalisations, is a compelling theory,”

says Marcus Perlman, at the University of Birmingham, U.K. If unified theory is correct then it solves two of the biggest mysteries of evolution: the origins of language and singing, writes David Robson, a science writer and the author of the book, *The Intelligence Trap*. (*New Scientist*, May 4, 2019)

“*Language* is certainly coeval with reason,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 199 fn.). The whole of human race was at one time of one language, taught to it by Divine Instructors. Early mankind (first three races) did not possess articulate speech. Some scientists assert that “human speech was developed from a few simple sounds,” but that is not true. Professor Max Muller contended that no plausible explanation has been given as to how the “roots” of language came into existence. Theosophy asserts that “a *human* brain is necessary for *human* speech.” When we compare the brain of an ape with that of man, we find that a great gulf separates the two. It has been observed that the brain of the largest ape, the gorilla, measures only about 30.51 cubic inches; the average brain even of the Australian natives—one of the least developed races, measures about 99.35 cubic inches. Thus, the brain-size of the ape is not even half the size of the brain of the new-born child. (*S.D.*, II, 661)

To understand the development of language we must take into consideration the development of speech in various races of man. Speech is connected with the mind. The First Race humanity was mindless and therefore also speechless. The Second Race had “sound language”, *i.e.*, they communicated by chant-like sounds consisting of vowels only. During the second half of the Third Race, after the sexes had separated and mind was *awakened*, speech developed, gradually. This speech was, at first, *monosyllabic*, *i.e.*, consisted of vowels mixed with consonants. The Fourth or Atlantean Race developed what is known as *agglutinative* languages, consisting of loosely connected words. More advanced among the Atlanteans left behind the *inflectional*, highly developed language for the Fifth-Race humanity. This speech of the early Fifth Race is now the “mystery tongue” of the Initiates of the Race. It was the

root of Sanskrit, from which gradually sprang other languages. (*S.D.*, II, 198-200)

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The year 2019 has been declared by the United Nations to be the International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements, to recognise the 150th anniversary of Mendeleev’s achievement. He organized the elements in a meaningful chart. He arranged the chemical elements in rows and columns. His table was published in 1869, and he is credited with organizing the periodic table in the form we use today. However, he was not the first one, as before him, the French geologist Alexander-Emile Beguyer de Chancourtois, the English chemist John Newlands, and the German chemist Julius Meyer had recognized a periodicity in the elements and published their versions of periodic table.

The modern periodic table arranges elements in the order of increasing atomic number, or the number of protons found in the nucleus of each element. Today, there are 118 confirmed elements. However, with the discovery and arrangement of 118 elements, Mendeleev’s masterpiece is not yet complete. When the synthetic elements nihonium, moscovium, tennessine, and oganesson were formally recognized in 2016, the remaining gaps in the bottom row of the periodic table were finally filled. The search for 119th element, which would be the first in a brand-new row, is already underway in some laboratories. “Meanwhile, research on the existing superheavy elements might change the periodic table, too.” (*Nature*, January 30, 2019)

In occult philosophy, the number seven is considered as the most sacred of all numbers. Everything of importance was calculated by and fitted into this number by the Aryan philosophers—ideas as well as localities, writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 407). Even in chemistry we find that chemical elements are ruled by the law of periodicity governed by the number seven. In 1864, John Newlands saw a connection between the chemical properties of elements and their

atomic masses. He stated that if the known elements, beginning with lithium are arranged in order of increasing mass, the eighth element will have properties similar to the first, the ninth similar to the second, the tenth similar to the third, and so on.

If chemical elements are arranged in groups according to their atomic weights, as in Mendeleev's table, it is found that first, second, third, etc. elements bear close analogy in *all* their properties with the corresponding members of the next period or series. It was also observed that *in each period* (or series) the general properties of these elements vary one from the other, with approximate regularity, until we reach the seventh member of that period, whose properties are found to be in striking contrast with the first element of the same period, as well as with the first element of the next period. For instance, Chlorine, the seventh member of Mendeleev's third period contrasts sharply with both sodium, which is the first element of the same period, and with potassium, which is the first member of the next period. However, sodium and potassium, being the first members of two different series, are closely analogous. Thus, given the contrast in properties between the first and the last elements of each series, we may expect the fourth element in a series—Silicon for example—to show mean variation in properties, and constitute a *transitional element*. H.P.B. points out that this is the law in *Occult Sciences*. In the septenary chain of globes or septenary constitution of man, animal, plant or mineral atom, the fourth and seventh members, always play a distinct part in the septenary system. Everything in the universe, from great to small, in its physical and spiritual evolution proceeds cyclically and septennially, showing its seventh and fourth member behaving in the same way as shown in the periodic table. (*S.D.*, I, 582-83 fn.)

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GREAT works need no great strength, but perseverance.

—*Gems from the East*