

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

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR

THE DIGNITY of labour or dignity of work is a philosophy that all work, physical and mental, done with hands or head, should be treated equally, and that no work or worker should be treated as inferior. And yet, from the ancient times, manual labour and labourer has been looked down upon. The whole question of “dignity” is seen in a unique perspective in an article that appeared in the magazine, *Scientific American*. According to this article, it is quite erroneous to attach dignity or disgrace with either physical or mental labour, apart from the object of labour. If physical labour is of dignifying nature then a horse, ox or steam engine possesses greater dignity than man. If mere mental labour is of a dignifying nature in itself, then forgers, masterminds behind terror attacks, or internet hackers, must stand on a very elevated position on the ladder of dignity. Going a step further, we would agree that idleness is an evil, while hard work and industry is noble and a righteous duty. But even here, if hard and intense work is done to achieve an ignoble end, then such work cannot dignify the worker. It is not the work that confers dignity upon the labourer, but rather the labourer that confers dignity upon the work he performs. Though all are not able to choose their profession, each one of us can choose our character, irrespective of what profession or work one performs. A mechanic can be a gentleman, and so can a businessman.

One of the reasons why many do not find their own job and their

own place is that they are following false standards. What is right and proper to do, and what are the honourable and non-honourable ways of earning livelihood, are not judged on the basis of one's own aptitude and character but, in the light of worldly opinions. Who attached glamour to certain work? The answer is our society. Once upon a time profession of modelling or acting, especially when adopted by a woman, was looked down upon. Today, such glamour and money is attached to these professions that more and more people opt for modelling, acting, or choreography as their career choice. There has been such erosion of work ethics that often the only deciding factor in choice of work is MONEY. It is even better if one can get a job which requires minimum physical or mental exertion, with a good pay packet.

“The *will* to work enables a man unerringly to come upon his vocation—the work with which, and to do which, he is born,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. *Svadharna* (one's own duty) is fulfilling *svabhava* (one's inner nature). Our work is born with us. So also, the instruments, bodily or mental, are born with us. By being in the place which matches our inner longings and skills we can give our best contribution to the world. Krishna says in the *Gita* that humanity was divided into four classes or divisions depending upon the inner disposition or temperament. Thus, a man of “*Kshatriya*” or warrior temperament can serve the society or nation best by joining the police force or army, and a person with good business acumen can give his best contribution by being a businessman. For the healthy functioning of the society the work of a doctor, lawyer, professor or trader is equally important, as they are complementary and hence must be co-operative and not competitive units in the whole.

We work with our head, heart and hands. There are a rare few who have the chance of combining all these three in their work. Every work is holy. Cleaning the street, washing clothes or cooking, is as ennobling as painting a picture, teaching, performing a surgery, or writing a poem. We do not always look out for work depending on our aptitude. As soon as a person with some education begins

searching for a job, he looks out for what is known as a “white collar” job. “Duty of another is full of danger,” says the *Gita*. One of the meanings of this saying is that do not covet work for which you are not suited physically and mentally. Often we find people taking up the study of medicine or engineering, either because of the prestige associated with them by the society, *or*, because it is a good avenue for making money. It is not difficult for the person to realize that he or she is clearly not suited for that profession. And yet, with extra coaching and hard work, one manages to get the degree, or still worse *buy* a degree, and needless to say that such a doctor or engineer is dangerous to the society.

It is absurd to distinguish between physical and mental work, as even manual work, even so-called unskilled work, requires thought. We see that it takes more intelligence to become an expert electrician, a carpenter or a mason than an office clerk, whose work may involve merely typing or filing letters. One thing must be remembered that the “so-called” *high* cannot stand without the *low*. Can you build a building only with the architect and his plan? Nor can a contractor alone build the building with the plan and the materials, without the help of the labourers. The very production of food we eat depends on the hard and tough labour of the farmers.

It is interesting to note that all great people have endeavoured to inculcate respect for this so-called “inferior” work, and show that it is only the person who performs the smallest work with sincerity and devotion is suited for performing “higher,” duties of life. When a learned professor offered to work for Theosophy, he was first given the work of sticking stamps on envelopes by H.P.B. In Gandhiji's ashram, the first task entrusted to new entrants was the cleaning of latrines. In those days latrines were buckets, which had to be carried and emptied into cesspits and cleaned frequently. Gandhiji was of the view that performing such task, would strip the person of any residual ego, inculcate humility, and prepare him to serve the weakest and poorest.

Similar views have been expressed by a Sage to a pupil who

was confused about his duties. He was told, “To do great duties is to be by natural impulse incapable of failing in the small.” The pupil tells the Sage that he happened to have been born in a fortunate family, where there were others performing for him the “lowly” duties. Should he not discard those duties? And the Sage gives a thought-provoking reply. The pupil is told that he has a very different kind of duty arising out of the servant and served relationship. If the duty of a servant is to serve his master with devotion, then it is the duty of the master to accept the service with appreciation and gratitude, and treat the servant performing “lowly” duties, with consideration and not with arrogance, rather, treat him as a brother. Above all, the very fact that every task performed by the pupil was illuminated by the light of the higher mind, he should be able to perform those “lowly” tasks better than the servant, and bring his service to higher excellence. (*From the Book of Confidences*)

There is no denying that even when we are not required to perform menial work, we should adopt the right attitude towards those who serve us in a so-called low capacity. “If we adopt this idea of mutual trust and respect, the result will be that those who minister to us as attendants now will grow towards the higher *gunas* (qualities) in a natural way, and their devotion will be our recompense. Is it because we do not act in this way that there is so much unrest among the working classes, whose labour helps to give us comfort and to fill the coffers of their masters—for which service all they get is a meagre wage?” (*The Theosophical Movement*, March 1965)

Even if we have learnt not to regard physical labour as inferior, it is equally important to grasp that there should be equal development of the head, heart and hands, and that is quite a challenge in our world of mechanization and over-dependence on machines. Sometimes one feels that with typewriters and computers at our disposal we have nearly forgotten to write with hands, as also, to add and subtract simple figures. While machines save us time and energy, we seem to have earned that at the expense of bodily fitness. In earlier days, every part of the body was naturally exercised, as

one performed household chores. Today, more and more number of men and women are found to be joining gymnasiums and paying heavy fees for acquiring bodily fitness. The key is to strike a balance between office-life and home-life.

Gandhiji goes to the extent of saying that “man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands.” He connected this concept directly with the misplaced idea of philanthropy, and expressed that he did not agree with the idea of giving a free meal to a healthy person who has not worked for it in an honest way. Such misplaced charity does not add to either material or spiritual wealth of the country, but only goes to increase laziness, idleness and hypocrisy. What was needed was some kind of occupation, and he felt that the occupation that will give employment to millions was hand-spinning. Gandhiji said that physical labour was more important for maintaining the health of the society than it was for staying physically fit.

Thus, if our work is born with us, as also the tools to work with, then what is lacking is only the *will* to work. When we perform the work which comes our way, cheerfully and carefully, giving to it our all, then we make that work sacred and holy. Each one who performs his duty is, in a way, doing God’s work. George Eliot in her poem shows that Antonio Stradivarius, the maker of violins, assigned dignity to his work of making violins by his attitude. In the poem, he is made to say, “My work is mine...I say, not God Himself can make man’s best without best men to help Him...’Tis rare delight: I would not change my skill to be the Emperor with bungling hands and lose my work, which comes as natural as self at waking.” And she adds, “God could not make Antonio Stradivarius’ violins without Antonio.” Shri B. P. Wadia comments that the purpose of the Inner Divinity in man is not only to draw him out of his lower, animal nature but also aid him to transmute it so that it radiates the efficiency and the Beauty of the World of Spirit. We might say that we are able to accomplish this, to some extent, when we put our heart and soul into our work.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT “THE LORD’S PRAYER”

“AS MEN’S prayers are disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson. Do we have to go through life without prayer? Most emphatically we do, if prayer means to us what it usually does. But emphatically no, if we refer to true prayer. When the Buddha said, “Pray not!...seek nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn” he did not refer to true prayer. Neither is the Lord’s Prayer meant to be understood as it is generally understood. Jesus said that we should pray in secret and gave an example of true prayer. But how is this prayer regarded by us today? Do we not mainly emphasize “Give us this day our daily bread?” If we look at prayer as though it were a statement of a teacher of scientific law, who shows us how to aspire with the heart and the mind and to live by action, then it takes on a different meaning.

“The Lord’s Prayer,” is the one prayer that Jesus gave, and his command was to pray “in secret.” While many people say it, and more often than not in groups, at schools and in the Churches, few understand its real meaning. The Lord’s Prayer consists of six petitions.

Our Father which are in Heaven. Here we have recognition that there is something which is not of this earth on which we live; there is that, which is our source, of which each of us is a “son.” Since we all originate from that Source, it is called “our Father.” While permeating earth, He dwells in Spheres above the pettiness of earthly things. It is the deific essence within us, in our heart and spiritual consciousness. It is the God within, which we are, and hence it is taught, “The Kingdom of Heaven is within.” It is our Higher Self. Our true home is with Him in Heaven. Each of us is a pilgrim-soul, a spark radiated from the central fire, gathering experiences, from life to life, engaged in a pilgrimage to the “shrine” from which one has come.

The first petition is, *Hallowed be thy name.* We can get nowhere

in spiritual living without reverence, for that is a safeguard against pride. The heart immediately responds to the idea that there is something to be revered *in its own right*. Reverence is the recognition of greatness far beyond our own, and is born of love and, to some extent, of knowledge of the nature of that which is revered. We cannot love someone we do not know, but knowing the inherent loveliness of the character of a friend, we can add reverence to our love for him. True reverence is, then, an attitude of mind, not mere genuflection. These two short phrases set the keynote of the relationship which should exist between God and man, especially when we view them in reference to the next phrase.

Thy kingdom come, is the second petition, and it implies that we must work to bring God down to earth, to show the spirit of reverence and devotion towards Nature, which will bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. We can bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, once we have made friends with the Inner Ruler, as then we will have everything—Power, name, fame, possessions, knowledge, peace, happiness, and so on. The “Kingdom of heaven” refers to the divinity within. “Kingdom of Heaven” is the state of spiritual bliss and perfection. It is that peace and bliss which leaves no desire for any worldly thing. It is that knowledge, knowing which, nothing else remains to be known.

Our real Self finds channel of expression through our thoughts. Hence, it is at the *thought level* that we must first seek the Divine. There must be first determination at the thought level to leave behind the mundane life and search for truth.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, is the third petition. When we do the will of that which we reverence, instead of working for personal ends according to our own will, then indeed will the Kingdom of God be established. Jesus recommends silent, unuttered prayer to one’s Father-in-Secret. It is “Will prayer.” Will prayer is not a petitionary prayer, where the prayer is uttered and addressed to some extra-cosmic God, and more often than not it is a request for fulfilment of personal wish or desire. These purely verbal

supplications can never reach the divine. In a prayer, that which prays is the personal self and that to which the prayer is addressed is the Divine nature or Individuality. Unless these two are *consubstantial* in nature, no communion can take place. Hence there is the need to purify the personal nature so that it is brought nearer to the Divine. This is what seems to happen in Will prayer. To be answered or heard, prayer should be pronounced mentally and by one who knows how to make himself heard in silence and must be addressed to one's Father-in-Secret.

In such a prayer, the inner attitude is, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." It seems that for a brief space of time the mind is unfettered and becomes one with the divine, and hence it is as if the potentialities and powers of the divine nature, in terms of will power become available, and we find our thoughts and desires being translated into action. Hence, it is then no longer a prayer but a command. But if there is no purity then we may send up waves of purely personal desires towards our divine nature and which may produce disastrous results.

Give us this day our daily bread, is the fourth petition. "Our daily bread" does not mean merely food necessary for the body, though if God or the Good Law feeds the sparrows, how much more will He feed us, unless by our own actions we prevent Him! But this petition is certainly not recommending passive resignation without making one's own efforts. H.P.B. points out that petitionary prayers kill self-reliance. When one considers oneself separate from God, and prays to Him, there is no justice or merit in the achievement. Would you pay the labourer you hired to work in your fields a full day's wages if you did most of his work for him, while he sitting under an apple tree prayed to you to do his work? In such prayers we are living in moral idleness, passing on our burden to God, says H.P.B. Jesus say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (*Matthew*, 4:4). Thus, "daily bread" seems to refer to all that is needed for a meaningful and spiritual existence, which includes love, beauty, art,

brotherhood, and above all, right knowledge.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us, is the fifth petition. How easy to say, how easy to believe that our trespasses will be forgiven! Taught to fear the consequences of our wrong-doings, we long for forgiveness. Even if such forgiveness were possible, there is a price to be paid for it. The price is that we forgive those who trespass against us, and this is a much harder thing to do. "How many times *must* I forgive my brother? Seventy times?" Jesus answers, "Not seven but seventy times seven." Often the sins that others have committed against us, and called upon to forgive, are the very same sins we are ourselves guilty of. To forgive is to cease to feel anger, hatred or resentment against another person for his real or apparent offense, mistake or injustice.

We seek forgiveness or mercy of God or Law, and sometimes this request is accompanied by true feeling of repentance. Professor C. S. Lewis suggests in his essay "On Forgiveness" that "there is all the difference in the world between *forgiving* and *excusing*." He writes: "Forgiveness says 'Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology, I will never hold it against you and everything between us two will be exactly as it was before.' But excusing says, 'I see that you couldn't help it or didn't mean it, you weren't really to blame.' If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive."

Our false concept of "merciful law" or "merciful God" is that they *excuse* our wrongdoing and allow us to go scot-free. A sin, crime, or error disrupts the channel of communication with our divine nature. True repentance and forgiveness establishes back this ruptured communication so that we can receive the necessary guidance to correct ourselves.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, is the sixth petition. We cannot expect God to lead us into temptation, whether by God we mean the Impersonal Law or the common Father of us all. Does it not mean, rather, let us not allow ourselves to fall into temptation, but let us endeavour to deliver ourselves from evil? It is not to an outside being we pray, but to the Spirit-Soul seated in our

heart. United as spirit-soul-body, we can conquer, but separated we fail. This idea is also brought out by the phrase: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” That light is in all of us, but it must be made to shine through our actions, motivated by our thought-feelings.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever, and ever. Amen. It is again harking back to the one Reality, the real part of us, from the basis of which, and for which, every action should proceed. The “Amen” is the AUM, and stands for the God within, the Self of all things and creatures. It is really a *mechanical* repetition of such prayers that makes people forget the God within themselves.

Certainly, if we accept this line of thought we would not pray for this and that favour for ourselves or for our friends. In its highest sense, prayer is a meditation which is described by Plato as the ardent turning of the soul towards the divine, and it is the unuttered prayer—not to ask for any *particular* good but for good itself, or the Universal Supreme Good. We are asked to remain silent in the presence of the Divine Ones, so that they can show us, by the light which issues from them, what is *intrinsically* good—and not what appears to us to be good. In this sense, it is not desirable to pray for the speedy recovery of the ill or for any other *seeming* good. In the eyes of the Law of Karma, perhaps the good consists in allowing the karmic effects of our past thoughts and deeds to work out. We pray for this or that particular good to happen, because we do not have before us the larger picture.

When Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” he was referring to the power of thought-feeling of this nature, and true it is that such prayer is beneficial not only to oneself but to all Nature. Epictetus, the Roman slave-philosopher, says that one must be able at length to say from the bottom of one’s soul, “Conduct me, Jove, and thou, O Destiny, wherever your decrees have fixed my lot.”

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA THE AWAKENING OF FAITH—III

THE SECOND factor is sacrifice, which has already been dealt with in the Fifth Discourse, to which this Seventeenth corresponds. It was seen that sacrifice and sacrament implies the recognition of the inner, invisible principle in all objective manifestation, and the attempt by man to contact his own spiritual consciousness, which he can find in all objects. Sacrifice, then, does not mean the offering of any particular objects to the outside world, but rather the inner attitude of mind, while he is contacting that world of the senses, and while he is performing all his duties. The food we take from the outside we choose in terms of our tendency or faith, but we do take it from outside inwards. In the question of sacrifice, that tendency is going to express itself from within outwards. We try to give something of ourselves, from the inner, to the world outside.

The third factor is a very important one—that of mortification or austerities. Krishna describes fully the *tapas* or mortification which belongs to the *sattvic* stage. He says that there is three-fold *sattvic* mortification, in reference to the body, in reference to the speech, and in reference to the mind. If there is this three-fold *sattvic tapas* there must be the same three-fold classification in connection with the *rajas* and with *tamas*. But we must observe that Krishna follows the same spiritual principle that he observed in reference to the *asuras*. It was seen earlier that he did not insist upon the infernal imperfections of the *asuras* as he had insisted upon the divine perfections of the Great Masters of Wisdom. Here again he gives us in full the mortifications of the *sattvic* quality, and only generally describes those of *tamas* and *rajas*. He wants us to meditate, to think about, and to begin to apply these mortifications. Let us take them up in detail. The mortification of the body are: “Honouring the gods, the brahmins, the teachers, and the wise, purity rectitude, chastity, and harmlessness are called mortification of the body.”

Keep in mind the fact that they are called mortifications of the

body and reverse the order. You will then find that they follow each other in logical order. Beginning at the end, the first is *ahimsa* or harmlessness. When that has been practiced to a certain extent, we are able to practise the other mortifications—purity, rectitude, chastity. When these in their turn are successfully practiced, man attains to a certain degree of wisdom, and because there is in him that wisdom, he is able to recognize wisdom outside of him, and he is asked to show reverence, to honour all people who are wise, who show more wisdom than himself in any particular department of the activities. However, because of the principle that is emphasized in the teachings that man should be a self-reliant and a self-dependent being, people get the wrong idea that they are not to recognize any superiority outside of themselves. We hear many students of Theosophy say, “I know of no one superior to myself. There is no one that I recognize as superior.” That is simply a mistaken and false idea.

There is superiority in beings outside of ourselves. All that is meant when the principle of self-reliance is understood is that man should rely and depend upon his own Higher Self, but that in itself implies that he has to suppress his own lower self. Therefore, he should be able to recognize wisdom, knowledge and virtue in other human beings and in the spiritual science, and he is asked to show respect to those particularly wise beings. Only when he has thus tried to become worthy of relationship with those other beings, wiser than himself, does he begin to show more wisdom, and that entitles him to become a teacher. There comes the other mortification—he in his turn becomes a guru, the effort that he is making towards the enlightenment of the minds of other human beings, entitles him to spiritual regeneration which brings the spiritual or second birth, and regenerated he knows the kingdom of the god, he becomes like unto a veritable *deva* or divine being. Among the mortifications of speech it is interesting to note that study is mentioned, study of any philosophical system, of any laws of the universe, brings its own purifying effect upon the psychic nature of a person, which has its expression in speech, and “Gentle speech which causes not anxiety,

which is truthful and friendly, and diligence in the reading of the scriptures, are said to be austerities of speech.”

“Serenity of mind, mildness of temper, silence, self-restraint, absolute straightforwardness of conduct, are called mortification of the mind.” Mortifications of the mind are those very things that will help a person to control his thoughts and his mind. It is not enough to be pure from the outward point of view in our actions. We must endeavour to become pure in our thoughts. People feel that what we think does not really matter, because it harms no one from the spiritual point of view. However, it harms ourselves and others as well. Thus silence is mentioned among the mortification of the mind. Unless we become silent from the mental point of view we shall never obtain spiritual silence in the outside world. Theosophy emphasizes the quality of silence. H.P.B. has this to say:

The spoken word has a potency unknown to, unsuspected and disbelieved in, by the modern “sages.” Because sound and rhythm are closely related to the four Elements of the Ancients; and because such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken corresponding powers, union with which produces good or bad results, as the case may be. No student was ever allowed to recite historical, religious, or any real events in so many unmistakable words, lest the powers connected with the event should be once more attracted. Such events were narrated only during the Initiation, and every student had to record them in corresponding symbols, drawn out of his own mind and examined later by his master, before they were finally accepted. (*S.D.*, I, 307)

When we speak, or, every time we pronounce a word or sound, we do produce an effect in the invisible world around us; hence the necessity of speaking as little as possible, and not to be using forever that occult principle—speech.

The last factor is *Dana* or charity. Gifts that we give to others, not only visible and tangible but our moral charities and intellectual charities, which will produce a particular effect, are also of one or another of the three qualities in Nature. If we review these four

factors we can see how food is that which we take from the outside universe. Sacrifice is our attempt to impart something to the outside universe. *Tapas* or mortification is the effort of the divine man to subdue and control the outer man, because through that outer man alone can he contact the outside universe. And finally *dana*, charity, is the successful achievement of that inner, invisible being through the outer man, to give of his own spiritual essence, knowledge and wisdom, to the outside world.

Only those beings who have resolved to follow the path of renunciation are the ones who use the word *AUM*. That sacred word is the mantra, we can say, which is used to reach those Great Beings, the Servants of humanity. On the other hand, the word *Tat* is used to reach and contact the liberated and emancipated souls, those who have trodden the path of liberation, and those who long for their own immortality, and are going to enjoy that blissful condition of emancipation. The word *Sat* is used by all beings, who perform good actions. All beings who belong to the quality of *Sattva*, therefore, who are still bound down by that quality and who have not chosen to follow either the path of renunciation or liberation, but are still self-satisfied and at peace in their own condition of light and truth. The word *Asat* is used by those beings belonging to *rajas* and *tamas*.

By these four words we can classify the whole humanity. Those who want to liberate as quickly as possible will pronounce *Tat*. Those performing good actions will use *Sat* and all beings below will use *Asat*. These four factors indicate to us that growth and progress depend on the performance of certain duties. Those who think they can emancipate themselves through non-action are mistaken. Inaction in action, simply indicates an inner spiritual attitude of man, when he is in the world of action and is performing his deeds. This will again be explained in the next discourse, where Krishna shows us by what actions alone are we going to be able to understand the meaning of life, and hear for ourselves the song of Life.

(Concluded)

SYMBOLISM OF FIRE

WORSHIP and reverence of fire is an ancient practice among religions across the globe. While the Rig Veda esteems the fire-god *Agni* as one among the highest trinitarian deities, with him being “verily all the deities” (*Anugita* quotation, from the *Secret Doctrine*, I, 101), the Egyptians recognized Amun-Ra as a major god concerned with creation. The Zoroastrians are known to be fire-worshippers, with their fire-god, *Atar*, being the highest deity. While this is by way of example, a cursory glance at any ancient religion and culture reveals the high pedestal assigned to fire.

Are all these “lispings of infant humanity”—as Max Muller would have it—and merely a dumb wonder of the caveman at the discovery of the fire element and its life-giving as well as destructive ability? Or, do the Vedas, *Zend Avesta* and Egyptian mysteries contain a deeper science and a profound wisdom hidden in the symbol of fire? A student of symbology would confidently choose the latter camp, knowing that “the wandering savage tribes of America, which proclaim themselves ‘born of fire,’ show more science in their creeds and truth in their superstitions, than all the speculations of modern physics and learning.” (*S.D.*, I, 121)

While Science observes that fire is “the rapid oxidation of a material in the exothermic chemical process of combustion, releasing heat, light, and various reaction products,” esotericism teaches that it “is the most perfect and unadulterated reflection, in Heaven as on Earth, of the ONE FLAME. It is Life and Death, the origin and the end of every material thing. It is divine ‘SUBSTANCE’” (*S.D.*, I, 121). This world being an enigmatic mirror of pure Truth, every element as well as event on the terrestrial plane has its prototype in six other higher realms, the last one being Eternal. In this scheme of things, fire on earth is a reflection of Deity itself: “Deity is an arcane, living (or moving) FIRE, and the eternal witnesses to this unseen Presence are Light, Heat, Moisture.” (*S.D.*, I, 2)

The eternal One Flame, ever invisible, is reflected as conditioned

consciousness of a mineral, plant, animal, human or supra-human intelligence. As the fire from a single source—a candle or a lighted match stick—can light up innumerable candles, without diminishing anything in itself, qualitatively or quantitatively, so does the one Spirit reflect itself in myriads of bodies—visible and invisible. The fundamental law of Occult Science is, “the radical unity of the ultimate essence of each constituent part of compounds in Nature—from Star to mineral Atom, from the highest Dhyana Chohan to the smallest infusoria, in the fullest acceptance of the term, and whether applied to the spiritual, intellectual, or physical worlds” (*S.D.*, I, 120). The fire is the same in all beings, but the luminosity of the flame depends on the purity of the wick and the fuel.

Agni is said to have 3 sons—*Pavaka* (Purifier), *Pavamana* (Purifying), and *Suchi* (Purified). These three have 45 children. Thus, the family of *Agni* is composed of 49 personages. These forty-nine, in their psycho-spiritual aspect in relation to Man, are the seven faculties with their seven subdivisions: Senses of hearing, sight, touch, taste, smell, and those corresponding to mind and understanding.

Thus we find *Anugita* describing the Seven *Hotris* (Priests), each of them offering the sacrifice to “the Lord.” There is a “fire” which burns in every sense of ours. Sense-objects are the offerings, made in the fire of the sense by the “presiding deities” of each sense, as a sacrifice to the *Atman* within. This is one of the inner, real meanings of *Yajna*, the outer ritual being symbolic. Therefore, the senses must be purified of the dross of addiction, to sense objects and selfish desires, and the object of existence must be for “the experience and emancipation of the Soul.”

The three progenies of *Agni*, mentioned above, have their deeper meaning too. Man, not merely the physical body, but the whole being, is a marvellous mixture of all the primary forces of Nature with their subdivisions. This science of the various divisions of nature which have congregated in Man, thus making him the perfect being, was symbolically hidden in the story of these “fires.”

Pavaka is made parent to *Kavyavahana*, the fire of the Pitris.

These Pitris are those beings who prepared the invisible, astral tabernacle, for the human monads, to take residence in. *Suchi* is made the parent of *Havyavahana*, the fire of the “gods.” These are not “gods” as we ordinarily understand, but lower elemental forces which constitute our principle of desire. *Pavamana*, is shown as the parent of *Sahasraksha*, or *Saharaksha*, the fire of the “Asuras.” Here again, “Asuras” are not mythological demons, but the first and highest progeny of Brahma, those who arose from his breath (*Asu*), and referred to as the highly progressed and perfected beings who have a significant role in the intellectual and spiritual development of mankind. They are the ones who lighted up the fire of *Manas* in man, and thus made him complete, and potentially supreme. Our fire of self-consciousness is a reflection of that divine Fire in us, lit up by these “Asuras.”

It is this undying fire which takes up body after body, as wick and fuel, over innumerable lives, to consciously realize through experience its oneness with the Fire burning in every other being, as well as with the One Flame mentioned earlier. So long as this realization of oneness does not dawn upon us, we are forced, by our own ignorance and illusion, to be born again and again. Thus in the mythology, *Agni* and his progeny are cursed by Sage *Vasishta* to be born again and again. “This is to be understood by the heart: there is no separateness at all. He goes from death to death who beholds separateness.” (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*)

Interestingly, the fire of *Asuras* is termed *Sahasraksha*—“the lord with the thousand Eyes,” or All-Seeing, and an epithet of *Agni* is *Jataveda*—“one who knows all birth and existences.” Truly, this is the eternal fire in our being which has passed through innumerable existences in the past, sees everything and knows all.

This purifying fire of *Pavamana*, in majority of mankind, is still a spark. Symbolism speaks of its birth “through friction,” hinting that the fire of Wisdom—the most excellent purifier—can arise only through “friction” between our Mind and Spiritual Wisdom, in other words, through the union of our *Manas* and *Buddhi*.

Not only does the symbol of fire have its psycho-spiritual meaning, but like every other symbol, it has its six other keys, each of which can be turned seven times, thus revealing the whole tree of Knowledge to the eye of the adept. Giving a small turn to the key of Cosmogeneration, an ancient fire ritual is thus explained:

The birth of the celestial bodies in Space is compared to a crowd or multitude of “pilgrims” at the festival of the “Fires.” Seven ascetics appear on the threshold of the temple with seven lighted sticks of incense. At the light of these the first row of pilgrims light their incense sticks. After which every ascetic begins whirling his stick around his head in space, and furnishes the rest with fire. Thus with the heavenly bodies. A *laya*-centre is lighted and awakened into life by the fires of another “pilgrim,” after which the new “centre” rushes into space and becomes a comet. It is only after losing its velocity, and hence its fiery tail, that the “Fiery Dragon” settles down into quiet and steady life as a regular respectable citizen of the sidereal family. (*S.D.*, I, 203)

The above quotation explains by analogy that all the worlds or sidereal bodies are born one from the other. The birth of the celestial bodies is compared to a crowd of “pilgrims” at the festival of “Fires,” wherein seven ascetics appear at the threshold of the temple with seven lighted sticks of incense from which the first row of pilgrims light their own incense sticks. Then the ascetics whirl the lighted sticks around their heads and furnish fire to other pilgrims. Likewise, a *laya* centre is lighted up or awakened by the fires of a “pilgrim” (deceased celestial body) and that “centre,” after being awakened, rushes into space and becomes a comet, which after losing its velocity settles down ultimately as a sidereal body. A *laya* centre may be regarded as a nucleus of cosmic matter.

Thus we find the scriptures of ancient religions full of hidden meaning which may be partially revealed through a correct understanding of the science of Symbolism.

CLEAVING THE FETTERS OF FATE

FATALISM is the belief that the events of our lives are preordained by the decree of a supreme power to which one has to passively submit. This is not only a belief among the followers of some religions but, in a way, it is the teaching of the modern science also. Modern scientific view is that the universe is a vast machine which runs according to fixed, unchanging laws which operate mechanically, like a clock, and that the mysteries of nature may be discovered by studying these laws which are predetermined. It holds that human thought and aspirations have no more place in these laws than does the action of a creator. Hence, according to this view, all phenomena of nature, including human existence, is predetermined, over which man has no control, be they heredity, environment, or a host of external forces that play upon him. They call it scientific determinism. In this perspective the question of moral responsibility of individuals for their actions or for their character does not arise at all, as these are supposed to be predetermined by their genetic make-up and heredity over which they have no control.

Predestination of human life and existence is a belief held by followers of many religions. It was an article of faith among the early Fathers of the Christian Church that salvation or damnation of souls has been preordained by God at the outset in his universal scheme—“God’s plan,” as they call it. But the fact is that Jesus, and later, St. Paul, teach quite the contrary, that life of man is not preordained but that every individual is responsible for his actions in that he must reap what he has sown, that he shapes his own destiny. There are a number of passages in the Bible which teach free will of man and his individual responsibility. Similarly, ethical teachings in the *Quran* do not support the popular notion that Islam teaches predestination, *Kismet*. True meaning of *Kismet* is not fatalism but it simply means *law*, the law of cause and effect, and the law of Evolution. Many among the Hindus, misunderstanding the dynamic law of Karma, have developed a fatalistic outlook that

they are bound by the Karmic effects of actions done by them in past lives and that nothing can be done about it but to passively endure it. This is one of the reasons for India's degeneration. This fatalistic outlook prevails among many people though no teacher or scripture, when properly understood, teaches that man is helpless victim of an arbitrary fate. But they have always taught that there is indeed destiny, but that it is determined by man's own actions, and that he has the innate knowledge and power to rise above the constraints of circumstances and alter the course of destiny by action on a basis other than the one which caused his fetters, and even free himself entirely from the power of Karmic action which bind him to the miseries of endless involuntary cycles of birth and death.

What fetters man to the consequences of his actions are his thoughts; and by his thoughts alone, and nothing else, can he break those fetters and become free; because, mind is the real plane of action, and thought is action; and desire is the propeller of action. We can have no desire for a thing we are determined not to think about, and no result follows an action not done. But, lacking in knowledge, discrimination, and the will to resist habitude and temptation, and indiscriminately pursuing objects of desire we get bound to effects produced by our actions. Personal preferment and pursuit of self-interest are the producers of most powerful constraining force which binds man to circumstances, painful as they may be, from which he vainly struggles to free himself.

Therefore, the advice of the Teachers is that, if we aspire to free ourselves from bonds of Karmic action, we must not provide a basis for thought to inhere and produce consequences which fetter us, and that basis is personal desire—*Kama*. In other words, if our aspiration is to realize the truth of One Self, the Self of All, and our thoughts and actions are directed to that end with highest good of humanity ever in view, wholly free from motive of personal interest but moved by devotion and love of all, such action having no focus or basis in personal self, liberates man and assimilates his mind to higher consciousness.

All actions of such a man who is free from self-interest, who is devoted, with heart set upon spiritual knowledge, and whose acts are sacrifices for the sake of the Supreme, are dissolved and left without effect on him. (*Gita*, IV, 23)

Selfless action and devotion to the highest interest of others are the only efficacious means, by which alone, and by no other means, can one burst the bonds of Karma and rise above them. But one cannot practice this discipline without first acquiring spiritual knowledge. Spiritual knowledge means knowledge of Self or *Atman*. We have to educate ourselves out of the mistaken notion that we are this body, and that the individual self is separate from other selves; that this sense of separateness, which we so strongly feel, is the source of egotism or selfishness, and is the chief cause of all the miseries and sorrows of the world.

Having acquired this knowledge by study, reflection and meditation, we must think and act from that higher understanding in everyday life. True Self, the Perceiver, is changeless and non-acting, is one idea we can visualize with a little self-introspection: change cannot perceive change; only that which is changeless can perceive change. This truism is evident from the fact that over the decades since we were born, body has changed, our ideas, beliefs, ideals, our likes, dislikes, etc. have all undergone change. Every detail, even the smallest, of these incessant changes is known to us, though we may not be able to recall them all at a given moment. Nevertheless, all of them are known to us because the perceiving Self is changeless. It is evident then that Self, the lord of the body, is essentially unchanging and unaffected by changes it perceives. It is not acting, though the power to perceive and to act, proceeds from it. That power is infinite, and that is the true self. There cannot be two infinities or two eternals. Therefore, our true Self which is eternal cannot be but the self of all beings also, the source, the sustainer and the final receptacle of all that is, was, and ever shall be. Teachers constantly remind us that, we are THAT. It is the personality which is the *agent*, the doer and the actor, which is non-eternal, the product

of past Karma, and it is by the blind, indiscriminate, creative power of its passions that it reproduces itself life after life *ad infinitum*, unless the cycle is put an end to by neutralizing the cause of its recurrence. It implies that in our thought and action we have to take the stance of the Higher-self, and renounce all interest and concerns of the personal selfish self. Motive for action, even small obligatory actions in daily life, should then be for All-Self, which can only be realized by devotion to Humanity's highest good—altruism.

The devotee who knows the divine truth thinketh "I am doing nothing" in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing; even when speaking, letting go or taking, opening or closing his eyes, he sayeth, "the senses and organs move by natural impulse to their appropriate objects." Whoever in acting dedicates his actions to the Supreme Spirit and puts aside all selfish interest in their result is untouched by sin, even as the leaf of the lotus is unaffected by the waters. (*Gita*, IV, 8-10)

Once personal motive in thought and action is renounced, with heart joined to devotion, all actions are dissolved, leaving no residual cause for further action. The inner self, so purified from polluting effects of actions with personal motive, is progressively assimilated to the Supreme Self. This is true practice of Yoga, which means union with the Supreme.

Personal likes and dislikes fetter man the most. We have preference and liking for a particular set of circumstances which we feel are pleasant, or have affinity for someone and dislike for other conditions and persons. We tend to shun unpleasant experiences and difficulties that come into our life unbidden, by reason of our own past choices, which we do not remember, which we resent, and then struggle against odds. Equally, we pursue objects of our desires and struggle to perpetuate them at any cost. Long experience in the school of life is teaching us that it is folly to let these two opposites—unwelcome visitations of adversities in our lives, and hard to forego pleasantries of life—to affect us, as the universe is

pervaded by duality, both of which bind us down to endless miseries of conditioned existence, from which we can never escape except by one and only means, and that is to inwardly stand aside, or stand above, in the spirit of dispassion and resignation to the Higher Self, unaffected by ought that may befall us.

The man who knoweth the Supreme Spirit, who is not deluded, and who is fixed on him, doth not rejoice at obtaining what is pleasant, nor grieve when meeting what is unpleasant. He whose heart is not attached to objects of sense finds pleasure within himself, and, through devotion, united with the Supreme, enjoys imperishable bliss. (*Gita*, V, 20-21)

Falling back inwardly on the true Self and placing absolute trust and dependence on the unerring and just law of Karma, the Self and the law being synonymous, in all circumstances and conditions, and acting thus, is wisdom in action. Though acting, performing every duty of life, fulfilling every obligation, with utmost care and efficiency, but with heart unattached to the fruits of action, whether they be successful or otherwise, such a devotee is really not acting. He has found the fine line between action and inaction. "Yoga is skill in the performance of actions." Every event and circumstance to such an one has deepest occult significance, and full of precious lessons to learn, which in the sum contribute to his spiritual development. The wise words of the great Teacher, W. Q. Judge, who is a master of wisdom in action, is full of insight and inspiration:

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

Such selfless action is not easy of accomplishment. It takes ages

of concerted efforts and experience to understand the intricate psychic and psycho-physiological nature of lower self in order to subjugate it entirely to the dictates of the Higher Self.

However, we can *try*, and such is our duty; if we persevere, the tendency toward the right understanding will increase with each life more rapidly than would otherwise be possible. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 122)

To practice Yoga in the true sense as heretofore attempted to be explained is the duty of every one—the duty we owe to our Higher Self, to our fellowmen, and to the lower kingdoms of Nature especially, which look up to man for their progression towards the human stage. This is our appointed work, and “he who does not go through his appointed work in life has lived in vain.” Though success in entire elimination of personal idea is a distant prospect, yet constant practice of it saves man from great danger of sliding into downward course which Teachers warn against.

Look for peace that comes from a realization of the true unity of all and the littleness of oneself. Give up all, in mind and heart, to the Self, and you will find peace. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 128)

WHEN nothing seems to help, I go and look at a stonemason hammering away at his rock perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred and first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not that blow that did it, but all that had gone before it.

—JACOB RIIS

IN THE realm of ideas, everything depends on enthusiasm; in the real world, all rests on perseverance.

—JOHANN GOETHE

BRAIN AND MIND

II

OUR BRAIN is the vehicle or instrument of the lower mind, which perceives things seen by the senses as “ideas,” in the brain. Though we say eyes see, ears hear, nose smells, the tongue tastes, etc., the organs and the senses do not cognize objects. In *The Ocean of Theosophy* Mr. Judge explains that when we “see” an object, the eye receives the picture on the retina, which is first turned into vibrations in the optic nerves, and then transmitted to the brain, where *Manas* (mind) is able to perceive the object as an *idea*. Similarly, when we hear something, the vibrations first reach the ear and then the brain, where *Manas* is able to perceive. *Kama-manas* or lower mind is the faculty that *perceives*, and when it *interprets* the sensation, we call it perception. When the mind of man was not lighted up, he could not perceive things the way he does now.

If the brain is damaged or the connection between brain and *Manas* is broken, then intelligence will not be manifested. The mind uses the brain for reasoning from premises to conclusion. If certain portions of the brain are affected, reason and judgment could also be affected. The same person in normal state makes a proper interpretation and judgment, thereby showing that the real *seat* of moral behaviour is in the inner man or the Ego. The impairment of the instrument inhibits the *expression* of true judgment or discrimination. The brain is not the *seat* of discrimination or reasoning, but only a useful instrument. Mr. Crosbie explains that in hypnotism, the hypnotizer paralyzes that channel in the brain of the subject, through which the subject, as Ego, operates and controls his brain. As a result, the person hypnotized receives only those impressions suggested by the hypnotizer. Research has indicated that the brain shows profound changes when under the influence of hypnosis. The way the brain processes information undergoes profound change, in the case of people acting on suggestions. Researchers discovered that some of the hypnotized people saw

colours where there were none, while some others lost the ability to make simple decisions.

The functions of the Higher Mind are independent of the brain. For instance, the soul memory is not dependent on brain. There are three types of memory—*Remembrance*, *Recollection* and *Reminiscence*. Remembrance and recollection are dependent on more or less normal and healthy functioning of our *physical* brain. *Reminiscence* is soul-memory; it is the direct perception of what was, and is not dependent upon brain—the brain merely serves as a sort of filter or translator of impressions. The instrument of the brain is necessary for bringing back the memory of deep sleep state or the memory of past lives, into waking consciousness.

The brain is not the seat of memory. Every organ in our body has a consciousness of its own kind, and therefore, has its own memory. In fact, every cell in the body also has a memory of its own kind. Astral Light is the tablet or storehouse of the unseen universe, where every fleeting impression, feeling, thought and action, as every pulsation of the visible cosmos, is recorded. Astral Light is the tablet of memory of the animal man, while *Akasa* is the tablet of memory of the spiritual Ego. Memory, says H.P.B., is that power which every human being unconsciously exercises, to look with inner sight into the astral light and there see the images of past sensations and impressions. In other words, memory is unconscious looking into and reading the impressions in the astral light. Each plane has its own tablet of memory. On all planes “memory” must be the power of reproducing past experiences.

The brain cells are *receivers* and *conveyors* of memory, but not their preservers or *retainers*. When it is said that one has lost his memory, or that it is weakened, it is partly because the memory cells have become enfeebled. H.P.B. gives an analogy. Through the window glass we are able to see the objects outside, but if the windowpane is cracked, we shall see only distorted images, and if it is replaced with cardboard, we are unable to see anything. However, the objects outside the window have not disappeared and

can be seen once the windowpane is repaired. So, too, the Universal Memory (Astral Light) preserves every impression.

We may say that reminiscence is the aroma or nectar of the spiritual qualities of past personalities. For soul-memory to become available in our waking consciousness, the brain must be made porous and receptive so that it could be impressed with this memory of the past. For this, it is essential to think and act along right lines during waking life. Spiritually advanced beings such as Buddha and the Initiates remember all their past incarnations.

Likewise, our ability to remember the dreams depends upon the state of our consciousness before falling asleep, the receptivity of brain, and the ability of the inner Ego to impress the physical brain of the outer man. Dreams are but the impressions made on the brain; and brain is the instrument of the lower mind or waking human consciousness. The brain can act as a dull surface, mirroring shadows and distorted images. It can act as a polished surface, when it can reflect brilliantly but evanescently. It can also be like a sensitive photographic plate, and then it will faithfully mirror and retain every impression of the soul. To be able to remember dreams, the brain must be made porous and receptive and we are told that by living according to the dictates of the soul the brain may be made porous to the soul’s recollections.

“The human brain is simply the canal between two planes—the psycho-spiritual and the material—through which every abstract and metaphysical idea filters from the *Manasic* down to the lower human consciousness (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 25*, p. 5). All true impressions are in the divine nature or *Atman* but they must be reflected in our everyday consciousness. At the simplest level, we receive help and communication from our divine nature during Dreamless Sleep State. We are none the wiser when we wake up, either because we are unable to bring the memory of those experiences to waking life, *or* if we do bring them to the waking state, we are unable to get any higher meaning from these experiences. This happens because our brain is not *receptive* and *porous*, as it is entangled in everyday

activities and concerned with only mundane plane. We need to change the quality of our brain. We can change the quality of the brain by taking up or ideating on universal ideas or even metaphysical ideas and living a morally pure life. Using “will” we can transcend ordinary mental processes, *i.e.*, the activities of the lower mind. When that happens, mind thinks from higher plane of being.

Unlike man who thinks, animals receive stimulus and impressions from their senses which become the basis of their dreams through automatic throwing out of these impressions by brain. H.P.B. mentions that *every being endowed with physical brain or organ approximating thereto, must dream*. Every animal has physical senses through which it receives impressions. These senses are dulled during sleep, but memory still acts mechanically, reproducing past sensations (*Transactions*, p. 70). To some extent, this is proved in an experiment conducted by scientists at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. A number of mice which were fitted with electrodes in their brains to record the brain activity when they explored the maze and came out of it, exhibited similar neural activity when they fell asleep later; indicating thereby the re-living of their experience of waking state during sleep.

The cerebellum is the seat of all the animal proclivities of a human being, and is the great centre for all the physiologically co-ordinated movements of the body, such as walking, eating, etc. The proclivities include natural desires such as hunger as also desires of lower kind. While the reasoning, learning, etc. are associated with the left hemisphere, creativity is associated with the right hemisphere of cerebrum (*S.D.*, II, 301).

Cerebellum is concerned with instinct. Cerebrum is concerned with intellect. Cerebellum furnishes the material for ideation. The Cerebrum finishes and polishes the material supplied by Cerebellum but cannot create this material for itself.

During sleep, when active functioning of cerebrum ceases, cerebellum begins to throw off impressions just as a bar of heated iron radiates heat. This produces chaotic dreams. If cerebrum were

to be active during sleep, we would have dreams with proper sequence as it happens in day-dreams. The fact that we experience vivid dreams as we approach the sleep-waking state is due to the mechanical activity of cerebrum. When cerebellum and cerebrum act in co-operation, dream recollection becomes possible.

The Ego, though all-knowing, will not be able to use the brain to its full capacity unless it has experience. For instance, savages have good brain capacity, but the Ego is not mature and experienced to use it to its highest capacity. It is like asking two people to use computers. One who has mere working knowledge can only use it as a typewriter or calculator, while the one who has experience and has knowledge of computers, can utilize it better. It is only when the Ego has passed through various experiences of life and learnt from them that it acquires the power to utilize the brain to its full capacity. Men are wise, not in proportion to their experience, but in proportion to their capacity for experience. Thus, on the one hand, we need to increase the capacity of the Ego to use the instrument, through assimilation of the life experiences, and on the other hand work towards achieving the purity and soundness of the instruments or vehicles.

The Pineal gland is located in the middle of the brain, and secretes a single hormone called melatonin which regulates day and night cycle or biorhythmic cycle of when we sleep and when we wake up. In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 301) we are told that the intellect of man may be gauged to some extent by the development of the central convolutions and the fore part of the cerebral hemispheres. The development and increased size of the pineal gland may be considered to be an index of the astral capacities and spiritual proclivities of any man. Pineal Gland is closely connected with the functioning of the “third-eye”—the Spiritual intuition. The “third eye” was once a physiological organ, but later on, owing to the gradual increase of materiality and disappearance of spirituality, this “third eye” got atrophied, and was gradually transformed into a simple gland, which is Pineal Gland (*S.D.*, II, 295-96). Science is

ignorant of the fact, and regards pineal gland to be a pea-like mass of grey nervous matter attached to the third ventricle of the brain, and containing *mineral concretions* and *sand*, and “no more.”

The Spinal Cord in man connects the Brain with the generative organs. Practical Occultism founded on the Esoteric Philosophy recognizes the direct and intimate connection subsisting between the Pineal Gland and the genitalia. These two are creative poles, and when one is positive and active, a proportionate negative and passive condition is produced in the other. When the North Pole of the Pineal Gland is active, it creates children of ideas and thoughts; when the South Pole of the generative organ is active, children of flesh are created. The Pineal Gland is the Heart of the Mind—the seat of Love without any trace of lust, the seat of Compassion without any trace of passion. In the ordinary individual both the Pineal Gland and the genitalia are active by turns, and therefore, he is a mixture of lust and love, of passion and compassion. The function of pineal gland is also affected by consumption of alcohol and drugs, which prevents the development of the “third-eye” or spiritual intuition. As one advances on spiritual path, abstinence from drugs and drinks, as also, observance of celibacy become absolutely necessary.

We may conclude by recalling H.P.B.’s statement: “The brain is such a complex thing, both physically and metaphysically, that it is like a tree whose bark you can remove layer by layer, each layer being different from all the others, and each having its own special work, function, and properties.” (*Transactions*, p. 64)

(Concluded)

IT IS the individual who knows how little he knows about himself who stands a reasonable chance of finding out something about himself.

—S. I. HAYAKAWA

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Does the degree of guilt depend on whether one intended harm or not? Or, is it enough that harm was caused? asks Vinita Nangia. According to her if the intention of the offenders was to hurt, be unfair or cruel, then they do not deserve forgiveness, but if the harm was unintentional, they deserve leniency. However, it is also true that lack of harmful intent cannot totally absolve you from blame for the negative outcome. For instance, if one breaks a neighbour’s window with a wild swing of cricket bat, it is immaterial whether one meant to damage or not, because in this case, one was aware of the possibility of harm inherent in the act, but it may be that one was too confident of one’s skill. In her book, *I Let You Go*, Clare Mackintosh gives an instance of a mother who lets go her child’s hand for just a split second, in which the child dashed across the road and dies in an accident. In spite of being counselled that it was not her fault she was not convinced of that. Likewise, one cannot get away from cruel words spoken in a fit of anger by saying, “I did not mean that; it just slipped out.” The fact that it “slipped out” reveals that at some level you did believe it.

Moreover, sometimes a well-intentioned act can also cause harm or irritation. Thus, the most important factor to take into account is the impact produced on another, and adverse impact could be because one was insensitive or was not alert enough. What varies is the degree of guilt, depending on a whole lot of variants. The degree of guilt, if there was no malicious intent, could be mitigated by a sincere regret and an attempt to make amends.

There are far more complicated situations, such as a policeman killing a person while firing into a crowd, or a woman killing a man about to harm her child. Are these people guilty? It is obvious that no one rule can apply to all situations. Even the court of law distinguishes between degrees of guilt, so that we have terms such as, “culpable homicide amounting to murder,” “reckless act,” “mitigating circumstances,” etc. Failing to be empathetic renders

you guilty too—of being insensitive and not caring enough, writes Vinita Dawra Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, April 15, 2018)

A human being has the power of choice, and with that comes the moral responsibility. Ultimately, it is important for us to know whether we are guilty in the eyes of the Law of Karma, which is the Ultimate Law of the Universe. Karma has two aspects, one is that of action and reaction on physical plane, and the other is that of moral responsibility. The former is applicable to all beings. So, if a child puts its finger into the fire, it will burn. But the law of *moral compensation* does not apply in every case. The moral compensation in normal human beings would involve intense pain and suffering in one's inner nature till the person finally learns the lesson and reforms.

The Law of Karma does not bring us punishment or reward mechanically, but takes into account the motive, the inner state of the person and the weight of his past Karma, as also, the person's level or degree of knowledge or ignorance, and inner development. The Karmic responsibility is in proportion to one's knowledge. We do not incur a very heavy debt, when we act wrongly *but with a good motive*, or because we were disturbed inwardly. The more the knowledge—of right and wrong—the less will be the “mercy” of the law. We incur heavier karmic debt when we engage in a wrong action *knowingly*. There is a difference between the sleeping person's hand overturning a glass and spilling water, and another person in his waking state throwing down a glass in anger and breaking it.

We are increasingly seeking therapy in companionship of ducks, dolphins and dogs. In United States, an animal can often board a flight as long as a doctor signed a letter stating that it helps the owner deal with a medical condition. Delta Airlines carried 250,000 such animals in the year 2017, which is 150 per cent more than in the year 2015. Most are dogs, but often pigs, hamsters and peacocks are also included. A 2014 survey found that 97 per cent of United

States family doctors believed that owning a pet has health benefits, and since then all kinds of animals are seen being taken to nursing homes, prisons and hospitals.

John Bradshaw, who studies anthrozoology, or the way in which humans and animals interact, at the University of Bristol, U.K., says that seeking animals for emotional support may well be a waste of time. He says that people confuse feeling good in the presence of animals with long-term clinical benefits. Despite widespread use of animal therapies, a 2017 review found that research into its efficacy is still in its infancy. Moreover, animal therapy is a big business. For instance, a session of dolphin therapy, where people come into close contact with a dolphin in a pool, can cost 600 Pounds per hour or more. No doubt, in the 1960s New York psychotherapist Boris Levinson found that some children with communication problems opened up more in the presence of their dog. Also, there is some evidence that playing with a dog helped some autistic children learn to read, but even so, it is not clear if playing with animals is more effective than other enjoyable activities.

Another reason why Bradshaw, a director of the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, is keen to understand human-animal interactions is that many people do not understand the responsibilities involved in ensuring that animals in their care have a good life. “There is a danger that if doctors encourage people to get pets for health reasons, not only will this approach fail, but it may also result in poor animal welfare,” says Bradshaw. For instance, the charity Whale and Dolphin Conservation has called for a ban on dolphin therapy, on the basis that it is harmful for both the animals and the people. Moreover, “Hal Herzog, a psychologist at Western Carolina University, has argued that emotional support animals might prolong an individual's psychological issues by enabling them to avoid or delay dealing with their problems in other ways,” writes Nic Fleming. (*New Scientist*, April 14, 2018)

Man has always kept pets for various reasons. Dogs were domesticated and trained to be watchdogs and also used for hunting.

Alarming, more and more people are keeping pets to get over depression and loneliness. Pets seem to be taking the place of human companions. It is easier to love pets and find one's love reciprocated, almost without fail. Is keeping pets the right solution for loneliness? Animals must be treated with love and compassion, but we need not make them our constant companions, and much worse, attempt to humanize them. It was once reported that a lady used to take her parrot to bed with her and compel it with slaps to lie on its back. The most important thing for the animal is to have experience in the species to which he belongs. They are unable to have that experience when they are cut off from their natural surroundings. An animal has to learn self-defense, finding food for himself, etc. Hence, when some people say that their dog is able to appreciate music, they fail to see that appreciation of music is not the next step in dog's development. In fact, in close proximity with humans, they pick up lower tendencies. For instance, a pet dog that is showered with love and attention all the time is often found, out of jealousy, to harm the newborn baby, towards whom family's attention may be shifted.

There is a greater danger than germ infection in keeping pets. Occultism teaches that there is a continuous exchange of atoms or "lives," going on between man and the lower kingdoms. When we keep pets, there is abnormal interchange of life particles. The animal is at a lower stage of evolution, while man is on a higher rung of evolution. The animal evolution is unnaturally forced and the task of developing instinct is interfered with. On the other hand, what kind of life particles are we attracting to ourselves by our so-called "loving" attachment to pets? When we link ourselves so intimately with animal nature, we hold back our own human evolution, "animalizing" our own character. The need for abstaining from keeping pets is still greater as one advances on the spiritual path, as one is required to keep one's own magnetism pure. Hence, at a certain stage in discipleship, there is a strict rule that "no pet animals are permitted and it is forbidden even to touch certain trees and plants. A disciple has to live, so to say, in his own atmosphere in

order to individualize it for occult purposes."

Aldous Huxley says, "A man may be a pessimist determinist before lunch and an optimistic believer in the will's freedom after it." Do we have free will? Why does a gunman shoot? Psychological science has much to say about thought, emotions and behaviour of perpetrators and victims, because psychology and other behavioural sciences study the causal networks of the natural and the cultural world. But their explanation is complex. There are many simple explanations offered, and one of them is based on free will. "People feel that they have a choice in many behavioural matters, and after they did one thing, they often remain convinced they could have done the other. They find it even easier to assert that others could have acted differently, especially when what they did do was destructive or despicable. It is rarer to claim that a person who did good could have freely chosen to do bad. Interestingly, and in direct opposition to the doctrine of free will, many rescuers and lifesavers maintain that they did not have a subjective experience of choice—that instead they simply did what needed to be done. In contrast, evildoers are strangled with the doctrine of free will. Why did they choose evil? They did not have to!" writes Joachim Krueger, a social psychologist at Brown University who believes that rational thinking and socially responsible behaviour are attainable goals.

The author considers the doctrine of free will to be the most dangerous, as very few people know what free will means. We justify punishing an evildoer believing that he freely chose evil, without being forced or conditioned. He acted afresh. In other words, not being tied to prior causes, and not being subject to chance, he makes a free choice. Since he is cut off from the past, he exercises pure freedom, and therefore we do not ask, "He makes a choice, based on what?" This kind of free choice, independent of the past, does not allow us to infer anything about the person's character, psychology or attitudes, which, in fact, would help us to explain his behaviour in causally determined terms. "The doctrine of free will

asks us to believe in a free floating cause of a behavioural act, a cause without history, and more importantly, without a future. If the person chooses evil again and again, a causal pattern emerges and the individual acts can no longer be said to be free,” writes Krueger. (*Psychology Today*, Top Posts: February 2018)

The problem of free will can be easily solved once we recognize the duality of mind. The incarnated mind or lower mind or everyday mind can either turn to the divine nature or can gravitate to *kama* or passions and desires. At the moment of making a choice our mind is temporarily freed from desire nature, and it becomes an organ of free will in man. But our choices are not made in the vacuum or without basis or causality. Our “free will,” strictly speaking, is not absolutely free. It is influenced by past thoughts, feelings, choices and actions. H.P.B. writes, “...by ‘psychic’ individuality we mean that self-determining power which enables man to override circumstances. Place half a dozen animals of the same species under the same circumstances, and their actions while not identical, will be closely similar; place half a dozen men under the same circumstances and their actions will be as different as their characters, *i.e.*, their *psychic individuality*.” If a coach in the moving train catches fire, we see varied reactions of the passengers: Some might panic and cry, other may scream, still others might decide to pull the chain to stop the train, and so on.

An occasional smoker with confidence in his freedom of will, or power of choice, may finally become a habitual smoker. The fact is that we are conditioned, to an extent, by our previous right or wrong actions so that our present choices are, as it were, determined or influenced by the past. Hence, H.P.B. points out that man is a free agent during his stay on earth, but “there are *external and internal conditions* which affect the determination of our will upon our actions.” In other words, the exercise of free will is conditioned or limited by the *external* circumstance, as well as, the *inner* capacities and conditions—both being the result of past Karma.