

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THEOSOPHY—HELP AND HOPE FOR THEE

A MASTER has gone on record saying that each member, if earnest and unselfish, can become a centre of powerful influences, gathering like-minded people around him and benefiting the whole neighbourhood. What comes in the way of each member becoming such a centre? It is, basically and mainly, the mental attitude. Mr. Judge points out that most students think that people around are not receptive. Who cares for Theosophy these days? But such attitude is dangerous, because we are connected with others on the mental plane, and if we think nothing can be done then we impress other minds around us with the same thought and then, of course, nothing is done. As against this, if we *think* Theosophy and say to ourselves, earnestly and sincerely, with the wish that just as I have benefited from Theosophy, let others too, be benefited, then it would be like whispering into the ears of others who are in our vicinity, “Theosophy, help and hope for thee.” Such an attitude combined with sincere efforts at promulgation can have a miraculous effect. To *think* Theosophy means to *constantly aspire* towards it day and night. In other words, each one of us must inquire, where do my thoughts turn *naturally*, when I do not have anything pressing to think or do? Like children, having finished their homework, run towards their base, *i.e.*, playground, have we made Theosophy such a base?

The purpose of life is to learn and then to teach. Evolution is a

tremendous drama of education requiring both those who are old in learning and experience, and also those who desire to expand their knowledge and lead a better life. The philosophy of Theosophy can but point the way, the travelling has to be done by each. “You yourself must strive; Buddhas are but sign-posts.” Theosophy emphasizes self-development, or development through one’s own mental efforts, which is the principle of true education. With plethora of philosophies and new-age gurus, every seeker has a wide choice. Many choose the philosophy which justifies the course of action which appeals to them. Many others base their choice on the philosophy or practice which provides relief or solution to the immediate problem. Those whose beliefs were based on the satisfaction of their personal natures, would continue to pursue their chosen path till they are led to an *impasse*, a dead end, and return confused, looking for more enlightened path. To such the philosophy of theosophy could show the way—which is the high road of constant quest for truth, to be followed by eager, open minds, and it is the path of evolution. It is the philosophy of rational explanation of things.

Theosophy is synonymous with everlasting Truth, and possesses answer to every question. Study of Theosophy and its right interpretation and application are the responsibility of every student of Theosophy. What passes for Theosophy in many quarters is not Theosophy, either due to negligence, or due to vain hope of attracting more people, or catering to demands of people, or simply due to lack of proper grounding in the fundamental principles of the philosophy of Theosophy. The future of Theosophy in the world is largely dependent upon the quality of its students and expounders. The task of every student is to sow the seeds the best he knows how. There is a lot of information and even knowledge in the world, but what is needed is the vitality of Truth, and it is realization and understanding which gives vitality to Truth. So long as there remains a gulf between preaching and practice, we will fail to present Theosophy as life-saving philosophy. If people do not come to

Theosophy, let us take Theosophy to them, by “taking every opportunity of talking to others,” and by “assisting in circulating our literature.”

The morality of our civilization springs from modern knowledge. Modern knowledge is a mixture of scientific materialism and religious superstition and dogmatism. Modern knowledge upholds the doctrine that whatever there be of soul and spirit is the result of material evolution which takes place because of the power and potency of matter. Thus, the sense of “self” may just be an illusion created by 100 billion neurons at work. Neuroscientists locate our consciousness in the brain and not in the soul, saying that sensations, thoughts, joy and pain are the result of physiological activities in the brain tissues. Everything ends with the death of the body. A complete reversal of the ancient view! Ancient philosophy teaches that body comes to birth because Soul is. Laws of Nature are expressions of Intelligences who are the agents and instruments of those Laws.

If one escapes scientific materialism then, in places like India, one is caught in religious dogmas and superstition. There are religious practices closely knit to social customs. A Master of Wisdom writes: “If it be permissible to symbolize things subjective by phenomena objective, I should say that to the psychic sight India seems covered with a stifling grey fog—a moral meteor—the odic emanation from her vicious social state. Here and there twinkles a point of light which marks a nature still somewhat spiritual, a person who aspires and struggles after the higher knowledge. If the beacon of Aryan occultism shall ever be kindled again, these scattered sparks must be combined to make it’s flame.” Every student-aspirant has to transform himself into one of those few sparks or points of light, which in companionship and unison with others can form a flame, which can rekindle the light of Aryan occultism. The student-aspirant proves that there is help and hope in theosophy, for better life and better future, by serving humanity through his trade and profession. The path of Practical Theosophy is a process of self-transmutation.

What dominates the world today is *kama* (passion-desire) or selfish love and lust. Love of family, wealth, possessions of one kind or another, is all at selfish level. This selfish love must be transmuted into Charity. It implies using our possessions—physical, mental, moral and spiritual—impersonally and universally. We can *own* nothing. We are trustees of our possessions.

What humanity needs most is theosophical education, the right philosophy of life. “The great problems of life [are]: why we are here, why we suffer, and where may justice be found that will show the reason for the sufferings....It is life and its sorrows that destroy our peace, and every human heart wants to know the reason for it,” writes Mr. Judge. The answer to these questions lies in the doctrines of Karma and Rebirth. He says, “After an experience of fifteen years in the Society’s work I have seen that more good and useful men and women have been attracted to our movement by these doctrines than have ever come to it by reason of phenomena.”

Theosophy gives the insight that “it is ‘we’ ourselves who are creating the phantasmagoria before our eyes and struggling over the solution of its disturbing effects, instead of creating for ourselves a world of effects more in keeping with our real natures—a world in which we can live undisturbed by the effects that disturb others,” and yet remain concerned about the welfare of others. Phantasmagoria is a changing series of imaginary and real figures seen in a dream. It is also an optical device for changing the size of the image on a screen. We create such changing series of figures in our lives just as we do in dreams. A professor saw a duck he ate for dinner in his dreams, and it was growing and growing in size till it grew to the size of an elephant, and began to wave his webbed foot. The image was exaggerated and blown out of proportion. We do the same in the waking life. We tend to exaggerate our fears, our worries, our difficulties and even our self-importance, or importance given to other things and people. When our self-image is exaggerated we feel easily insulted or easily disappointed. Our perceptions are from the point of view of personality. We are being asked to create

a world of effects which is in keeping with our real nature. Knowing that our real nature has all the powers, potentialities and energy, we can be sure of being able to deal with the effects, whatever they are. There is quiet confidence that we can deal with every sorrow, difficulty, disappointment, danger, because our real nature is infinitely powerful and all-knowing. By centring oneself in the Self, one does not become oblivious of others. There remains concern for other people’s welfare.

Mr. Crosbie rightly remarks that it looks like the world is not ready for Theosophy *per se*, because often what has been passed on in the name of Theosophy are the opinions of those who put their personalities forward, or an admixture of theosophy and some religion or philosophy. The physical eclipse of the Sun occurs when the Moon passes directly between the Earth and the Sun, cutting off the light of the Sun. Let us take the Moon to represent a disciple or someone who reflects the light of truth, and reaches it to his fellow beings. Let the light of Truth symbolize the Sun. Depending upon his level of development he will reflect more or less light. Also, so long as he is faithful to his task of reflecting the light impersonally, he benefits humanity, by removing the darkness of ignorance. But when he tries to put forward his own personality, seeks to put himself on a pedestal, begins to divert the attention of the people from the teachings to himself, he, without realizing, places himself between his followers and the light of truth, causing a moral and spiritual eclipse. For those who are partly deluded, there is partial eclipse, but for those who are completely taken in by his pretensions, there is total eclipse. After a while, the Sun escapes from the clutches of the Moon, reestablishing brightness. Likewise, the self-seeker who sought to obscure the sun of truth is eventually exposed and must retire. Let every student-aspirant take to heart these words of Jesus, addressed to his disciples: “Ye are the light of the world....Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (*Matthew*, V, 14-16)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE KEEPER OF THE TRACK

I WAS in despondent mood and I lay down to rest. I tried to compose myself and ere long was enveloped in a soothing slumber. I slept and on waking remembered this dream.

It was a land of Quiet. No living being seemed to be about. Calmness was the presiding genius. Suddenly I saw a humble structure—a simple home surrounded by dignity and majesty. Who could be living there? I saw an old man sweeping, cleaning the footpath that led to the dwelling. I watched him for a while as he moved noiselessly doing one thing and then another. After a while he sat down with his book of palm leaves on his knees.

Something urged me to accost him and inquire. What did it all mean? My confused approach cast a shadow over his book.

“What ails thee lad?” he inquired, as he looked up at me. “Remember, friend, despondency and despair are vital enemies on the threshold of life.”

“Father,” I answered, “your serene gentle face invites confidence and urges me to unburden my heavy heart. What shall I say? Failure and disappointment are my lot. My hope, my prayer, my earnest endeavour all seem in vain. Checked on all sides—the greater the desire to serve and sacrifice, the fewer the opportunities. There seems to be no appreciation or gratitude in those I serve. My brothers and companions plunge into the fray, meet success and move onward. I toil in vain. Every morning I earnestly look around for some place where my services may be appreciated and every night finds me just where I was. Much is attempted but nothing accomplished. Among the needy none seek *my* help. Among the sick, no one looks for *my* soothing hand. I am lonely, I am forsaken. Alas, there is will to serve, but no field in which to act.”

The gentle eyes of the venerable man smile in sad reproach.

“Child indeed,” he murmured. “The heart is good but the start made at wrong end. I am very old, but never have I seen kind Mother

Nature forsaking her own, and yet she never moves a hair’s breadth in the discharge of her benevolence. Sit down, boy; clam yourself.” After a moment’s quiet he spoke—he seemed to be repeating what he had heard: “Disappointment, despondency, despair, is the three-headed devil and one needs must fight it single-handed. Disappoint disappointment. Down your despondency. Do away with despair. So damn the Devil.”

He became silent again and then talked to me.

“Tell me, whether in all your work of service, you have toiled and suffered for others’ welfare only? Have no ambition and self-seeking tainted your aspirations?”

He looked at me with penetrating gaze, smiled and asked: “Do you know who dwells there? No? He is One of the Army of the Voice; one of Those who are men, not men as we are, but Super-Men. Though I am here I know Him and yet not seen Him. But my heart tells me that He is one of the Pure-hearted, cleansed of despair. One who is never disappointed when his sacrifices are rejected. The disappointed find shelter under those Trees which surround His Ashram; the despondent lose their feeling of dejection inhaling the fragrance of those growing herbs; the despairer gains strength as he looks at the Star of Hope shining over the home. But all cannot reach the shade of the trees; the Star of Hope shines only for him who has abandoned all hope. Gather experience to prove worthy of the gifts which are here.”

I held my breath. “But friend, surely you yourself are that Star of Hope. Why are you holding me in this outskirts? Let me go in.”

He smiled sadly but heroically. “Lad, I am the gate-keeper of this Blessed Ashram of the Blessed One—gate-keeper of the gate that does not exist and yet it is there. Not I it is who stops you from entering; your own self holds you back—glued to the spot where you are. The Glorious One there needs workmen; and happy, thrice happy he whose efforts permit him the Divine companionship.

“I came the same way as you, have confronted the same demon—despair. But this is the Divine Assurance I received to my despondent

query: ‘Can I, even I, hope to reach the goal?’ ‘Truly you may.’ ‘And how is the Path to be found?’ ‘There is but one way, the Way of Duty, *that* will lead you to the Path.’ ‘What particular duty?’ ‘Point out the Way to other men. Keep the Path visible to mortal sight.’

“These Blessed words sustain me, and my present Duty, lad, is to keep the track visible for those who desire to seek the track—which is lost in the wilderness of the world, but which begins here and welcomes every newcomer to the Lord’s Land. Few be they who approach, but the track I keep visible in the hope that the setting sun may usher into this Divine Retreat some lonely footsore pilgrim. Waiting, watching I look on while now one, now another passes on into the House of Light, leaving me at my post. My time is not come; but I have the faith that it will arrive. The day is sure to dawn when I, the Track Pointer, will find entrance, not as I go in now, but in a real sense. He who is within the Ashram needs me at *this* task. He keeps my feet from wandering—away into the jungle that you call the world; He guides my hands to point the Track to others.

“With heartiest welcome I usher in every weary traveller, and every such traveller returning home adds to my strength. Only entire forgetfulness of self draws one to the Sacred Hearth of this Ashram. Your very despondency shows that there lurks the idea of reward for work. Remove the veil of selfishness which dims the sight. Do any work that comes your way—see that it is divine. No effort is lost, no labour is in vain. But, active or silent, attune your ‘mind and heart to the great heart and mind of all mankind.’ Be ready to point the track and let others pass onward, while you remain behind. Try, friend. Be a true servant of the Great Servers and thus win your peace. This is what I do.”

I awoke. My eyes wet with tears. A deep quiet in my heart unknown for many a long day. But I remembered. Verily a dream more real than most events of life and labour.

It is the Master’s work to preserve the true philosophy, but the help of the companions is needed to rediscover and promulgate it. Right ideas and right philosophy is the dire need of our age. We are asked to put forward the Theosophical ideas before the world, *again and again*. As Mr. Crosbie writes, “In the swirl of engrossing events man needs reminding.” We are bound to feel disappointed when people do not respond. We may find today that there are too many engrossing events to absorb the attention of young and old alike. If we perform the task ceasing to look for reward and with the feeling, “I am only an instrument through which the good work is getting done,” then there can be no disappointment or despair. Often, although wishing and willing to give, life places us in circumstances where we do not find worthy recipient. This is true especially of knowledge. Great is the sorrow when we see that there are only a few who can appreciate Theosophy. And yet we must carry on the work of giving the waters of life, without losing enthusiasm. Kahlil Gibran describes the agony beautifully in these words: “Would that I were a well, dry and parched, And men throwing stones into me; For this were better and easier to be borne, than to be a source of living water, When men pass by and will not drink.”

We must do our best, wait and acquire “patient resignation.” Mr. Crosbie sums up the position while writing to a student worker: “There are many whom we cannot help. Their time has not yet come, perhaps, in that they have not arrived at that condition which permits such help as we can give. We can help those that are ready; they may not be many in number, but they exist, and will come, as the way clears for them to do so. A steady outpouring of the eternal ideas will attract and hold those who need them; others will come and go as their mood determines.... You try to serve all and give them of your best; no one can do more. Every spiritual effort is a good action.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 192)

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

CRAVING—III

14. *Craving grows in a disturbed mind, also when passions flourish, and when yearnings for the pleasant arise. Thus fetters grow strong. (349)*

15. *He who delights in quieting his disturbed mind and becomes mindful of the pleasant but undesirable nature of craving, he will certainly remove, nay destroy, the bondage of Mara. (350)*

MIND has been compared with monkey that moves from tree to tree in search of juicy fruits. Our mind moves from one pleasant object to another. When desires enter into the mind, it becomes restless for their fulfillment. Our life seems to revolve around desires with which we get identified. Success in fulfillment of desire becomes *our* success, and failure to fulfill them becomes *our* failure. And when the Will is driven by desires of personal nature, we get chained by our own desires. Krishna describes the person of demoniacal disposition as the one who is “fast-bound by the hundred cords of desire.”

But it is possible for a man to overcome his desires by becoming mindful of the pleasant but undesirable nature of craving. Craving does not disappear by satisfying it—it increases. The pleasure obtained by fulfilling the desire is temporary. Often, the happiness that arises from the connection of the senses with their objects is sweet as the waters of life, in the beginning, but in the end like poison, as it happens in case of addiction to alcohol or drug. The person is ruined in the end. It is best to learn to reject such pleasures, firmly, at the outset. Other pleasures, though not bad, also have to be rejected in preference of those, which bring happiness to many.

We must cultivate detachment. First, we develop it in small things. We can do without fan, we can do without extra helping of our favourite dish, we can do without any of the comforts, if need be. We should prepare ourselves so that we will not feel miserable if

there comes about sudden change as to people, places, things we got used to. This attitude must further be extended to inner nature, because, a man of meditation also needs psychic food. His taste refines, he looks for depth and substance in his pleasures. He is attracted to more refined pleasures such as music, gardening, reading, etc. But, if any or all of these are missing, he should be perfectly willing to go on with life without grumbling.

16. *He who has reached the goal, who is fearless, who is without craving and without sin, he has removed all thorns of life; this is his last life. (351)*

17. *He who is free from craving, without attachment, who penetrates with insight words and texts and knows their orderliness, he is a Sage, a Great Person. This is his last life. (352)*

The above verses give description of the *anagamin*—the one who is not required to be born again; this being his last life. He is free from craving and attachment. He is without sin. He has broken the chains that bind the ordinary man to rebirth. He has liquidated all his Karma and attained perfection. His passion has been transformed into compassion for the whole world and he tries to alleviate suffering without slightest feeling that “*I am helping.*” Since he no longer considers himself separate from other beings, he does not offer a focus where results of even his good action may return. The whole world shares the good fruit of his selfless actions.

Such a man is skillful in understanding the words and their meaning. He is a master of science of words and their grammatical arrangement, who knows the order of letters in their prior and posterior relations and implications—such an one is called a great sage or *mahapragya*. He knows the true meaning behind the words and the context in which they are said or written. His knowledge and understanding is not a result of reasoning which is liable to error because of wrong premises or even wrong reasoning. To get at the real meaning underlying words, particularly those of the scriptures, one requires unerring intuition. All of us possess this

faculty to more or less extent. But in a spiritually wise person, it is fully operational. In *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita* we are told that it is possible for every man to acquire this faculty.

“Krishna declares that he will feed the lamp of spiritual wisdom so that the real meaning of his words may be known...whereby one can plainly discern the real, or undisclosed, meaning of holy books. Indeed, there is a school of occultists who hold...that this power may be so developed by devoted persons, that even upon hearing the words of a holy book read in a totally unfamiliar language, the true meaning and drift of the strange sentences become instantly known. The Christian commentators all allow that in studying their Bible the spirit must be attended to and not the letter.” Often, our scriptures are given hard and fast interpretation by the supposed custodians of the religion. But the sage is able to see the new but true meaning behind words of the scriptures and show the application of the teachings to different circumstance of life.

18. *“I have conquered all. I know all. I am free from taint whatever the living condition. I have renounced all. I am free as all craving is extinct. I have penetrated Wisdom Supreme. Then, from whom have I learnt?” (353)*

This verse, it is inferred, was spoken by the Buddha in answer to an enquiry: “Who is your Master?” One authority suggests that the Buddha’s answer was to the Brahmana Upaka on his way to Benares. The answer is a good example of the observance of silence and secrecy while full veracity is maintained.

The life of the Buddha is known to all of us. It has been described in detail by historians and by devoted followers of Buddhism. In his search for the solution of the sorrows of the world, the Buddha showed open-mindedness and willingness to learn by trying out various methods and exploring various philosophies. At one time he even undertook extreme asceticism which almost killed him. In a way, all these were his teachers, because, they presented to him an opportunity to learn the truth by eliminating all that is false. But

what is it that guided him to accept or reject anything? His own Higher Self—the ultimate guru who is present within each one of us. *The Voice of the Silence* says: “The ‘great Master’ is the term used by Ianoos or chelas to indicate the HIGHER SELF. It is the equivalent of *Avalokiteswara*, and the same as *Adi-Budha* with the Buddhist Occultists, ATMA the ‘Self’ (the Higher Self) with the Brahmins, and CHRISTOS with the ancient Gnostics.” In that sense, the Buddha is perhaps teaching us self-reliance, because the highest authority is within us. He says: “You yourself must strive; Buddhas are but sign-posts.”

19. *The gift of the Law (Dhamma Danam) excels all gifts. The flavour of the Law excels all flavours. Delight in the Law excels all delights. Extinction of craving is the end of pain. (354)*

The best gift that anyone can give another is *dhamma-dana*. It is the gift of spiritual knowledge. Among all charities, charity of knowledge is considered to be the highest. The verse contains important message for those who are engaged in alleviating the suffering of mankind by providing basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing. While these are no doubt necessary and important, what they also need to give is education. This includes right knowledge regarding man and nature, the purpose of life, the cause of suffering and also its cure. The knowledge of the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation convinces man that there is law in the universe and it works to bring harmony. He realizes that it is possible for him to respond to adversities in life in a constructive way so as to gain strength, fortitude and contentment instead of complaining and blaming another. He accepts responsibility for his present life as being result of past actions and endeavours to shape his future by right thought, feeling and actions in the present. The great beings convey these truths through their own lives.

20. *Riches destroy the foolish, not those who seek the Beyond. By his craving for possessions the foolish man*

destroys himself, fancying he is ruining another. (355)

The wise man treats the circumstances of life as opportunities, whether it is poverty or riches, health or sickness. We usually equate riches with favourable circumstances of life. The important question is: Do we really know how to make best use of the favourable circumstances of life? We don't. Surrounded by comfort and lacking nothing, we enjoy life. "Languages, archaeology, music, satiating sight and beauty, eating the finest food, wearing the best clothes, traveling to many places and thus infinitely varying impressions on ear and eye; all these begin and end in the brain and not in the soul or character. At death, the wonderful central master-ganglion disintegrates, and nothing at all is left but some faint aromas here and there depending on the actual love within for any one pursuit or image or sensation. Nothing left of it all but a few tendencies—*skandhas*, not of the very best. The advantages then turn out in the end to be disadvantages altogether," writes Mr. Judge (*Vernal Blooms*, p.12). Thus, the rich man fails to benefit by the "advantages" of life. Worse still, if he gets carried away by the power of money, he seeks to fulfill every desire of his heart, even if he has to ruin another for their fulfillment. Uncontrolled desires, finally bring about his own ruin, morally, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and also physically. The wise man considers his wealth like a trustee. He uses it for right purpose, to benefit others by its means. The life of the adept-king Janaka shows us the way.

21. *Weeds are the bane of fields. Lusts are the bane of humankind. Therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from lusts brings great reward. (356)*

22. *Weeds are the bane of fields. Ill-will is the bane of humankind. Therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from ill-will brings great reward. (357)*

23. *Weeds are the bane of fields. Delusion is the bane of humankind. Therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from delusion brings great reward. (358)*

24. *Weeds are the bane of fields. Desire is the bane of*

humankind. Therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from desire brings great reward. (359)

Weeds are a curse to fields; they prevent the seeds sown by the farmer from bringing forth an hundredfold crop by sucking up the vitality and nutrients for their own luxuriant growth, leaving little space for the seed to send forth its root into the soil and sapling above to drink life-giving sunlight and air. What weeds do to the fields is done by lust, ill-will, delusion and desires to the mankind. A considerable portion of our life and energy gets wasted in pursuit of lusts and desires which leave us very little time or energy to inquire about and devote ourselves to the spiritual life. It is not surprising that "the adept is the rare efflorescence of a generation of enquirers." Therefore, it behooves us to pay our respect to those who have destroyed these weeds, and help them in their work for humanity by becoming their companions. The Buddha thus shows the better way of earning merit or *punya*; because, people at that time put too much emphasis on rituals and ceremonies in order to earn merit for favourable future life and the life after death.

(Concluded)

MANY people seem to think it foolish, even superstitious, to believe that the world could still change for the better. And it is true that in winter it is sometimes so biting cold that one is tempted to say, "What do I care, if there is a summer; it's warmth is no help to me now." Yes, evil often seems to surpass good. But then, in spite of us and without our permission, there comes at last an end to the bitter frosts. One morning the wind turns and there is a thaw. And so I must still have hope.

—VINCENT VAN GOGH

THE EYE AND THE HEART DOCTRINES

SAUNAKA, the great sacrificer, approaches the revered teacher Angiras and enquires about that knowledge, knowing which everything is known. The Teacher says that there are two types of knowledge, the Lower and the Higher, and that the Higher Knowledge is that which when known, everything is known. Buddha's teachings are also of two types: the Eye doctrine, which is given to the crowd, and the Heart Doctrine, which is communicated to the Elect. When Jesus was asked why he spoke in parables to the multitude, he said that to the crowd it is not given to know the Kingdom of Heaven but that it is reserved only for the Elect who are qualified to receive it. The two kinds of knowledge have always existed in the world from the remotest antiquity. The lower sort formed the public teachings, as found in the doctrines and traditions in every religion, while the higher was carefully guarded by the great Teachers who imparted it to only to those who were found fit to pursue it.

The upanishadic story of the young Shvetaketu is a typical journey of a human mind, from mistaking lower knowledge as the supreme, the resultant pride, and its subsequent transcendence through the study of a unifying philosophy of Self. The young boy is sent forth by his father Uddalaka to learn the "service of the Eternal," since none in his family is an unlearned nominal worshipper. Shvetaketu returns twelve years later, conceited and vain of his learning. His father immediately becomes aware of it and asks, whether the young man had enquired about that teaching "through which the unheard is heard, the unthought is thought, the unknown is known," and goes on to explain it as the knowledge of that One Self which masquerades under many names and forms.

Socrates explains Phaedrus why he has no time for far-flung topics: "I have no leisure for them at all; and the reason, my friend, is this: I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know myself; so it seems to me ridiculous, when I do not yet know that, to

investigate irrelevant things." During his famous pilgrimage to Kashi with his fourteen disciples, the story goes, that Adi Shankaracharya saw an old man trying hard to learn Sanskrit grammar, and thus composed the famous poem which exhorts students to not get stuck in non-essential subjects but aspire towards a knowledge of the True Self.

The doctrine of the Eye is the knowledge acquired of things external with the lower mind which sees only differences, not only between religions, but also within religion itself, giving rise to sectarianism. Thus every religion is divided into numerous and mutually antagonistic sects, each claiming to be the exclusive possessor of truth. Our lower mind and intellect give us perception of the objective world only, and the spiritual and the moral world of causes, the World of Reality, lies outside its scope. To know the latter, the divine faculty of Spiritual Discernment, the Divine Intellect which lies latent in man, has to be developed. It alone can reconcile all the otherwise irreconcilable, irresolvable differences by demonstrating the One underlying Truth in the apparently diverse universe.

This spiritual discernment is the Heart doctrine. This enables one to distinguish between what is Eternal (*Nitya*) and what is not (*Anitya*). Once this discernment begins to guide our thinking, one sees the unity of life, so beautifully expressed by the 13th century Sufi saint, Sad-Ud-Din Mahmud Shabistari:

"I" and "you" are but the lattices,
In the niches of a lamp,
Through which the One Light shines.
"I" and "you" are the veil
Between heaven and earth;
Lift this veil and you will see
No longer the bond of sects and creeds.
When "I" and "you" do not exist,
What is mosque, what is synagogue? What is the Temple
of Fire? (*The Secret Rose Garden*)

Here lies the greatest hope for mankind. Reaching the Truth (or

Divinity, or one's true Self) need not be brokered through religious institutions, nor negotiated through appeasements of the priest-class; it is a birthright of every soul.

Man is god in the making. Not a being born in original sin, not a product of animal evolution, not the congregation of brain and senses, but a spiritual being, a ray of spirit donning the garments of body and mind. Every man—irrespective of caste and creed, a theist or an atheist, a believer or a materialist—is a spiritual being, and has higher faculties which can apprehend truth directly. An illumined sage, says Krishna, “regards with equal mind an illuminated, selfless Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and even an outcast who eats the flesh of dogs.” The degree of unfoldment and development of one's higher, spiritual faculties determines proportionately one's closeness to truth, and freedom from illusions of mind and senses. When the villager asked Buddha, “who are you?” the response was “I am awake.” Awareness of one's spiritual nature, and its oneness with all sentient beings, implies growing nearness to Buddhahood.

If we are truly spiritual in nature then why are we revelling in darkness, and are not even aware of our powers and faculties? It is said that the demon Mara has a crown-jewel of such lustre that it blinds the person who looks at it. This is an allegory: Mara is personified temptation, and the lustre is the fascination exercised by our vices. We are continually led away from Truth by our lower desires and passions, which are wholly self-centred. Mind, the instrument of the Soul, is continually so disturbed that it distorts reality and superimposes untruth upon truth. The nature of mind is such that it reflects the characteristics of the subject or object to which it is directed, and gets modified by them. Thus, the mind which is constantly directed towards lower, self-centered, and thus non-eternal objects takes on the nature of untruth and reflects the same. The remedy is to purify it and place it upon the Eternal that resides in us.

Here lies the rationale for ethics. As the physician's advice for health and hygiene is based on laws of physical life, so also, are

ethics based on undeviating laws of the inner, moral world. Just as breaking the laws of physical health results in disease and discomfort, equally so—and infinitely more harmful—are the consequences of breaking the laws of moral health. The inharmonious inner condition leads us away from truth into the depths of illusion, thus defeating for the time being the purpose of the soul's evolution. Therefore, virtues are a prerequisite for acquiring knowledge. It is not easy to acquire these virtues. Many lives of wrong thinking have hardened into grooves of mental thoughts and habits, which are difficult to overcome. For virtues to become a habit of the mind, one has to begin with right thinking, based on right doctrine. Buddha has named the first step of his Noble Eightfold Path as *Samyak-Darshana* (Right Doctrine or Perfect Insight); as the Path to truth invariably begins with correct thinking, with the acquirement of right knowledge.

These two categories of knowledge—the higher and the lower—seem to be related to the two selves in man. There is the outer, material, revealed man, corresponding to the revealed Veda; and then there is the inner, hidden, divine Man, related to the unrevealed, *Gupta Vidya*. If our mind is involved in the material self—catering to its desires, and making it the abode—it cannot transcend beyond the letter of the scriptures. Depending on one's degree of closeness to, and identification with, the inner Divine Self, the brilliant lamp of spiritual discernment shines in us. The lower self is bound, deluded, and “perceives different and manifold principles as present in the world of created beings”; the divine Self in us is free, omniscient, and “untouched by troubles, works, fruits of works, or desires,” and sees “one single principle, indivisible and incorruptible, not separate in the separate objects seen.” Externally, every body appears different, just like every religion when studied superficially appears contrary to one another; but internally, every being is a radiation of the same Spiritual Sun.

Sage Yagnavalkya instructs his wife Maitreyi that only when there is duality, can the seeds of liking and disliking sprout, and not

when the unity of Self is recognized. In the hearts of those who recognize this unity of Self, compassion will spring up spontaneously. It is through compassion, and renunciation of personal self-centeredness, that we attract the true Teachers of *Gupta Vidya*. These *Gurus* cannot and should not be sought outside oneself; neither can they be found in this world—the “pleasure-ground of senses.” A story goes that a student, during his trial of probation, sought for these great Teachers at a place of pilgrimage, but found a decrepit *Bairagee (sadhu)* who warned him thus: “It is not wise to peer outside of yourself for the great followers of Vasudeva: look rather within.” These sages of Wisdom are not enticed by our riches—material or intellectual—and nor are they deceived by our pretensions and ostensible motives. Our heart is a transparent vase to them, in which they see the brightness or dullness of the light of self-abnegation and concern for the “Great Orphan” Humanity, and help accordingly, based on our degree of unselfishness. If found worthy, they show us the way to the powers of Self, and its omniscience, omnipotence, and its control over nature’s forces.

Thus we see that the path to the true Teachings, the true Teachers, as also one’s true Self, are all the same. The way to this path is within oneself—in preparing oneself to be worthy of higher knowledge, through study of scriptures and living a life guided by ethics and duty; and this path begins and ends outside of self—which means when the lower self is dissolved and disappears, it makes room for the light of the Higher Self to shine through all the vestures of the soul, unimpeded.

EACH of us should do something every day that we do not want to do, but know we should do, to strengthen our backbone and put iron in our soul.

—HENRY HITT CRANE

THE ADEPTS IN THE BIBLE

MOSES

IN THE JUDAIC tradition Moses has been revered as the greatest teacher and prophet, who delivered his people from Egyptian slavery. According to the biblical account, Moses’ parents were from the tribe of Levi, one of the groups in Egypt called Hebrews. H.P.B. mentions that Moses is made a descendant of Levi, a serpent-tribe. In all ages the serpent was the symbol of divine wisdom, which kills in order to resurrect, destroys but to rebuild the better. Gautama-Buddha was of a serpent-lineage, through the Naga (serpent) race of kings who reigned in Magadha. According to the Ophite legends, Jesus or Christos was born from a snake (divine wisdom, or Holy Ghost), *i.e.*, he became a Son of God through his initiation into the “Serpent Science.” (*Isis*, II, 484)

The story of Moses is a copy of the Babylonian King, Sargon I, who lived far earlier than Moses. Mr. George Smith, the Assyriologist, points out that Sargon I was an early Babylonian monarch, born of royal parents. His mother concealed him and later put him in an ark made of rushes, covered with bitumen, on river Euphrates. Likewise, we find in the Biblical account of Moses that because the Egyptians had ordered the massacre of the Hebrew children, in order to restrict the number of Hebrews, his parents hid him for three months and then set him afloat on the Nile in the basket made of reeds. The child was found by Pharaoh’s daughter while bathing and was reared in Egyptian court. Sargon was adopted as a son by a man named Akki, a water-carrier. Sargon later became the King of Babylonia. The capital of Sargon was the great city of Agadi, which was called Akkad, by the Semites. In *Genesis*, it is mentioned as a capital of Nimrod. Akkad lay near the city of *Sippara*, on the Euphrates, and the name of the wife of Moses is *Zipporah (Isis, II, 442-43)*. *Encyclopedia Britannica* mentions that while many doubt the authenticity of the account of Moses’ birth, the name Moses (Hebrew *Moshe*) is derived from Egyptian *mose* (“is born”) and is found in

such names as Thutmose ([The God] Thoth Is Born).

“Moses was educated by the Egyptians and in Midian, from both he gained much occult knowledge, and any clear-seeing student... can perceive all through his books the hand, the plan, and the work of a Master,” writes Mr. Judge (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 9). According to the Biblical accounts, during his education in Egypt, Moses discovered that he was a Hebrew. When he took the inspection tour among his people, he saw the oppressive measures under which they laboured. When he found an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew, probably to death, he could control his sense of justice no longer. He killed the tough Egyptian overlord. Later, afraid of being found out by the Pharaoh, he went away to Midian. While Moses was resting at a well, according to the biblical account, seven daughters of the Midianite priest Jethro came to water their father’s flocks. Other shepherds arrived and drove the girls away in order to water their own flocks. Again Moses showed his courage and prowess as a warrior because he took on the shepherds and routed them. Moses stayed on with Jethro and eventually married Zipporah, one of his daughters.

In the article, “Reincarnation in Judaism and the Bible,” Mr. Judge mentions that the doctrine of Re-birth was applied by the Jews to Moses, Seth and Abel. Abel, spelt also as Habel, was killed by Cain, and to supply the loss of Abel, the Lord gave Seth to Adam. Seth was said by Adam to be the re-birth of Abel. Moses is said to be reincarnation of Seth. Later, Cain died and reincarnated as Yethrokorah. He died and the soul waited till the time when Abel (or rather Seth) came back as Moses. Cain (or rather Yethrokorah) reincarnated in the person of the Egyptian. Thus, Abel comes back as Moses and meets Cain in the person of Egyptian, and kills him.

In *Isis Unveiled* (II, 550-51 fn.) H.P.B. gives Kabalistic interpretation of Moses’ running away to the land of Midian and then resting at a well, etc. H.P.B. remarks that Moses was the most notable practitioner of Hermetic Science. The “well” in the kabalistic sense, is the mysterious emblem of the *Secret Doctrine*. “If any

man thirst let him come *unto me and drink*,” says Jesus (*John vii*). Therefore, Moses, the adept, is naturally enough represented sitting by a well. He is approached by the *seven* daughters of the Kenite Priest of Midian coming to fill the troughs, *to water their father’s flock*. Here we have seven again—the mystic number. In the present biblical allegory the daughters represent the *seven occult powers*. The shepherds who drove the daughters away are shown, by some kabalistic interpreters, to represent the seven “badly-disposed Stellars” of the Nazarenes; for in the old Samaritan text the number of these Shepherds is also said to be seven.

Then Moses, who had conquered the seven *evil* Powers, and won the friendship of the seven *occult* and beneficent ones, is represented as living with Jethro, the Priest of Midian, who invites “the Egyptian” to eat bread, *i. e.*, to partake of his wisdom. In the Bible the elders of Midian are known as great soothsayers and diviners. Finally, Jethro, the initiator and instructor of Moses, gives him in marriage his daughter. This daughter is Zipporah, *i. e.*, the esoteric Wisdom, the shining light of knowledge, for *Siprah* means the “shining” or “resplendent,” from the word “Sapar” to shine. Sippara, in Chaldea, was the city of the “Sun.” Thus Moses was initiated by the Midianite, or rather the Kenite (or Cainite), and thence the biblical allegory.

As he had assumed the responsibility for Jethro’s flocks, Moses roamed the wilderness looking for pasture. It is on one such occasion that he saw a burning bush. He realized that he was face to face with deity, the God, who claimed to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was calling him to deliver the Hebrews from Egypt. The God of the fathers had been known mostly as *El ‘Elyon* (God Most High) or *El Shaddai* (God of the Mountain or Almighty God), but he identified himself to Moses as *Yahweh* (or Jehovah) and gave instructions that he was to be called by his new name from then on. As the causative form of the verb “to be,” *Yahweh* means “He Who Creates” or “Brings Into Being.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

The Biblical account shows that the Pharaoh was reluctant to

allow Moses to take the Hebrews out of Egypt. The Egyptian army cornered them at the Red Sea, which barred their exit to the east. A strong east wind blew all night, creating a dry corridor through the Sea and permitting the Hebrews to cross. The pursuing Egyptians were destroyed when the waters returned. The timing of this natural event gave the final answer to Pharaoh's arrogant question, "Who is Yahweh?" Safely on the other side, Moses and his sister Miriam led the people in a victory song of praise to Yahweh. (*Exodus*, 15:1–21)

In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 426-29) H.P.B. writes that often she has wondered if the story of Exodus is only another version of the legends about the Atlanteans. She quotes passages from the occult Commentary to show the similarity between Exodus and the perishing of the Atlanteans. The Fourth Race Atlanteans of the later period are renowned for their magic powers and wickedness, as also their ambition and defiance of gods. H.P.B. points out that no one can fail to recognize the Atlanteans of *The Secret Doctrine* in Ravana and the Rakshasas of Lanka. It is from the Fourth Race that the early Aryans got their knowledge of wonderful things. The Aryans learnt from the Atlanteans the aeronautics or *Viman Vidya*. The Atlanteans perished in the cataclysm brought about by their extreme materiality and sin. They worshipped form and matter which later degenerated into self-worship and then into phallic worship. *The Secret Doctrine* says that the Atlanteans built great images nine *yatis* (27 feet) high, the size of their bodies. A few wise men among the Atlanteans were saved and they became forefathers of the Fifth Race. We are in the fifth sub-race of the Fifth Root Race and this race has been in existence for one million years. H.P.B. mentions that the gigantic Atlantean magicians of Ruta and Daitya islands, may have become in the Exodus narrative, the Egyptian Magi, while the yellow-faced nations of the Fifth Race, might have been represented as the virtuous sons of Jacob, the "chosen people." Giants, or a race 27 feet high, is not a fiction, because Moses speaks of Og, a king who was nine cubits high (15ft. 4in.) and four wide

(*Deut.* iii. II), and Goliath was "six cubits and a span in height" (or 10ft. 7in.).

Moses liberated the Hebrews and brought them out of Egypt near Mount Sinai. Once again god appeared to him and gave him the Ten Commandments. We are told that Moses brought the people to the nether part of the mount. "And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace" (*Exodus*, 19:18). Thus, Moses could see the Fire, but the people below could only see the smoke. H.P.B. explains that for Moses, the *fire* on Mount Sinai represented the spiritual wisdom imparted to him; for the multitudes of the "people" below, for the profane, Mount Sinai in (*through*) smoke, represented the exoteric husks of orthodox or *sectarian ritualism*. (*S.D.*, II, 566)

We are told that Egyptian sacred books are far older than the oldest parts of the *Book of Genesis*. The laws of Moses are copies from the code of the Brahmanic Manu (*Isis*, II, 431). In *Leviticus*, and other parts of his books, whole pages of laws are identical with those of *Manu* (*Isis*, II, 447). The whole Chapter Five of *the Gospel According to Matthew*, gives the Sermon on the Mount given by Jesus, in which every one of Ten Commandments of Moses is virtually criticized. The language of Jesus is unequivocal; it implies not only rebellion but defiance of the Mosaic "Lord God." "Ye have heard," he tells us, "that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but *I say* unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Ye have heard that it hath been said [by the same "Lord God" on Sinai]: Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But *I say* unto you; Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." H.P.B. compares these with Manu, thus: "Resignation, *the action of rendering good for evil*, temperance, probity, purity, repression of the senses, the knowledge of the *Sastras* (the holy books), that of the supreme soul,

truthfulness and abstinence from anger, such are the ten virtues in which consists duty.... Those who study these ten precepts of duty, and after having studied them conform their lives thereto, will reach to the supreme condition” (*Manu*, book vi., sloka 92). And then again if we turn to the *Prâtimoksha Sûtra* and other religious tracts of the Buddhists, we find similar ten commandments. (*Isis*, II, 164)

Whatever Moses is now believed to have been, he was an initiate. The Mosaic religion was at best a sun-and-serpent worship, but the same was diluted and disfigured when Jewish *Pentateuch* was compiled by Ezra, and revised by the Rabbis of the Great Synagogue. The learned and cunning Rabbins of the School of Tiberias, in the ninth century of our era, added Masoretic Points, or vowels to Scriptures, and by doing so have put an entirely new construction on the chief words and names in the Books of Moses, and made thereby confusion still more confounded. The truth is that this scheme has only added additional blinds to those already existing in the *Pentateuch* and other works. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

AT THE end of life we will not be judged, by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done.

We will be judged by “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in.”

Hungry not only for bread—but hungry for love. Naked not only for clothing—but naked of human dignity and respect. Homeless not only for want of a home of bricks—but homeless, because of rejection.

—MOTHER TERESA

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: Do the sins of our past life ancestors affect our life also, even if we did not sin directly?

Answer: In the article, “Thoughts on Karma,” Mr. Judge mentions a verse in the Bible which says that the sins of the father will be visited on the children to the third and fourth generation, and reproduces a story told by a German mystic. There was once an Eastern king who had a son, and this son committed a deed, the penalty of which was that he should be killed by great stone thrown upon him. But it was seen that such a punishment would not repair the wrong nor give to the offender the chance to become a better man, hence the councillors of the king advised that the stone should be broken into small pieces, and the same should be thrown at the son, and at his children and grandchildren, in the quantity that they were able to bear, so that they would *suffer* but not be *killed*. It was done, so that all were in some sense sufferers yet none were destroyed. Why should the children and grand-children suffer for the sins of the prince? It is argued that the children and grandchildren could not have been born in the family of the prince if they had not had a hand, made some contribution in the past, in other lives, in the formation of his character, and for that reason they should share, to some extent, in his punishment. In this way we can understand the Biblical verse. Ego is drawn to a family which has some characteristics that are similar to one or many of his characteristics. But the Ego is drawn to a family or nation, also because towards that family or nation lies his responsibility for having taken part, or for having contributed in the past in making the general character of

the family or nation to which he now belongs. The Ego would have affected the physical stream of heredity. Mr. Judge explains why it is that even delicate European ladies will enjoy the recital of a bird or deer hunt. It is their Karma that they are the descendants of long generations of Europeans, who, with the aid of the church, decided that animals had no souls and therefore could be wantonly slaughtered. It is heredity based on Karma (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 3*). Thus, the Ego is drawn to a particular family in order to meet its obligations, based on the principle of justice.

In our civilization we are all under the penalty of our forefathers' sins, living in bodies which carry the seeds of diseases of brain, blood and flesh, which come to us along the turbid stream of heredity through centuries. However, human beings of this civilization do not suffer unjustly, because we suffer the consequences of the disturbance brought about by us in other centuries. Perhaps, we did not know then when we acted wrongly, in relative ignorance that the consequences of these actions could be so far reaching. For those actions committed in ignorance, we often undergo physical suffering, though not the higher moral responsibility. (*W.Q.J. Series No. 6*, p. 23)

We are all connected on the inner planes of being, and we affect others, as also, others affect us through their thoughts, feelings and actions. It is difficult to say what portion of our karma or another's karma is *strictly of his own making*. As Mr. Judge suggests, "The indissoluble unity of the race demands that we should consider every man's troubles as partly due to ourselves, because we have been always units in the race and helped to make the conditions which cause suffering" (*"Forum" Answers*, p. 55). Besides individual karma there is also collective and distributive Karma. We have contributed in making the humanity as we find it today.

But, in case, when the Ego has not, directly or indirectly, contributed in the past in creating the race, family or national situation, it can still choose to take birth in a family and surroundings that are most in harmony with its karmic tendencies, taking the path of least

resistance. Knowing this, the ancients tried to develop very pure family lines such that over many centuries that family line would have the power to repel the evil or mediocre Egos which do not come up to the standard of that family stream. There were pure family lines of true Brahmins, with genuine love for knowledge and high moral values. They aspired to produce saviours and regenerators of humanity.

Question: Is it not advisable not to perform any action, so that we do not create any karma, good or bad, which could be rewarded or punished, and which could entangle us into vicious cycle of birth and death, instead of liberating us?

Answer: In the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna tells Arjuna that it is not possible for any person to give up actions. "No man resteth a moment inactive." Nor is it possible to obtain happiness by total abandonment of actions. One who keeps calculating as to which way he would not be bound by Karma, may be called "a false pietist of bewildered soul."

The distinction between action and inaction is very difficult. Inaction, as the state of actionlessness, is impossible. Even if we are inactive at the *bodily* level, we are active on the *mental* plane. Many seekers have abandoned action, hoping to gain salvation. There are a great number of ascetics who remain inert, because renunciation of action is interpreted to mean complete abandonment of action. Some renounce the world and seek refuge in monasteries, ashrams and mountain tops, deserting duties of life. The fact is that it is difficult to attain true renunciation of action without right performance of action. When a seeker renounces action literally, by remaining inert or by shirking his duties, life after life, sooner or later he comes to realize that real meaning of the renunciation of action is that he must continue to perform the actions, but renounce *desire and concern for the fruits of them*, as also, the feeling of doership (*kartabhav*). There is bodily action but inward detachment or inaction. Such a person does not offer an individual focus, where

karmic effects could return, and hence becomes free from karmic bondage. Like King Janaka, one has to be *in* the world, but no be *of* the world.

Even in ordinary activities like sleeping, breathing, speaking, etc., the attitude of a devotee is, “I am doing nothing” in seeing, hearing, touching smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, even when speaking, “the senses and organs move by natural impulse to their appropriate objects.” There is the story of a sage who ate a hearty meal with the *gopis* (shepherdesses) on the river bank, and when the *gopis* said that they wanted to go to the other side of the river, the sage moved his hand over his stomach and said that if he had not eaten any food the river should part and make way for the *gopis*. The *gopis* were surprised, as the sage had eaten food with them. The sage explained that the food was offered to the fires in the stomach, hence “I have not eaten the food.”

An important concept in Lao Tzu’s philosophy is that of *wu-wei* which means “without doing,” or “absence of action.” Yet, “*wu-wei* is not an ideal of absolute inaction; on the contrary, it is a particular efficacious attitude since it makes all doing possible,” writes Max Kaltenmark. The doctrine of inaction seems to imply non-interference. Spontaneity is another name for Tao, and hence everything in the universe happens without any particular kind of intervention. When the ruler follows the principle of inaction, it makes for ideal government. The doctrine of inaction advocates “resist without resisting.” Resist without resisting is the plan of quiet passive resistance. Retreat within your own heart and there keep firmly still. When a person develops inner strength, inner integrity, total harmlessness, and therefore, total absence of provocation, he is able to subdue his opponent without effort.

Lastly, the doctrine of inaction seems to suggest that although inactive physically, all things are possible to one who is active on the inner planes. On the other hand, when one is “inactive” or calm on the inner planes, one is able to accomplish more.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

We look for security all the time. We seek security in money, property, relationships, and in a hundred other different things. Money does give us a sense of pleasure and security, but we are mistaken if we think that money is *synonymous* with security. This kind of error is called *shobhanadhyasa*, or seeing something more than what is there. Music gives us pleasure. In fact, good music can transport us to a realm where we tend to forget our day-to-day problems, our opinions and anxieties. But if we think that music will solve all our problems then we are again mistaken; it is *shobhanadhyasa*. To see more value in something than what it has is *shobhanadhyasa*. There is the story of a master who used to say that *kanchan* or gold is something to be kept away. Once to test master’s detachment a disciple kept a gold coin under his pillow. The disciple noticed that the master could not sleep because there was gold coin under his pillow. So great was his detachment! Once the coin was removed he could sleep. However, suppose the coin belonged to a person for whom gold meant everything, and he had kept a gold coin under his pillow, but found before going to sleep that the coin was missing, and therefore could not sleep. Thus, we have one person who loses sleep because of the absence of gold coin, and another person who is equally disturbed because of its presence. So does the problem belong to the gold or to the person? The gold is what it is, a metal with its own objective value, like any other metal. It is like any other creation of God, and for a God-inspired person gold can be no different from copper or iron. Gold is rare, highly malleable and shining metal, not subject to corrosion. Its natural qualities has made gold superior to other metals, even before it was made basis for monetary system. Hence, to look upon gold as a source of bondage is *shobhanadhyasa*.

We do not see things and people as they are but we see them from our own perception. There is a world and there is a projection. Projection is the result of our psychological background, which

stifles our perception and estimation of the world. Education helps us to surrender our own projections, our own *adhyasa*, our own superimposition of security and values upon situations, things and people. When we renounce our prejudices, or our own notions about the world, we are able to experience freedom, understanding, love and compassion, writes Swami Dayananda Saraswati. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India, September 29, 2013*)

The human mind is compared to a mirror. The mirror would reflect the light, but the dust of false knowledge, prejudices and biases, the dirt of passions, the ashes of moral death, are allowed to cover the mirror. Our thinking and our perceptions are coloured by our conceptions and prejudices. A prejudiced mind has one particular way, or a fixed way of looking at and understanding things. Mr. Judge advises that someone who wants to apprehend truth must be able to lay aside his preconceptions, to be able to appreciate and acquire a new idea or a new point of view. Some people come to Theosophy, bringing with them their own background, and because they hold onto their own ideas, they are unable to grasp the philosophy of Theosophy.

The Bhagavad-Gita speaks of *sthitaprajna*, or one established in wisdom, who is equal-minded to pain and pleasure, heat and cold, and to whom gold and stone are as one. It is not as if he cannot discriminate one from the other—good from evil, superior from inferior, but it means that he has neither attachment nor aversion for these pairs of opposites. Whatever may be our possessions—money, ideas, knowledge or powers—our attitude towards them must be of *trusteeship* and not that of ownership. Money or precious metals are not bad *per se*. Wealth is auspicious, and much good can be done by proper use of wealth for welfare of others. On account of our attachment, strong elementals get associated with money, and that is what makes it bad.

Can a virtue become a vice? Self-confidence, resilience and

fearlessness produce bold leaders who perform well on the job, whether as presidents, CEOs, or war heroes. But the very same virtues are also just a few degrees from antisocial behaviours, with decidedly negative consequences. When we lack awareness of our own fears and limitations, we tend to become reckless, impulsive and callous, ignoring other people's fears and limitations as well. The nature of the virtue is that a vice is almost always hidden inside. Thus, organized becomes obsessive; confidence can turn into arrogance, cautious can become anxious, and persuasive can become domineering. In their recently published book, *Fear Your Strengths*, executive developers Robert Kaiser and Robert Kaplan say, "Show us strength, and we will show you an example where its overuse has compromised performance and probably even derailed a career."

Taking personal inventory can lead us to a realization as to which virtues are constructive and beneficial in our life, and which are holding us back and affecting work and relationship. "There really is a fine line between striving for excellence and striving excessively for perfection," says Gordon Flett, professor of social sciences and humanities at Toronto's York University. Pursuing excellence at all costs can destroy creativity, risk taking, and experimentation. Expressing genuine emotions and standing one's ground are valuable skills in love and work. Being agreeable, nice and quick to compromise, does not always work because conflicts are inevitable in life and then one has to make hard decisions or take actions which may not please everyone. Creating balance among all the elements of life—work and home, self and others, self-discipline and enjoyment—seems to be the goal, but the danger of trying to achieve this balance is that it may lead to a cloistered, overly controlled life. There should be "bold balance," which respects moderation but also accommodates dynamism, as seen in the cycle of the seasons. Virtues are not always what they seem to be, and we should regularly re-examine our assumptions about what traits are beneficial, writes Mary Loftus. (*Psychology Today, September-October 2013*)

When practice of a virtue is carried to an extreme, it might cease

to be a virtue. For instance, extreme fearlessness could produce rashness, so that the Proverb of the wise Solomon is, “The fear of the Lord is beginning of knowledge.” Out of false sense of fearless independence we obstinately disregard the Law of Karma which works to Righteousness, till punishment by the Law drives us to give up “independence” and recognize “interdependence,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

The Buddhists speak of four divine emotions—*metta*, meaning loving kindness; *karuna* or compassion; *mudita* or sympathetic joy and *upekkha* meaning tranquility or equanimity. Each quality has its “near enemy” and “far enemy.” The “near enemy” is a negative quality which we tend to mistake for the true quality. The “far enemy,” is the opposite negative quality. For instance, the near enemy of *metta* or loving kindness is sentimental attachment, and the far enemy of *metta* is hatred. *Metta* must be gradually refined, till it is free from any expectations, and is merely a desire for another person’s happiness and growth. The two near enemies of compassion are sentimental pity and horrified anxiety, because it is possible to mistake them for compassion. The opposite or “far enemy” of compassion is cruelty.

Through the Gates of Gold cautions us against another danger. The author says that by mechanical practice of virtues we might fetter ourselves into one groove, one changeless way of living the life. For instance, there could be over-anxious insistence on the virtues of accuracy or punctuality, so that there is rigid adherence to an immutable time-table. Some people feel lost unless they get up at the same time, eat at exactly the same time, and follow the same daily routine. These are *slaves* rather than *masters* of punctuality—slaves to automatic action of the bodily atoms.

Are the monsters mere fiction? The half-man, half-beast minotaur, the fire-breathing dragon or the horrid sea monster, Leviathan, of

the Bible, could they have a basis in reality? Monsters are fictionalized creatures, but they did not emerge from nothingness. At first glance, the idea of half-man, half-bull creature sounds ridiculous and biologically impossible. It is said that god Poseidon was responsible for creating the bull that inseminated the queen of Crete, leading to the birth of the minotaur. Known as the god of the ocean, Poseidon was also the god of earthquakes. While the most descriptions of minotaur’s physical form are vague, its bellows are described as so terrible that they could be heard for miles emanating from the labyrinth on the Greek island of Crete where it was imprisoned. A 2007 study by an international team of researchers published in *Nature Geoscience* hints that Crete has had earthquakes of truly epic proportions and the subterranean bellows could be the result of geothermal activity.

The 12th century historian, Geoffrey of Monmouth, hints that there might be some truth behind the tales of fire-breathing dragons. He writes that when ancient British King Vortigern was forced to flee to Welsh hills, he sought to build a fort near Snowdonia. Every time the wall was built, it would tumble, so he ordered his men to dig into the ground, and found dragon’s “panting” flame. Wales has many regions where coal gas collects in underground pockets, and people who went digging into them with tools that sparked against the rocks would have caused explosions. In the earlier days, these blasts of foul smelling fire might have been ascribed to the deadly breath of a monster, writes Matt Kaplan, a science journalist. (*BBC Knowledge*, August 2013)

The literature and scriptures of antiquity mentioned a variety of monsters. For instance, *Avesta*, the Zoroastrian scripture, mentions a Serpent, a monster with camel’s neck, which is called in the old Hebrew texts the “flying camel.” H.P.B. points out that it is the reminiscence of the prehistoric or antediluvian monsters, half-bird and half-reptile. Though there are no monsters now, they could have existed in Mesozoic age. H.P.B. mentions that fossil of a *flying saurian*, “the Pterodactyl” (found in Germany), was 78 feet long,

and carrying vigorous wings attached to its reptilian body. That fossil is described as a reptile, the *little fingers of whose hands* are so elongated as to bear a long membranous wing. Here, then, the “flying camel” of the Zohar is vindicated. For surely, between the long neck of the lesiosaurus and the membranous wing of the Pterodactyl, or still better the Mosasaurus, there is enough scientific probability to build a “flying camel,” or a long-necked dragon. Pterodactyls and Plesiosaurs ceased to exist with the bulk of the Third Race humanity. (*S.D.*, II, 205-207)

H.P.B. mentions that we must differentiate between the zoological real meaning of the words “dragon,” “*Naga*,” and “Serpent,” and the metaphorical one, when used symbolically (*S.D.*, II, 208). *Drakon* or *Dragon*, now considered a “mythical” monster, is in fact an extinct antediluvian monster. The “Serpent” and “Dragon” were the names given to the “Wise Ones,” the initiated adepts of olden times. Serpent and the Dragon represent Wisdom, Immortality and Rebirth.

Some of these monsters are only metaphorical. For instance, Virabhadra, a thousand-headed and thousand-armed monster, “born of the breath” of Siva Rudra, is a symbol having reference to the “sweat-born,” the second race of mankind. (*S.D.*, II, 182)

The monsters with animal head and body of man, may symbolize the unnatural union of man with huge she-animals, giving rise to anthropoid apes, which happened in the course of evolution when man was man only in form, but his mind was not lighted up. It might also symbolize the transition stage in the formation of perfect man, such as, *Nara-simha avatar* of Vishnu or man-lion which represents last animal stage, moving towards human stage. *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 55) mentions that in the beginning of evolution, physical nature, left to herself, without the aid of the lunar pitris, in the creation of man and animals failed, and is supposed to have created monsters, with the body of goat and head of man, or with body of man and head of a bull, etc.