

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 6, No. 1

May 17, 2014

### A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

THE TRIKAYA DOCTRINE—SOME REFLECTIONS	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	9
A JATAKA TALE	
STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA	13
THE BRAHMANA—I	
CHIRANJIVIS—THE SEVEN IMMORTALS—II	17
FREEDOM OF THE SOUL	23
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	28
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

### THE TRIKAYA DOCTRINE—SOME REFLECTIONS

THE SACRED day of Buddha Purnima marks the triple Anniversary of (a) Buddha's birth as prince Siddhartha, (b) his Enlightenment, *i.e.*, the day on which he attained Supreme Wisdom under the Bodhi tree at Gaya, and also (c) the day of his death, when he discarded his mortal coil and proceeded to *Mahaparinirvana*. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, explains that a distinction is drawn in Buddhism between Buddha, the enlightened historical individual, on one hand, and the abstract principle of enlightenment, on the other, *i.e.*, between Buddha and Buddhahood. The enlightened historical personality was known as *rupakaya* or “Form-Body” (*rupa* is “form,” *kaya* is body). The principle of Enlightenment, independent of the person realizing it, was known as *Dharmakaya*, the “Body of Truth,” or the “Body of Reality.” The distinction between the *rupakaya* and *Dharmakaya* became more pronounced after the Buddha's death, when the Form-Body was gone, and the historical Buddha existed in the form of relics in stupas, whereas the *Dharmakaya* was eternally present. The later Mahayana tradition mentions a third body or *kaya* called Sambhogkaya, which literally means “Body of Mutual Delight,” or the “Body of Mutual Enjoyment,” and could be interpreted to mean “Ideal Buddha” or “Archetypal Buddha.” The Ideal Buddha is not an abstract, impersonal principle like the *Dharmakaya*; it is definitely a person, but not a human historical person. Later tradition mentions

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a fourth body called *Nirmanakaya* or “created body,” giving rise to famous *Trikaya* doctrine.

*Trikaya* literally means three bodies or three forms. This is a most abstruse teaching which has been variously interpreted by religious sects and Orientalists, often creating confusion and contradictions. *The Theosophical Glossary* points out that according to Eitel’s *Sanskrit-Chinese Dictionary* the Buddha, while he is in his *Nirmanakaya* body, (which passed through 100,000 *kotis* of transformations on earth), he is at the same time a heavenly Dhyani-Bodhisattva, in his *Sambhogkaya* “robe of absolute completeness,” in a state of *Dhyana*, which cuts him off from the world. Besides being a *Nirmanakaya* and a *Sambhogkaya*, he is also a *Dharmakaya* “of absolute purity,” a Dhyani-Buddha in Nirvana. “This is the jumble of contradictions, impossible to reconcile, which is given out by missionaries and certain Orientalists as the *philosophical* dogmas of the Northern Buddhism.” In the explanation on *Trisharana*, the *Theosophical Glossary* mentions that it is not Buddha (Gautama, the mortal man or any other personal Buddha) who can live ubiquitously in “three different spheres at the same time,” but Bodhi or abstract principle of Divine Wisdom, symbolized by *Adi-Buddha* or *Adi-Bodhi*, which is ubiquitous because it is the universal essence.

In his book, “A Survey of Buddhism,” Bhikshu Sangharakshita mentions that the early Hinayanists regarded *Dharmakaya* as the collection of Buddha’s *Dhammas*, *i.e.*, doctrines and disciplinary rules collectively. However, to the monk Vakkali, who on his deathbed had ardently desired to see the Buddha in person, the Buddha said, “He who sees the *Dhamma* sees me. He who sees me sees the *Dhamma*.” When these words are interpreted literally, Buddha’s admonition to Vakkali would mean that one who lives in accordance with the doctrines, “sees” him. On the other hand, if Dharma is taken to mean the Reality Itself, then Buddha seems to identify himself with the Absolute, and says that to “realize” the Dharma and to “see” the Buddha are the same thing.

The *Mahayana* Buddhist text, *The Voice of the Silence*, elaborates the mystical doctrine of the three *kayas* or bodies—*Dharmakaya*, *Sambhogkaya* and *Nirmanakaya*—the spiritual forms of sublime robes of those who attain perfection. We are given four stages of spiritual perfection, beginning with *Srottapati*, “he who has entered the stream” that leads to the *Nirvanic* ocean. There are seven more births for a *srottapati* to reach *nirvana*. This is the first Path. The second is *Sakridagamin*, he who will receive birth only once more.” The third is called *Anagamin*, “he who will be reincarnated no more,” unless he so desires in order to help mankind. The fourth is known as *Rahat* or *Arhat*. This is the highest. An *Arhat* sees Nirvana during his life (p. 50 fn.). Every initiate who has crossed or reached the end of what is called the “fourth Path” is placed on the threshold of Nirvana. The path of spiritual perfection becomes twofold in the end—the Path of Liberation and the Path of Renunciation. Having reached Nirvana, every Arhat has a choice to enter Nirvana or to renounce it. The one who enters Nirvana, chooses the path of Liberation or *moksha*, a state of exalted and glorious selfishness.

Nirvana is erroneously explained as being synonymous with annihilation. It is annihilation of only *personality*. Regarding one who enters Nirvana, H.P.B. writes, “When the Spiritual *entity* breaks loose for ever from every particle of matter, substance or form, and re-becomes a Spiritual breath: then only does it enter upon the eternal and unchangeable *Nirvana*...and then that Breath, existing in Spirit, is nothing because it is all.” Thus, as a form, a shape, it is completely annihilated. But it exists as absolute Spirit; it has become *Be-ness* itself. Thus, when the spirit enters *Nirvana*, it loses its objective existence, but retains subjective being. To the objective minds, this is like becoming absolute “nothing,” but to the subjective mind it is “NO-THING,” because there is nothing to be displayed to the senses (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 113 and 114). A Bodhisattva, who having reached the rank of an Arhat passes into Nirvanic state, so to speak, chooses to wear *Dharmakaya* robe. The *Dharmakaya* body is that of a complete Buddha, *i.e.*, no body

at all, but an ideal breath. In his case, the individual consciousness is merged in the Universal Consciousness. Once a *Dharmakaya*, an Adept or Buddha leaves behind every possible relation with, or thought for this Earth. He is said to be in a state synonymous with the hierarchy of Dhyani Buddhas who are described as non-substantial primordial beings. He is said to have become a *Pratyeka Buddha*. He is someone who cares nothing for the woes of mankind, or to help it. He cares only for his own *bliss*, and hence on entering Nirvana disappears from the sight and the hearts of men. In Northern Buddhism a “Pratyeka Buddha” is a synonym of Spiritual Selfishness.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 371), H.P.B. appears to refer to the *Dharmakaya* or the one who has chosen the path of liberation, when she describes *Atyantika Pralaya* which is called the individual *pralaya* or Nirvana; after having reached which, there being no more future existence possible, no rebirth till after the *Maha Pralaya*, the period of 311 trillion years, which gets doubled if the *Jivanmukti* has reached Nirvana at an early period of *Manvantara*. When the period ends, the one who chose the path of liberation is said to begin on a relatively lower level in the new universe as compared to those who renounced Nirvana. Though, one who enters nirvana is like a drop merging into ocean, in a state of re-absorption, he is in a state of absolute existence. His individuality is not lost. The Buddhas, after entering Nirvana, re-appear on earth—in the future *Manvantara*.

The popular meaning attached to the term *Nirmanakaya*, and the explanation given by the orientalisists is quite different from the meaning given in esoteric philosophy. Thus, for instance, *Nirmanakaya* is popularly believed to be the physical body in which a Buddha or a Bodhisattva appears on earth. Schlagintweit describes *Nirmanakaya* as “Nirvana with remains,” probably because it is the kind of Nirvanic condition during which consciousness and form are retained.

“I believe that not all the Buddhas enter Nirvana,” says the true

Mahayana teaching. According to esoteric philosophy Bodhisattvas, who, having fulfilled all the conditions of Buddhahip, have the right to forthwith enter Nirvana. But they prefer instead, out of unlimited pity for the suffering ignorant world, to renounce this state of bliss and become *Nirmanakayas*. They prefer to remain in the invisible atmosphere of the world and contribute towards man’s salvation by influencing them to follow the Good Law, *i.e.*, lead them on to the path of Righteousness. Since *Dharmakaya* body separates the Adept forever from the world of form, unable to help humanity, an Adept who has won the right to Nirvana, “renounces the *Dharmakaya* body’ and in mystic parlance; keeps of the *Sambhogkaya*, only great and complete knowledge, and remains in his *Nirmanakaya* body.” (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 78 fn.)

According to *Visisthawaita* philosophy, the released soul or a *Jivanmukta*, after reaching *Moksha*, enjoys the bliss in a place called *Parampadha*, which place is not material, but made of *Suddasatwa*, the essence of which the body of *Iswara* is formed. There, the *Jivatmas* (Monads) who have attained *Moksha*, are never again subject to the qualities of either matter or Karma, but if they choose, *for the sake of doing good to the world*, they may incarnate on Earth (*S.D.*, I, 132). In the footnote, H.P.B. mentions that such voluntary incarnation is defined as *Nirmanakaya* or the “*surviving spiritual principles of man*.” This clearly indicates that when a perfected being blends all his “principles” into one, it refers to the higher three principles of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* clothed in the ethereal astral body or *Nirmanakayic* body.

One who chooses to enter Nirvana is called a perfect Buddha and is considered to be higher than a *Nirmanakaya*. However, in the popular estimation, the Bodhisattvas who prefer the *Nirmanakaya* to the *Dharmakaya* vesture stand higher, owing to their great sacrifice. The Esoteric School teaches that Gautama Buddha, with several of his *Arhats*, is such a *Nirmanakaya*. Tradition says that after Gautama the Buddha had reached enlightenment, he was inclined to remain silent, thinking that the

truth he had discovered was so abstruse that ordinary people, with their eyes covered with dust of ignorance and passion are not likely to appreciate it. Just then, Brahma Sahampati or Brahma the Lord of a Thousand Worlds, appeared before the Buddha and told him to preach the Truth, saying that there are at least a few in the world who will appreciate it. It is said that the Buddha opened his divine eye and saw all beings, just like lotuses in a pond, in various stages of development—some in bud form, some half open, etc. And he said, “For the sake of those who are like half-opened lotuses, I will preach the Dharma.” Arising of compassion which compelled the Buddha to preach the Truth and also, after death, to remain behind in the Nirmanakayic body to help mankind, choosing the Path of Renunciation, is described in Mahayana Buddhist Schools as “Bodhisattva Ideal,” where one takes a pledge that he shall never seek private salvation, or enter *nirvana*, until there is a single human being suffering, and till all beings have perfected. The Final choice and renunciation is the culmination of the feeling of compassion and self-sacrifice cultivated over innumerable lives.

*Nirmanakayas* of lower order become so by refusing the peace and bliss of *Devachan*, and they are lower in power than those refusing Nirvana. They often incarnate using borrowed body. They are constantly engaged in the far greater task of the betterment of the soul of man and the elevation of the race, which they accomplish through human agents. These wonderful beings have swayed and are shaping even today the destiny of nations through their human agents, such as, pillars of peace and makers of war such as Bismarck, or saviours of nations such as Washington, Lincoln and Grant, who were said to have been under Nirmanakayic influence.

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IN everyone’s life, at some time, the inner fire goes out. It is then, burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people, who rekindle the inner spirit.

—ALBERT SCHWEITZER

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### A JATAKA TALE

WE DEPEND on one another. We owe much to the sacrifice of our parents, of our teachers. We depend on Mother Nature and on the work of others. We live because of the sacrifice of the reformers of the past and of the present. None of us is what he is by himself. We do not think enough of the sacrifice, very real, of the Great Saviours of Humanity, and of H.P.B., of W. Q. Judge, and of those down the line who still sacrifice to keep the Movement or the Lodge alive. Sometimes we fight shy of admitting that there has been or is any sacrifice; or we refuse to accept it wholeheartedly, with gratitude in our hearts, and to use it for the benefit of the All. In the following Jataka Tale, Birth Story of the Buddha, we have an example of what true sacrifice involves and of its right acceptance, *i.e.*, glad remembrance with gratitude in the heart.

Once the life that was to become the Buddha took the form as an elephant and lived by himself in an oasis in the middle of a desert. The oasis consisted of a high mountain, a forest of banana trees and a stream of pure water. He lived happily, drinking from the stream and eating the bananas and playing by himself.

One day as he was playing he heard human voices crying for help. Rushing towards the sound, he saw a group of men in great distress on the hot sand, without food or water. He asked them why they were there and what was the cause of their distress. They told him that their king had driven them out of their country and that they were trying to get across the desert to another city. But on the way many of them had died and they themselves were weary and weak from want of food and water.

As the elephant listened his heart grew full of sorrow and he wondered how he could save them. Suddenly it occurred to him that he could do so by the sacrifice of himself. He told the men not to worry any more, for at the foot of the mountain which they could

see, not too far away, they would find the body of a large elephant. This would be food for them and appease their hunger. Nearby, he said, there was a stream of fresh water which would slake their thirst. Bidding them goodbye, he ran off quickly towards the mountain. As he neared it he turned aside so that they could no longer see him and, making his way as quickly as he could to the summit, threw himself over so that he was killed.

Meanwhile the weary men walked towards the mountain and saw the body of the elephant. They looked at it with wonder and joy. But one man said that it looked just like the elephant which had come out to greet them, and this being so it was impossible to eat him, for one does not eat a friend. Better, he said, would it be to die.

As they stood looking disconsolately at the flesh they could not eat, one man reminded them that if they did not eat it the elephant's sacrifice would have been in vain. So, with sorrow in their hearts and tears in their eyes, they ate the flesh. Then drinking from the stream, refreshed and strong again, they continued in safety across the desert to the friendly city and lived happily for many years. But their thoughts were often with the elephant whose sacrifice had saved them from death.

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The sacred day of Buddha Purnima falls on the full moon day of the lunar month of Vaisakh, when the Buddhists all over the world pay homage to "Gautama the Buddha."

Part of his teachings, as in the case of Jesus and other great spiritual teachers, is in the story form, for stories, the dramatization of ideas or events, stay in the mind more easily than plain statements of fact. After his death his disciples collected from their memories 547 stories in which he had shown how in former lives he had dwelt in the vegetable kingdom as the spirits of trees and grass; in many other species of the animal kingdom, gaining in intelligence, foresight and the power to sacrifice; and then in the human kingdom,

spending many lives developing his powers, living righteously and teaching right laws of conduct. Some of these stories have a more ancient origin and some of them have found their way into Aesop's and La Fontaine's Fables.

These stories are called Jataka Tales or the birth stories of the Buddha. Some of these stories show how the Buddha developed the power to sacrifice, not only life, but also the peace and bliss of Nirvana—the fruition of struggle in many lives. We see it in the above story, as also, in the stories where the elephant gave his tusks, though he knew it meant death; in the joyful sacrifice of the hare that its body might be food for the lost and hungry traveller, and so on. All these are stages on the journey that enabled him in his hour of triumph to forego Liberation, in order to remain in touch with the earth and to give help to mankind—becoming a Buddha of Compassion.

The stories are not so much ethical as they are examples of action and reaction, of the need of harmlessness, devotion, awareness and thought. They are examples of how to act and how not to act, of the results of friendship and the kind of friendship possible. Each was told by the Buddha in connection with some incident then taking place, and at the end of the story the characters of that day were linked with those in the stories. It is this that makes them unique in the literature of the world. Sometimes the same good or evil tendencies of the far past repeat themselves in the present; at other times the evil has changed to good. Or, at the end of the story one of the characters of that time sees the error of his ways and changes his mode of conduct. Many stories show the need for thought before action, notably in the case of a mouse who, helped by a friendly ascetic cheated three cats, causing their death because they tried to pounce on it, not knowing that the mouse was in a crystal cave. Crashing into the crystal walls of the cave, they were killed.

Some stories show how a moment of unawareness can cause disaster. The golden peacock, who dwelt happily by himself in the fastnesses of the Himalayas, repeating his invocation to the sun at

its rising and setting, forgot to do so one morning when a peahen called him, and was therefore caught unawares in a trap.

Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin, who tried consistently to harm him throughout his last life, wished him evil in many of the stories, trying to kill or injure him time and again. In all such stories Devadatta appears as the cruel, deceitful, harassing shadow following the Buddha. Ananda, the Buddha's favourite disciple, appears in most of the stories as a friend. The stories that deal with the Buddha as man are extremely illuminating.

The thread of life throughout the stories can perhaps be better understood if we take into account as background the ancient Hindu thought in which the prince was brought up. According to it, life progresses through the kingdoms of Nature, developing sensation in the vegetable, instinct and growing intelligence in the animal, and reason in man. As in the Kabalistic saying: "I died as a mineral and became a plant; I died as a plant and became an animal; I died as an animal and became a man." Every human being has to pass through the same evolution. In the lower kingdoms there is no permanent being evolving. With the human being comes the addition of the permanent individuality, the incarnation, in part or in full, of the *Manasputras*, Sons of Light, who, entering the human animal form, built with it, through countless incarnations, the perfect vehicle through which they can function on earth. When this is completed we have a divine being living in a human form.

"Some people do recollect their past incarnations during life; but these are Buddhas and Initiates. This is what the Yogis call *Samma-Sambuddha*, or the knowledge of the whole series of one's past incarnations," writes H.P.B. In the Hindu philosophy we are told that *Sutratma* or "Thread Soul," which is the reincarnating Ego—*Manas* conjoined with *Buddhi*—absorbs *manasic* recollections of all our preceding lives. Like pearls on a thread, the long series of human lives are strung together on that one thread. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 161-62)

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

### THE BRAHAMANA—I

THE CHAPTER is called *Brahmanavaggo* or "The Brahamana" or "The Brahmin." The note on the title of the chapter tells us: "It must be noted that Gautama, the Enlightened One, did not descend into incarnation for the purpose of establishing another religion. Like his illustrious predecessors, he was a Protestant and a Reformer. The Mighty Art taught 2500 years before him by Krishna was once again lost. The caste system was given a wrong colouring, contrary to the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The Buddha tried to restore the true teachings about the castes, and especially the Brahamana caste; these caste-men had arrogated to themselves a position which by character and behaviour they did not deserve. In this chapter, Buddha describes the nature and character of the true Brahamana. The true Brahamana felt the power of his poverty and was rich in virtue and knowledge. In this chapter, the Buddha upholds that ancient idea."

A true Brahmin is said to be the one who has realized the Brahman within. He is called a *dwija*—the twice born—his first birth being through the mother, while the second is the spiritual birth, when he becomes an initiate. In the days of old, this term was used only for the Initiated Brahmins and not for those who had merely undergone a certain ceremony like the thread ceremony, says the *Theosophical Glossary*. In the *Gita*, when Shri Krishna tells Arjuna that mankind was created by him of four castes—the Brahmin, the Soldier, the Merchant, and the Servant—distinct in their principles and in their duties according to the natural distribution of the actions and qualities, what he meant was that the ancient castes performed duties according to their inherent natures acquired through Karma of past lives. There was no pride of caste or jealousy, and there existed an ideal community of mutual helpfulness; hence the duties of the castes were "determined by the qualities which predominated in each," says Mr. Judge in *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*.

We must also remember that Buddhism was not a new religion but the pure religion of the Brahmins. H.P.B. explains this point in the Introduction to *The Secret Doctrine*, thus:

Thus the reader is asked to bear in mind the very important difference between *orthodox* Buddhism—*i.e.*, the public teachings of Gautama the Buddha, and his esoteric *Budhism*. His Secret Doctrine, however, differed in no wise from that of the initiated Brahmins of his day. The Buddha was a child of the Aryan soil; a born Hindu, a Kshatriya and a disciple of the “twice born” (the initiated Brahmins) or *Dwijas*. His teachings, therefore, could not be different from their doctrines, for the whole Buddhist reform merely consisted in giving out a portion of that which had been kept secret from every man outside of the “enchanted” circle of Temple-Initiates and ascetics. Unable to teach all that had been imparted to him—owing to his pledges—though he taught a philosophy built upon the ground-work of the true esoteric knowledge, the Buddha gave to the world only its outward material body and kept its soul for his Elect.

1. *O Brahamana, be energetic; dam the stream; cut away desires. When you understand how things get disintegrated you will also realize the Uncreate, O Brahamana. (383)*

2. *When a Brahamana reaches the other shore by meditation and insight he attains knowledge and is free of all fetters. (384)*

The Brahmin should work hard, control the stream of passions and desires and reflect upon the impermanence of all things. All that is composite, formed of other elements will one day fall apart. Once this is understood, the Brahamana is able to look beyond all that is transitory and changing to discern that which sustains all and is itself changeless—the Uncreate—the One Reality. He knows that man and all things are composite and hence must disintegrate and die. Body changes and disintegrates after death. Mind and emotions undergo change throughout our life. Yet, there is attachment to

personality. It is essential to overcome this attachment.

Through meditation and insight, the Brahamana attains the knowledge which is not merely an intellectual understanding but the realization of that which is known, having attained which he becomes free from all fetters.

3. *Him I call a Brahamana for whom there is neither this nor the further shore. Fearless and free, he is beyond both. (385)*

In the chapter “The Bhikkhu,” the Bhikkhu is asked to cut off the five: (1) Delusion of personality; (2) Doubt; (3) False Asceticism; (4) Yearning for desire fulfilment; and (5) Ill-will. He is also asked to get rid of five: (1) Desire for life in the worlds of form; (2) Desire for life in formless worlds; (3) Self-will; (4) Restlessness; (5) Ignorance. The one who has cut off the fetters which bind the man to *this* or the *other* world becomes free.

Shri Krishna says that those who have attained to the region of Indra or the heaven world, they feast upon celestial food and are gratified with heavenly enjoyments. And they, having enjoyed that spacious heaven for a period in proportion to their merits, sink back into this mortal world where they are born again as soon as their stock of merit is exhausted.

In the chapter “The Wise Man,” we are told: “A few only reach the farther shore. Most people go their rounds on this one.” “This shore” stands for the earthly life or *samsara* and the “other shore” for life eternal, *Nirvana*. But the highest ideal put forward by the Buddha is to go beyond the both, and follow the path of Renunciation. Seeking Nirvana is called “an exalted and glorious selfishness” by the Master of wisdom. The one who has cut off even this fetter, is truly free.

4. *Him I call a Brahamana who is meditative, stainless, settled; whose duty is done and depravities gone; who has attained the highest end. (386)*

5. *The sun shines by day; the moon lights up the night.*

*The warrior (Kshatriya) is resplendent in his armour; the Brahmana in his meditation. But the Buddha shines day and night, radiating his glory. (387)*

A true Brahmin who is meditative, free from blemish and corruption, and is assiduous in performance of his duties of a Brahmin realizes the highest good.

As the sun shines in the day and the moon shines in the night, the warrior shines in his armour and the Brahmana in his meditation, each showing forth the glory of their inherent nature which makes them what they are, the Buddha shines day and night, radiating his wisdom and compassion for the whole world *all the time*.

*6. Because he has driven away sin he is called a Brahmana; because he lives in serenity he is called a Samana; because he has put away worldliness he is called Pabbajita. (388)*

In the spiritual discipline, depending on the level of development, the person is given a title by other people as a mark of respect. The term Brahmin is derived from the root *bah* which means to put aside or drive away. The term *Samana* is derived from the root *sam* which means to be equitable. The term *Pabbajita* is derived from the root *pabbaj* which means to cast out or “the going forth,” *i.e.*, going forth from the home-life to the home-less life. By this he becomes a novice, listening to the Teachings of the Buddha with a view to apply them. As a listener he is known as *shravaka*; when he practises and applies to himself the teachings he is a *shramana*, *i.e.*, exerciser. When he succeeds in overcoming all tendencies to sin he is to be known as a Brahmana. Thus, it is because, each one has cultivated specific quality through discipline that they are addressed by others as such. These appellations would be meaningless if the person does not possess the required quality. Thus, it is not the name but the qualities possessed that defines the man.

*(To be continued)*

## CHIRANJIVIS—THE SEVEN IMMORTALS

### II

VYASA is one of the seven *Chiranjivis* or Immortals. The title “Vyasa” is common to many authors and compilers, but it is especially applied to Veda-vyasa, “the arranger” of the Vedas. It is believed that since Vedas are considered to be imperishable, their author, Vyasa is called *Saswata* or immortal. Veda-vyasa, also known as Krishna Dwaipayana, was the son of *rishi* Parasara and Satyavati. Since the child was of dark complexion he received the name Krishna, and since he was born on an island (*dwipa*) in the river Yamuna, he was called Dwaipayana. Parasara was a Vedic *rishi* to whom some hymns of the Rig-veda are attributed. He was a disciple of *rishi* Kapila and received the *Vishnu Purana* from Pulastya, and taught it to his pupil Maitreya.

Vyasa is also considered to be the author of *Mahabharata*. Ganesa is believed to be the scribe, who wrote *Mahabharata*, with his broken tusk, dictated by sage Vyasa. It is said that Ganesa agreed to be a scribe with a condition that Vyasa should dictate continuously without a pause, while Vyasa put the counter condition that Ganesa must understand every word and its implications before writing it down. In between, Vyasa would purposely dictate some complex verses so that Ganesa would have to pause and ponder, and meanwhile Vyasa composed some more verses. This shows that *Mahabharata* must be pondered over and read little at a time. The broken tusk symbolizes great sacrifices that the divine beings make for helping mankind.

*Purva-mimansa* and *Uttara-mimansa* are the fifth and sixth schools of Hindu philosophy. The *Purva-mimansa* was founded by sage Jaimini, while the *Uttara-mimansa* is attributed to Vyasa, the arranger of the Vedas. Since *Uttara-mimansa* is known as Vedanta, Vyasa is thus referred to as the founder of the Vedanta. Vedanta literally means the “end of all (Vedic) knowledge”—*Brahma-jnana*, or pure and spiritual knowledge of Brahma.

Vyasa does not exactly mean a “recorder.” It means one who expands or amplifies. It means a “Revealer,” who explains the mysteries to the neophyte or candidate for initiation by *expanding* and *amplifying* to him the meaning. In ancient times, the term “vyasa” was applied to the *Highest* Guru in India. *Linga Purana* mentions that the author of the *Mahabharata* was 28th Vyasa in the order of succession. We are told that in the mysteries of initiation the chief Hierophant who imparted the “word” to his successor *had to die* bodily. Even Moses dies after having laid his hands upon Joshua, who thus became “*full of the spirit of wisdom of Moses.*” There cannot be *two* “Highest” Gurus or Hierophants on earth, living at the same time. (*The Theosophist*, May 1882)

There are several incarnations of Vishnu mentioned in Hindu philosophy. H.P.B. explains that in the Hindu philosophy every differentiated unit is such only through the cycles of Maya, being one in its essence with the Supreme or One Spirit. Hence arises the seeming confusion and contradiction in various Puranas, and at times in the same Purana, about the same individual. Vishnu as many-formed Brahma and Brahma (neuter), is one, and yet he is said to be all the 28 Vyasas. In every Dwapara or third age, *Vishnu, in the person of Vyasa*, divides the Veda, which is one, into four and many portions. Twenty eight times the Vedas have been arranged by the great Rishis in the Vaivasvata Manvantara, in the Dwapara Yuga, and consequently there are twenty eight Vyasas who were all *in the form of Veda-Vyasas*, who were the Vyasas of their respective eras (*S.D.*, II, 146 fn.). “Vyasa is immortal in his incarnations. Let [us]...count how many Vyasas there have been from the last,” writes H.P.B. (*H.P.B. Series No. 35*, pp. 43-44)

Parasu-rama literally means “Rama with the axe.” He was a Brahmin, the sixth son of sage Jamadagni and Renuka. By his father’s side he descended from Bhrigu—the founder of the Race of Bhargavas. By his mother’s side he belonged to the royal race of the Kusikas. Parasu-rama is also said to be the sixth *Avatara* of Vishnu, and he appeared in the world at the beginning of the Treta-

yuga for the purpose of repressing the tyranny of the *Kshtriya* or regal caste. He appeared before Rama, who was the seventh *Avatara* of Vishnu. In early life, Parasu-rama was under the protection of Siva, who instructed him in the use of arms, and gave him the *parasu*, or axe. His story is told in the *Mahabharata* and in the *Puranas*.

The *Mahabharata* mentions that at the command of his father, he cut off the head of his mother, Renuka. She had annoyed her husband by entertaining impure thoughts, who called upon each of his sons in succession, to kill her. Parasu-rama alone obeyed. His father was pleased. He told Parasu-rama to ask for a boon. He begged that his mother might be restored pure to life and that he might be invincible in single combat and enjoy the length of days. He is known for his hostility to the *Kshatriyas*. The origin of this hostility is related thus: Kartavirya, a *Kshatriya*, and a king of Haihayas, had a thousand arms. This king paid a visit to the hermitage of Jamadagni when the sage was absent from the hermitage. The king was hospitably entertained by his wife, but while departing the king carried off the sacrificial calf belonging to the sage. This act so enraged Parasu-rama that he pursued Kartavirya, cut off his thousand arms and killed him. In retaliation the sons of Kartavirya killed Jamadagni. For this murder of his father, Parasu-rama vowed vengeance against them and the whole *Kshatriya* race. The *Mahabharata* mentions that thrice seven times, *i.e.*, twenty one times, Parasu-rama cleared the earth of the *Kshatriyas*, and he filled with their blood, the five large lakes at Samanta-panchaka. (*A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion*, pp. 230-31)

By the end of the Vedic period, Parasu-rama had grown weary of bloodshed. He gave up his possessions, and retired to Mahendra mountains to practice penance. Parasu-rama symbolizes strength, and that only destruction can result, when a person with strength loses his reason in anger. Explaining the immortality of Parasu-rama, H.P.B. writes: “Parasu-rama’s cruelty made him immortal but he is not supposed to live in flesh and blood now; he is generally stated to have some sort of existence in fire though not necessarily in what

a Christian would call ‘hell’.” (*H.P.B. Series No. 35*, p. 43)

Parasu-rama is said to be the sixth *Avatara* of Vishnu. H.P.B. explains that in a sense, various *avatars* depict the gradual evolution and transformation of all species, beginning with Azoic times, corresponding to *ilus* in which Brahma implants the creative germ. Then we pass through Palaeozoic and Mesozoic times, covered by the first and second incarnations as the fish and tortoise. Next is the Cenozoic period, covered by the third and fourth incarnations in the animal and semi-human forms of boar and man-lion. The geological period is covered by the fifth, designated as “era of mind, or the age of man,” symbolized in the Hindu mythology by dwarf, symbolizing the first attempt of nature at the creation of man. In this succession of *avatars* is carried out “the truly philosophical idea of a simultaneous spiritual and physical evolution of creatures and man. From a fish the progress of this dual transformation [spiritual and physical] carries on the physical form through the shape of a tortoise, a boar, and a man-lion; and then, appearing in the dwarf of humanity, it shows Parasu-Rama physically, a perfect, spiritually, an undeveloped entity, until it carries mankind personified by one god-like man, to the apex of physical and spiritual perfection—a god on earth.” (*Isis*, II, 275-76)

Vibhishana was the youngest son of Sage Vishrava, who was the son of Sage Pulastya. Vibhishana was the younger half-brother of the demon (*Rakshasa*) King Ravana of Lanka. In spite of being himself a *Rakshasa* he was of a noble character. Vibhishana had a *sattvic* (pure) mind and heart. From his early childhood, he spent all his time meditating on the name of the Lord. Eventually, Brahma appeared and offered him any boon he wanted. Vibhishana asked for a boon that his mind should always be fixed on the Lord and that he should never commit any unworthy action.

He advised Ravana who had kidnapped Sita, wife of Lord Rama, to return her to her husband. When his brother did not listen to his advice, Vibhishana joined Rama’s army. He divulged the secrets of Ravana’s army and many other secrets, and made sure Rama was

victorious in the great battle. For this, however, Vibhishana is also known as a traitor. Lord Rama accepted Vibhishana’s service and anointed him the Lord of Lanka after Ravana’s death.

When Vibhishana attained the position of the King of Lanka, he turned his subjects from the path of evil to the path of *Dharma* (righteousness). When Shri Rama was about to leave Ayodhya at the end of his reign, Lord Rama in his original form of Vishnu is said to have ordered Vibhishana to stay on earth and serve the people and guide them to the path of truth and *Dharma*. Hence, Vibhishana is considered to be one of the seven immortals or *Chiranjivis*.

H.P.B. explains the immortality of Vibhishana by saying that he is “not a *Rakshasa* really, but the personification of *Sattva-guna*, which is immortal” (*H.P.B. Series No. 35*, p. 44). The *Bhagavad-Gita* mentions that the three *gunas* or qualities, *sattva* (light and truth), *rajas* (passion and desire) and *tamas* (indifference and darkness) are born from nature or *prakriti*, and bind the soul to the body. Of these the *Sattva* quality by reason of its lucidity and peacefulness entwineth the soul to rebirth through attachment to knowledge and that which is pleasant.

In “A Dream of Ravana” we are told that *Tamas* also partakes of good and contains within itself potentiality of both the *Rajas* and the *Sattva*, which must be evolved from it. Like the black flint of the desert, it is cold, dark and motionless but “within it is the movement, the fire, and the anguish of the *Rajas*, and the light and the joy of *Sattva*.”

Through the anguish of the fire alone can the black coal of the mine become transmuted into light. And so the sorrow and anguish which result inevitably from the passions in the *Rajas*, or emotional life, constitute the purifying fire designed to purge away the dross of our Titanic nature, and transmute it into the pure *Sattva*, where purity, goodness and truth are predominant.

The same book mentions that even Egoity or self-consciousness

(*Ahankara*) is threefold, viz., *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic*. Thus, *Sattva* is not merely light and goodness, but self-consciousness of goodness and truth, and in self-consciousness of truth and goodness resides the power and energy of knowledge and wisdom.

Nisargadatta Maharaj explains that mental modifications are the perturbations of the mind that result from *tamas* and *rajas*. These cause man to lose sight of the fact that he is the Self. We might say that mind undisturbed by thoughts—in a state of total peace and purity—is the *Sattva guna*. In this mode, the mind is not different from the Self. (*Nectar of Immortality*, p. 60 fn.)

(Concluded)

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REMEMBER that it is not only desire of office and of wealth that makes men abject and subservient to others, but also desire of peace and leisure and travel and learning. Regard for any external thing, whatever it be, makes you subservient to another....What, pray, is this peace of mind, which any one can hinder—I do not mean Caesar, or Caesar's friend, but a raven, a flute-player, a fever, countless other things? Nothing is so characteristic of peace of mind as that it is continuous and unhindered....There is but one way to peace of mind (keep this thought by you at dawn and in the day-time and at night)—to give up what is beyond your control, to count nothing your own, to surrender everything to heaven and fortune, to leave everything to be managed by those to whom Zeus has given control, and to devote yourself to one object only, that which is your own beyond all hindrance.

—EPICTETUS

## FREEDOM OF THE SOUL

TO BE FREE in thought, in conscience, in self-determination and in action is natural to the human being. It is the innate virtue of the human heart. Curtailment of the natural freedom of the human being by arbitrary action of external authority is resisted by man, and the spirit of man asserts its sovereignty and struggles to free itself from the oppressive conditions. History of human progress is, in one respect, a saga of struggle of man for freedom from slavery or servitude in one form or the other. Struggle of conquered and colonised nations for political and economic freedom, and the right of self-determination, is a marked feature of the recent history of the world. Historian, John William Draper, in his book, *The history of conflict between science and religion*, portrays in vivid colours the mighty struggle of the Western nations to throw off the yoke of centuries of religious bigotry and ecclesiastical oppression to which they were subject, securing for themselves freedom of thought and ushering in the reign of reason, and that is another illustration of the fact that freedom is the innate virtue of the human soul.

However, struggle of man for freedom seems to be endless. No sooner one kind of oppressive conditions are overcome and reformed than other sorts arise to enslave man. Political independence is secured from foreign rule, and self-rule is inaugurated by conquered nations, but a section of people of the freed nations remain in bondage by the action of their own countrymen. Having freed themselves from the despotic imposition of religious superstition, the Western nations swung to the other extreme of materialism of an agnostic science, which, as one of the Masters of Wisdom said, has imprisoned spirituality and enthroned scepticism. Numerous social evils enslave the society and degrade man. Are individuals of nations, who are proud of their political freedom and independence, really free? Mere personal freedom is no freedom, if the person is not free from the vices of human nature. By no stretch of imagination can we call ourselves free individuals when we are slaves of lust, anger, greed,

hatred, and are addicted to sensual and selfish gratification. Pride, ambition, vanity, envy, hatred are the real tyrants resident in the stronghold of man's heart, which bind man in perpetual slavery, and which are not to be easily dislodged. It is relatively easier to overthrow a tyrant outside of us but not so easy it is to subdue and overcome the invisible and impalpable tyrants within, resident deep in our hearts and minds. The truth is that there are no external enemies or tyrants to enslave man; the apparent outside enemy, whom we see and contend with, is no more than the reflex of the tyrant within us whom we do not see, to whom we have willingly offered in our own hearts and minds a safe haven.

True freedom then is freedom from the domination of the enemies who are resident in our own psyche. But this is not generally understood, and man vainly seeks various extraneous panaceas for the evils which beset him. Struggle of man against forces which deprive him of his freedom, and against evils which bedevil society, will go on in endless cycles of reform and new struggles against other newer forms of oppression which follow, till he learns the lesson that true freedom is the freedom of the soul, and begins to look within himself, and acquires self-knowledge. The nature of the soul, the cause of its bondage, the means of quitting the conditions which bind it, and realization of true freedom, are all clearly set forth in the devotional books. Speaking of the innate divinity of the soul as an inalienable portion of Himself as the Supreme Spirit, Sri Krishna teaches:

It is even a portion of myself which, having assumed life in this world of conditioned existence, draweth together the five senses and the mind in order that it may obtain a body and may leave it again. And those are carried by the Sovereign Lord to and from whatever body he enters or quits, even as the breeze bears the fragrance from the flower. Presiding over the eye, the ear, the touch, the taste, and the power of smelling, and also over the mind, he experienceth the objects of sense. (*Gita*, XV)

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras teach that the universe is embodied consciousness and that it exists for the soul's experience and emancipation. Thus the human soul, eternal in its essential nature, is launched on the stream of evolution, passing through alternating periods of objective physical life in the body, followed by a relatively spiritual state of post-mortem life, after the death of the body. This long cycle of reincarnations is propelled, on the one hand, by the universal evolutionary energy which causes manifestation of the universe, and, on the other by the soul's own Karmic affinities engendered by itself in its incarnated lives. It is thus that the soul, life after life, gathers experiences, in various circumstances of life which its own Karma has pre-ordained. A Yoga aphorism of Patanjali teaches:

The Conjunction of the soul with the organ of thought, and thus with nature, is the cause of its apprehension of the actual condition of the nature of the Universe and of the soul itself. (Book II, Aphorism 23)

The end and aim of life is to attain complete self-knowledge which can only be obtained by garnering and assimilating experiences in embodied life. Though intrinsically pure, immortal and eternal, the soul loses awareness of its true nature and purpose of its sojourn in conditioned existence during incarnated life. The loss of memory by the soul of its true self and nature in embodied existence is due to the fact that it is moved by passions and deluded by sensations of pairs of opposites which pervade life, producing in it false egoism—a feeling of personality distinct and separate from others, causing misapprehension of its true self, and of the true nature of the universe.

From the fact that the soul is conjoined in the body with the organ of thought, and thus with the whole of nature, lack of discrimination follows, producing misconceptions of duties and responsibilities. This misconception leads to wrongful acts, which will inevitably bring about pain in the

future. (Book II, Aphorism 17)

This illusion of personal existence mistaken to be real, and actions done with selfish intent for the gratification of personal desires, is the prolific moral cause, producing innumerable mental, moral and physical effects by which the soul becomes bound, and struggles in the chains of bondage forged by itself in ignorance. Explaining the cause of bondage and the means by which this bondage to miseries of conditioned existence can be ended, and freedom of the soul secured, the aphorisms teach:

The cause of this conjuncture is what is to be quitted, and that cause is ignorance (*Avidya*). The quitting consists in the ceasing of the conjuncture, upon which ignorance disappears, and this is the Isolation of the soul (*kaivalyam*). The means of quitting the state of bondage to matter is perfect discriminative knowledge (*viveka*), continuously maintained. (Book II, Aphorisms 24-26)

However much we may be involved in, identified with, and bound to material life, suffering and causing suffering, being ignorant of our true self and nature, the spark of Divinity that lingers in our consciousness, which is connected by a vital link to the primordial Divine Fire, the Spiritual Sun, the Heart of the Universe, which glows in our hearts, can never be wholly extinguished in us, and it is our true Self and our only Saviour. It is the Divine Intellect (*Buddhi*) that we have to awaken in our heart. The Light of *Buddhi* dispels the darkness of Ignorance, revealing the True Self as All and in all, a state of Absolute bliss and freedom.

But freedom of the soul is not granted; it has to be taken by waging the holy war in ourselves against the powerful tyrants within, who enslave us. Voicing the great difficulty in fighting the elusive enemy, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna: What is it that impels us, despite our best intentions to do right, to commit offences as if propelled by some secret force? It is Lust, says Sri Krishna, born of the quality of *Rajas*, insatiable and full of sin, which impels man to offend against

his own conscience, and that it is the enemy of man on earth. Even the wise man who strives for perfection is not immune against the attacks of the foe, as its domain extends not only over the senses and organs, but also over the Mind and *Buddhi*, the faculty of spiritual discernment, and thus causes delusion. The only way to conquer the foe, say the Teachers, is to give oneself up entirely to the dictates of the Higher Self, and with that selfless, highest devotion to the welfare of Humanity, conquer the foe by restraint of the senses and of the mind, and by purification of understanding.

The senses and organs are esteemed great, but the thinking self is greater than they. The discriminating principle is greater than the thinking self, and that which is greater than the discriminating principle is He [the Supreme Spirit, the true Ego]. Thus knowing what is greater than the discriminating principle and strengthening the lower by the Higher Self, do thou of mighty arms slay this foe which is formed from desire and is difficult to seize. (*Gita*, III)

One who is self-conquered is freed from all fetters of time, space, causation, abides in the bliss of Self Eternal, unaffected by whatever condition he may be outwardly situated, wise, absolutely impartial and just, and constantly devoted to, and ceaselessly striving for, the enlightenment and emancipation of all beings.

Living in this world they attain the bliss of Nirvana, whose appetites have been conquered, whose minds are well grounded in the elements of enlightenment and who cling to nothing but enjoy freedom of detachment. (*The Dhammapada*, verse 89)

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WHEN I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it...always.

—MAHATMA GANDHI

## 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:** It is said that the whole of the visible world has emerged from one dot or a point. What is this point?

**Answer:** The Secret Doctrine, or the accumulated Wisdom of the Ages is vast and stupendous and was passed on by oral tradition from one generation of sages and seers to the next. This oral tradition was reduced to a Record in the Fourth or Atlantean Race (*S.D.*, I, 646). It was a Record of geometrical signs and glyphs, symbols and emblems. It is through the use of symbols that vast cosmogony could be recorded in few pages, which would have otherwise occupied several volumes. H.P.B. points out that every symbol is like a many-faced diamond. Each of its facets is open to several interpretations and is related to several sciences. There are seven keys to the interpretation of every symbol, such as, astronomical, metaphysical, psychological, philosophical, geometrical, etc.

*Tantra* philosophy mentions *Yantra* which is the abstract diagram. *Yantra* is a Sanskrit word and it means an instrument or a machine. A *yantra* may be said to be an attempt to give a visual representation to the Supreme Being. Generally, a *yantra* is a diagram which consists of point, circle, triangle, square, pentagram or hexagon. Each of these geometrical figures, beginning with a point, has great metaphysical significance. The circle, for instance, represents cycle of eternity or a great spiral of evolution and even *Parabrahmam*. The point within the circle is the First Cause. At the time of manifestation, there starts out into existence a centre of spiritual energy within the bosom of *Parabrahmam*, which marks the beginning of cosmic activity. This point is designated differently in

different systems of philosophy. It is called Verbum, Logos, *Sabda Brahmam* and *Avalokiteshwara*. Point also denotes a seed or Germ. Just as a tree is potentially contained in the seed, so also, the cosmos is potentially contained within this point. It is said to correspond in Astrology and Astronomy to the Sun. Like the Logos the physical Sun is the window through which the light and life of Central Spiritual Sun radiates in the visible cosmos as visible heat and light. However, since the “point” is without any dimensions of length, breadth or thickness, it is often taken to represent *Avyaktabrham* or the “unmanifested deity.”

“Deity geometrizes,” says Plato. In *Notes on the Bagavad-Gita*, Mr. Crosbie elaborates this statement by pointing out that from the “point” whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere, a radiation equal in all directions begins and establishes a circumference, thus producing a sphere within which the activity of the “point” is confined. The “point” spreads out horizontally and becomes a diameter, dividing the sphere into positive and negative hemispheres as basis for action and reaction. Similarly extension of the point vertically forms the cross within the circle. The lines of forces proceeding from the center and tending to return to it begin the revolution of the sphere with vertical and horizontal lines extending towards each other and thus forming ansated cross (or *swastika*), and finally the square within the circle, followed by the figure of cube, five-pointed star and six-pointed star.

Interestingly, this is part of the explanation of Arjuna’s *Viswarupa Darshan* or seeing the Divine Form as containing all forms. The Divine Form is like the spherical mirror which reflects all things. We might consider Arjuna’s *Viswarupa Darshan* to be a glimpse into the *noumenal* or archetypal world, in which all that is in manifestation, exists as abstract forms. Thus, a four-pointed star is a symbol of animal kingdom. A five-pointed star is the symbol of mind. It also symbolizes a human being who is not yet an Adept. This description gives us some idea of the manifestation of the *noumenal* and phenomenal world out of a single point.

**Question:** Eagles can see clearly their prey even from the height of 35,000 feet. But man cannot see clearly beyond the height of even tenth floor of the building. What is the difference between animal vision and man's vision? Do animals have keener senses than human beings?

**Answer:** Most animals have very keen senses, for a single reason: to hunt and survive. Some animals have good directional hearing, so that they can determine the location of little sounds. Likewise good directional sense of smell can determine the location of prey and food. These could also be used to avoid becoming a prey. Senses are used by our body to get information about the world around us. Senses are often called powers and faculties. It is believed that when human beings led the life of hunter-gatherers they must have had more acute senses, which we see in the case of less developed races, such as, Australian aborigines, African Bushmen, etc. However, after man's mind was activated, giving him power to think and choose, along with power to reason, instead of his senses becoming better and more acute, his brain seems to have become better, because the light of mind was given to man only when his brain was of much better and deeper capacity than that of any other animal.

In fact, there are limitations to our senses. At the peak of our youth our ears hear frequencies between 16 and 20,000 cycles per second. Humans do not hear low frequencies very well, and that is merciful, because, otherwise sounds of our own bodies would be as deafening as sitting in a lawn chair next to a waterfall. But we are skilled extenders of our senses. For instance, a doctor listens better to a patient's heart with a stethoscope. Doctors rely on ultrasound, consisting of over 20,000 cycles per second, to help diagnose tumors, writes Diane Ackerman. (*A Natural History of the Senses*, pp. 188-89)

As for the difference in animal and human vision, the retina of the human eye normally contains only three types of colour receptors, called cone cells. The other colours are seen as proper combination of these three colours. Humans are called *trichromats*. Some of the

animals and birds are *tetrachromats*, i.e., they see not only the three basic colours but also the ultraviolet vibrations. There are almost infinite gradations of colours and sounds in the cosmos. Our eyes are able to perceive seven prismatic colors, but there are vibrations slower than those of the Red and more rapid than those of Violet called infrared and ultraviolet respectively. They are not perceptible to our eyes. But an ant is able to perceive them. But even if we take the perceived colours, there can be innumerable shades for every colour which can be perceived clearly by a sensitive eye.

In his lecture on the *Lost Arts*, Wendell Phillips proves that the psychological nature of man is affected by a change of climate. Moreover, he proves that Oriental people have far more acute senses than the Europeans. The French dyers of Lyons say that the Europeans cannot see a certain delicate shade of blue. But, the Kashmiri girls making shawls can show three hundred distinct colours, which the dyer of Lyons is unable to make and which *he cannot even distinguish*. H.P.B. remarks that the eye of the Kashmiri girl is able to see a colour which actually exists objectively, but which is imperceptible to the eye of the European person, and hence it does not exist for him. We can see that there is a vast difference between the acuteness of the physical senses of two races, and likewise we must accept that there could also be vast difference in their psychological powers. There are some peculiarly endowed organisms that possess mysterious faculty called *second sight*. (*Isis*, I, 211)

Whenever there is a natural disaster like tsunami or earthquake, it has been observed that birds and animals move away to safer places, so that not a single animal carcass is found at the end of the natural disaster. Many scientists say that animals have sixth sense that alerts them to natural danger. Theosophy describes this sixth sense in animals as instinct. Animal instinct is a form of psychic clairvoyance. There is a mysterious sympathy between all things in nature. Animals being psychically more sensitive than humans, it is only natural that they should sense the impending quake in advance

and move to a safer place. We are told that corresponding to astral body in man there is astral light, a kind of universal photographic plate, which is a storehouse of not only past events but also of events to come—those events for which the causes are sufficiently well marked and made. Animals are able to perceive the same with their clairvoyant faculty. Paracelsus wrote that certain animals have instinct which enables them to become aware of certain other future events besides the change in weather or impending natural disasters. “The peculiar cry of a peacock or the unusual howling of a dog indicates the approach of a death in the house to which they are attached.”

The physical senses in man enable him to perceive on the physical plane. But there are inner, astral senses which function on the astral plane. In fact, “Occultism teaches that physical man is one, but the thinking man septenary, thinking, acting, feeling, and living on seven different states of being or planes of consciousness, and that for all these states and planes the permanent Ego has a distinct set of senses,” writes H.P.B. (*Transactions*, p. 73)

Though some animals have clairvoyant vision, man has superior vision. It is called intuitive perception or spiritual seership, which is not to be confused with ordinary clairvoyance. It is the faculty of spiritual intuition, through which direct and certain knowledge is obtainable. It is the eye of the Initiate who is able to penetrate into the kernel of matter and know the soul of things; the eye which can see the Reality hidden behind the veil of *Maya*. As the *Voice of the Silence* puts it, “it is an eye which never closes, the eye for which there is no veil in all her kingdoms.” Humanity as a whole had the faculty of intuition in the distant past but due to moral degradation we lost the third eye or spiritual intuition. Through altruism and devotion we may get back the “deva-sight” (spiritual clairvoyance) and “deva-hearing” (spiritual clairaudience), which was ours in former births.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

For some people work never stops, because they work round the clock, irrespective of whether they are physically present in the office or not. They pass their weekends resolving work issues instead of spending time with their relatives and friends. They are labelled “workaholics,” the ones who get a buzz from working under intense pressure. Psychotherapist and counsellor Dr. Anjali Chhabria says that workaholics have certain traits of an obsessive compulsive personality disorder (OCPD), and their craving for achievement is often driven by insecurity and perfectionism. Santosh Nair, motivational guru says that the commodification of workforce has made everyone a workaholic. People have to be super efficient, work like robots and work harder to prove their self-worth. A workaholic tends to equate time spent at work with success.

In the West, studies on corporate culture have often proved that addiction to work is no less than addiction to alcohol—it affects people’s emotional and physical well-being. The Japanese have coined a special term for extreme workaholism. They call it “karoshi” or “death by overwork”! Clinical psychologist and relationship counsellor Dr. Seema Hingorrany says that workaholics tend to neglect people close to them. Their inability to balance work and personal life leads to grief from family, which reinforces the idea that work is an ideal way to escape from personal conflicts. In many cases, workaholism is the leading cause of divorce, separation, extramarital affairs, and children experiencing an unhappy childhood.

Some of the dangers of being a workaholic are: One has little or no opportunity for social life and hence one is unable to develop social skills. There is inability to relate to people outside of work. There is always the risk of becoming one-dimensional and blinkered in one’s outlook, which leads to lack of creativity. It leads to rise in stress, depression and nervous breakdown.

To find the right balance between work and life, it is suggested

that one should gradually reduce work hours, knowing that it does not imply compromising on the quality of work. There is no need to feel guilty when one is not working. Avoid discussing work over lunch and dinner and keep the weekends for leisure and pleasure. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, March 23, 2014)

We find two extremes in our society: those who want to make easy money without doing much, and there are those who work endlessly, for acquiring wealth, position and power, and the latter are erroneously believed to be means to achieve happiness. Those who have achieved desired objects too quickly in life, at a very young age, experience existential vacuum. “Contentment is the greatest wealth,” says the Buddha.

Ambition seems to be at the base of workaholic culture. Though ambition is generally associated with gain of worldly things—wealth, name, fame, position and power—it is a force or energy which needs to be channelized properly. *Light on the Path* advises us to “kill out ambition,” but also asks us to “work as those work who are ambitious.” An ambitious person is characterized by zeal, enthusiasm, perseverance and commitment. All these qualities are essential in a spiritual aspirant. Ambition is a great teacher, because when realized ambitions fail to give lasting happiness, the person is woken up to explore higher possibilities. Sometimes workaholism results from the desire to remain occupied with preferred activity that brings inner satisfaction, and reduces the necessity of social interaction and performance of other irksome obligations to bare minimum.

The advice to follow the “Middle Way” came most emphatically from the Buddha, from his own experience. Lord Buddha asks us to maintain this balance in his teachings on the Noble Eightfold Path. Each of the eight steps is prefixed by the word, “perfect,” or “right.” For instance, the practice of “Right Effort” and “Right Action,” seems to suggest avoidance of the extremes—of being over-active or that of total inaction. There must be a fine balance between work and leisure.

From time immemorial, ever since man became a rational thinker, man has always believed in rebirth, in something surviving his bodily death, and that the essential man is born again and again, taking a new body of flesh and blood. This was termed “Metempsychosis” or “Transmigration of the Soul.” Thus, belief in rebirth which is universal and intuitive could not be without an element of truth in it. The concept of rebirth inevitably involves belief in the immortality of the soul. People often report having seen a ghost, or bodiless being, called in Sanskrit as “*asareeris*.” Local tribes of Africa and America intuitively believed in rebirth—some of them kept the dead bodies of their children in the open for a few days for their Souls to come back into their bodies!

Hindus, Chinese, Egyptians, Jews, ancient Chaldeans and Persian Occultists believed in rebirth. St. Augustine asks: “Did I not live in another body before entering my present mother’s body?” Only in 538 AD, Justinian had a law made which declared: “Whoever preaches the pre-existence of the Soul and consequently the wonderful opinion of its return, let him be anathema.” And yet, many westerners, even today, believe in rebirth. Today there are researches by para-psychologists and other scientists on rebirth. In his book, *Life after Death*, Deepak Chopra has referred to numerous cases of rebirth and past memories. In the same book he mentions extensive research done by Prof. Stevenson involving two hundred cases of children remembering their past lives. Inequalities of life and child prodigies could be explained only on the basis of rebirth.

There are instances of rebirth mentioned in both *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna tells Arjuna: “Both you and I have passed through many births. But while I know of my births, you do not remember your births.” The doctrine of rebirth is interwoven with the doctrine of Karma. Through Karma, man improves himself birth after birth, and is slowly divinised, becoming free from the cycle of birth and death, writes Shri M. N. Krishnamani. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, March 31, 2014)

“For logic, consistency, profound philosophy, divine mercy and

equity, this doctrine of Reincarnation has not its equal on earth” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 152). Though we do not have a *direct* experience of the soul existing independent of the body, yet, there are innumerable instances of people who have had OBEs [Out-of-the-Body-Experiences]—in which they describe rushing out of the body, observing the body from a distance and reentering it—showing that soul can exist independent of the body. Mr. Judge writes, “Unless we deny the immortality of man and the existence of soul, there are no sound arguments against the doctrine of preexistence and rebirth.” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 84)

The doctrine of rebirth is one of the most ancient doctrines. For ages, the symbol for rebirth has been the phoenix. It is a mythical bird of great beauty which is fabled to live for 500 to 600 years, then to burn itself on a funeral pile and rise from the ashes to live through another cycle of years. Evolution and progress is possible only through Karma and Rebirth. The immortal spark undergoes pilgrimage in the drama of evolution. A Kabalistic aphorism describes this pilgrimage thus: “A stone becomes a plant, a plant an animal, an animal a man, and man a god.”

Each life is an opportunity to learn and experience. Many have felt dejected at the thought that with death, all their aspirations and achievements would vanish like a torch dipped into water. But death does not mean an end. In the next life we pick up the thread from where we had left off in the previous life. If, say, the pursuit of music, mathematics or computer science is kept up for many lives, then we have a computer wizard, a mathematical genius, or a great musician. Rebirth explains the appearance of geniuses and even child prodigies.

Rebirth explains disparities, as also *congenital* blindness, handicaps and diseases. If we believe in a just and compassionate God then we have to take these as karmic settlement of deeds of our past lives. There are instances of people who have remembered their past lives. But that is not the conclusive proof of re-birth. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. writes: “To get convinced of the fact

of reincarnation and past lives, one must put oneself in *rapport* with one’s real permanent Ego, not one’s evanescent memory.”

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Often it is our personal conceptual preferences about God that are at the heart of many religious conflicts and wars. Almost every child is taught: “God said...,” “God wants you to...” What this Being says or wants seems to differ widely from faith to faith, and people argue and fight over these differences. Voltaire, the 17th century French writer, historian and philosopher, famous for his biting wit, said: “If God created us in his own image, we have more than reciprocated.” Likewise, Xenophanes of Greece observed: “Mortals consider that the gods are born, and that they have clothing, speech and bodies like their own. The Ethiopian gods are snub-nosed and black, the Thracians say that their gods have light-blue eyes and red hair....But if cattle and horses and lions were able to draw—lions would draw the forms of their gods like lions, horses like horses, cattle like cattle.” Many eminent Jewish, Christian and Muslim theologians have said that we should not think of God as a simple personality, an external being. Often when people say that God loves this, or despises that, it is found to be but reflection of their own opinions.

It is but natural that when we speak or think or make assumptions about realities that are outside our immediate human experience, we tend to think or speak about them in human terms. There is a need to become more sharply aware of our assumptions and distortions, particularly when we are ready to condemn another tradition’s assumptions as “wrong” or even “evil.” The mystics and poets are able to convey the concept of God without distortion. The mystics ask those who aspire to take up spiritual journey to shed or renounce the former way of life and also images of God, which they cling to tightly. We should recognize that any image or

pronouncement we can make about God is much too small to contain the Divine, writes Marguerite Theophil. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, April 20, 2014)

Except for the atheists, each person has his/her concept of God. Human history shows that in the beginning when man identified himself with nature, he worshipped animal gods. But as time passed and man became aware of himself as the crown-piece of evolution, he endowed God with human form and attributes. Some people think that God is a Being who sits outside of themselves and tells people to act according to his own whims and fancies. Others are a step better, who think that God is within us but not outside, thus drawing a kind of boundary in which they enclose God. Theosophy says that God is both within and without. H.P.B. writes: “The evolution of the GOD-IDEA proceeds apace with man’s own intellectual evolution. So true it is that the noblest ideal to which the religious Spirit of one age can soar, will appear but a gross caricature to the philosophic mind in a succeeding epoch!....For idealistic as well as realistic thinkers, and even free-thinkers, are but the outcome and the natural product of their respective environments and periods. The ideals of both are only the necessary results of their temperaments, and the outcome of that phase of intellectual progress to which a nation, in its collectivity, has attained.” (*S.D.*, I, 326-27)

God in Theosophy is an Impersonal, Eternal, Boundless, Omnipresent and Unchanging Principle. It is not personal God, who can think, have emotions, can perceive, can repent and feel anger. If his thoughts and emotions fluctuate we cannot ascribe to such a God changelessness and infinity. To assign to It any attribute is to dwarf it. The *Upanishads* explain it by saying *Neti, Neti*, “Not this, not this.” Absolute is all-inclusive. Belief in Personal God idea involves prayers and propitiatory ceremonies. H.P.B. writes that petitionary prayers kill self-reliance.