

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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TRUE SANNYASA OR RENUNCIATION

SANNYASA is a Sanskrit term which means “renunciation of the world” or renunciation of all the worldly interest and activities (*nivritti*) as against active life with performance of duties. While the Upanishads placed emphasis on renunciation, the dharma texts emphasized the value of active life (*pravritti*) of a householder who lives a family life performing his duties, saying that he can also earn religious merit. The social doctrine of the four *ashramas* (stages of life) is an attempt to reconcile these two views by showing that before becoming a homeless wandering ascetic (*Sannyasin*), one should first become a chaste student (*brahmachari*); then become a married householder (*grihastha*), discharging his family duties and then retire to the forest, with or without his wife, and devote himself to spiritual contemplation. However, there were those who skipped the householder and retirement stage and renounced worldly and materialistic pursuits to dedicate their lives to spiritual pursuits. Even today, we find them in various religious traditions, known by the name of *sannyasis*, *sadhus*, *bhikkhus* and *monks* with their female counterparts. Such a step to renounce the world may be an attempt to run away from the worldly responsibilities or may often be the mood of the moment, as a result of some traumatic or painful experience, such as, rejection by the opposite sex or failure to achieve desired goal in life. In such cases, the person may live in an *ashram* or a monastery but his heart may still be longing for worldly

enjoyments.

The term *Sannyas* or renunciation may mean merely external renunciation or *tyaga*, in which one renounces worldly objects such as family, marriage, wealth, and pleasure of life, but is not completely detached from worldly interests. True renunciation is internal renunciation or *Vairagya*, wherein the worldly objects are not necessarily renounced but only the *attachment* to the worldly objects is renounced. *Vairagya* is detachment, dispassion or disconnection of mind and heart from the objects of the world. There are different types and different degrees of *vairagya*. *Vairagya* in its mildest form is called *Smashana* (cremation ground) *vairagya*, such as one experiences when one comes back home after cremation of a family member or a loved one. For a few days one feels that everything is false, fleeting and useless, but gradually one begins to live the life as before.

It is not as if painful and pleasurable experiences never lead to true renunciation. Sometimes there is a temporary heartbreak, but sometimes a permanent, which can jolt a person out of complacency. *Light on the Path* suggests: “No man desires to see that light which illumines the spaceless soul until pain and sorrow and despair have driven him away from the life of ordinary humanity. First he wears out pleasure; then he wears out pain—till, at last, his eyes become incapable of tears.” For some, however, such a turning point can be brought about through extreme indulgence in pleasures. Generally, we feel that we can be happy if only we had a car, position, money, etc. When we have all these, we may try to get a better model of car, try for a higher post in the office, join a club, and so on. Sooner or later, a point of satiation is reached, waking us up to higher possibilities. If we are sincere, and if this is not just the emotion of the moment, then we may want to know: what is spirituality? We may find that it involves complete overhauling of our mental and moral nature.

The discipline of monastic life or life of *ashram* is useful but it is likely that one only *suppresses* the desires and attachments by the

strong effort of will without trying to eradicate them from the roots. Virtues are developed by remaining away from temptations of sex, food, comforts of life. As a result, at the first contact with the pleasures and temptations of material world, the person slips. John Milton has said, “I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue [virtue developed within four walls of monastery], unexercised...”

There is the story of two monks, who were travelling from one monastery to another. They were celibate monks, not even allowed a direct gaze at women. After long walk, they came to a river, which they had to cross. One lady was also at the banks of that river, wanting to cross. Monks decided to cross the river by walking through the shallow part of the river. Since the lady also needed to cross the river, one of the monks without much ado, carried her on his shoulders, and soon they reached the other side, where he set her down. The lady went her way and the two monks continued their walk in silence. The other monk was really upset, and after some time he asked the monk who had carried the woman, “We are not allowed to look at other women, not touch them...but you carried a woman across the river?!” The other monk had a smile on his lips when he replied “I put her down when I crossed the river, are you still carrying her?!”

The story of Amrapali, a beautiful courtesan, is a good example of a true renouncer. While many kings and merchants fell in love with Amrapali, she herself fell in love with a Buddhist monk, the moment she saw him from her terrace. She then not only called him to eat at her place, but also requested him to stay the next four months of the rainy season in her house. The young monk replied to her that it was only possible if his master, the great Buddha allowed it. All the bhikkhus were jealous of the young monk and the news reached the Buddha. The Buddha, however, to everyone’s surprise allowed the young monk to stay at Amrapali’s house. After four months, the bhikkhu came to the Buddha and touched his feet, and behind him came Amrapali dressed in saffron robe as a Bhikkhuni. And what she said was something strange, “I could not seduce your

young monk, but his spirituality seduced me to become like him.”

Yoga Vasishtha seems to suggest that you can be *in* the world, and yet, not be *of* the world. Even in the midst of luxuries and pleasures of life one can remain detached. It is said that when Sri Rama returned from his guru’s *ashram*, he no longer felt interested in the affairs of the kingdom; the world seemed to him impermanent and unreal. Sage Vasishtha counselled Rama, saying that the world was unreal but once you come into it as an actor, you will have to play your part well. Moreover, “even though you will rule a kingdom, it does not stand in the way of spiritual life. Renunciation of objects and duties is not renunciation. It is renunciation of identification that is important. One must fulfill obligations, the duties of nature. Then and only then, will they not come into direct confrontation with spiritual life.”

True *vairagya* is an internal state of mind and can be practised equally well by one engaged in family life and career as it can be by renouncing the world. True renunciation does not mean suppression of desire or developing repulsion for material objects. By the application of *viveka* (spiritual discrimination) to life experience, the aspirant gradually develops attraction for the inner spiritual life and attachments fall away naturally. *Vivekachudamani* says that *Vairagya* and *Bodha* (true understanding) are two means, like the two wings of a bird. The one desiring liberation, must be fully equipped, not only with dispassion for things mundane, but must also cultivate *Bodha* or constant attunement to real nature. In other words, there must be gradual purification of desire nature.

In *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 7*, we are shown how we can purify our desires, step by step, beginning with killing out the desire for the things of matter. The second step is to overcome subtler desires such as those for power, knowledge, love, happiness or fame. How to achieve this? The answer is, “Life itself teaches these lessons,” because even when we get what we want, we are likely to lose it, or it may not be what we had expected it to be, or it loses its charm once we have attained it. Thus, our life experiences show that it all

turns to dust and ashes in the mouth. Gradually, after many such experiences, we begin to intuitively perceive that satisfaction is attainable only in the infinite, so that at last, we begin to use our “Will” to centre all our desires on the Eternal. “Desire only that which is within you... which is beyond you... which is unattainable,” says *Light on the Path*.

The Fifth Chapter of the *Gita* is entitled *Karma-Sannyasa Yoga*, or “Devotion by means of Renunciation of Action.” Many have taken this to mean complete renunciation of action outwardly. Mr. Judge remarks that no person will be able to renounce the world until he has learnt the right performance of action. By perfect performance of action through devotion, we are fitted for the next stage of *renunciation of action*, which is renouncing attachment to the results of action, and acting as a mere instrument of the divine. “The character of the man himself inwardly is the real test. No matter how many times during countless births he has renounced the world, if his inner nature has not renounced, he will be the same man during the entire period, and whenever, in any one of his ascetic lives, the new, the appropriate temptation or circumstance arises, he will fall from his high outward asceticism” (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 118-19). Even after renouncing wealth, home, relatives, wife, and children, one cannot easily renounce the love for name and fame, nor can one easily purify the ego and direct his emotions toward self-realization.

“If we fear or fail to act in any given place where the situation calls for action, then we have acted in wrong way, for we have missed an opportunity. And an error of omission is worse than an error of commission. Act, then, but act for and as the Self of all creatures. Renounce not action, but *selfish interest* in every thought and act,” writes Mr. Crosbie.

The article, “Living the Higher Life” emphasizes the importance of performing family duties and duties towards nation. Before one leaves the family life one has to discharge all the duties toward family. Performance of family duties includes getting rid of defects and

weaknesses which are inherent in our nature, and in the nature of our family members. Family duty consists in cultivating and elevating the emotional nature of ourselves and of our family. In each life, one has to endeavour to get rid of the defects of the family in which one is born, and convert the defects into noble qualities, and thus strengthen and develop good qualities in himself and his family. A time comes when he is in the family, but not of the family, “like the water on the lotus leaf, making only the good traits of the family the seat of his higher self.”

The same article goes on say that when a person takes to ascetic life before fulfilling his family duties, he finds himself attracted by the family defects and selfishness which is in him and also in his family members and relatives, and which will prove to be an obstacle in his living of the life as an ascetic. The family members and relatives tend to arrest the progress of this ascetic, in whom family defects are strengthened by mysterious power of attraction. In the next life, such a person is either born in the same family with family defects strengthened in him and his family members, or he is born in a new family, carrying with him the tendency to desert, and thus become undutiful son, brother, husband, in this new family. Ultimately, such tendency to desert is not just confined to family duties, but such a person may soon find that he has begun to desert his national duties and his duties towards humanity.

One is not allowed to *desert* family duty in order to go on spiritual quest. In the Buddha’s case, seeing of a sick person, an old person and a dead body, culminated into renouncing of the world. The outer renunciation was but a reflection of *true inward renouncing*, which resulted from inner detachment. The message that he brought was that it is necessary to “renounce” the world, in order to be the better able to serve it. He showed this by his greatest sacrifice—instead of choosing the path of liberation or *moksha*—which is but exalted and glorious selfishness—he chose the path of renunciation, so as to help the suffering humanity.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE GARDEN AND THE CHILDREN—AN ALLEGORY

ONCE upon a time, long, long ago, when the earth was young and very happy, there was a beautiful garden. In the garden lived the children and they were very merry together, living in the warm summer air, bathing in the cool streams and shallow lakes, and smelling the wonderful fragrant flowers that grew all around. All the animals and all the birds and the fishes played with the children and there was peace and happiness and love everywhere.

As the children grew older their Elder Brothers, great and powerful, gentle and strong, Beings of Light, came and lived with them. They taught the children how to live with and help the birds and the flowers, the trees and the streams, the ponds and the fishes; how to build houses and make homes; how to draw and to paint; how to pause and listen to the little sounds of little creatures and the larger sounds of Mother Nature when the thunder roared and the storm raged over the mountain ridges, blowing all the clouds before it; how to sing and make sweet music.

Time passed and the children learned all that they could from their Brothers of Light. They learned to live together in harmony, each one appreciating the others’ abilities and strengths and seeing that while they seemed to be different they were not in reality separate but each depended on the other. They enjoyed the arts and sciences, studies and pleasures, some together and some by themselves.

Time passed and then the day came when the Elder Brothers had to leave—their work called them to other places where other children in other gardens needed them—so they called all their young friends together and notified them of the time of departure, saying that now they had to leave and their work in the garden would have to go on, guided and looked after by their young friends themselves in the ways they had been taught. They left—and for a long time all was well; the work of helping Nature and working on with her continued. Time passed. Forgetfulness came and covered

many of the children with his “Cloak of Carelessness.”

Again time passed. The creeping slime of ignorance began to ooze out of the weeds and choke the bright streams, which no longer were able to flow smoothly into the shallow lakes. A few of the children saw these things and worked as hard as they could to keep a little patch of the garden clear and bright and called on their friends to come and work together. A few joined, but others left as the imps of laziness sang cunning tunes in their ears and played curious rhythms on their little drums stretched taut with feelings of pleasure and pain, and a great darkness covered the garden.

More time passed and the Elder Brothers, having done their work, returned and the garden repelled them. They looked from afar and were appalled by the conditions they saw. Carelessness had set himself up as a ruler and was waging a war on a dictator called Cupidity. All the little imps of laziness had declared a Republic and the laziest of them all (who was also the most cunning) was now President. He did not know which of the two warring parties to join and was waiting to see who would win so that he could join that one safely. He had turned some of the more clever children into economists and statisticians and they now governed all the others with the help of Corruption, Precedence, Power and Greed. The good Elder Brothers were horrified. “Is this the working of the Good Law?” they asked one another. “Surely not,” they said, and they looked into their intelligent mirrors and traced the history of the past. They were able to see how Forgetfulness had covered all with the Cloak of Carelessness, and how the imps of laziness had all crept slyly in. They held a conference. They decided that at least one of them would have to go back to this terrible place; here and there they could see the light of the soul of a true child still burning feebly in the dreary dark, and for the sake of all such and to recall the others to duty a sacrifice was needed.

One among them offered to go. He went and entered the garden as one of the children and began his work. He passed silently through the paths and the public places, over the streams and among

the lakes and rivers. Here and there he met sincere children, those who still sought and worked for Knowledge, who longed for Wisdom and the Power to discern aright. These became his friends and his companions, here a few and there a few, and as he spoke a word here and a sentence there, a new heart was touched, the memory of the old Knowledge, of the soul-satisfying Wisdom was touched and awakened by the living fire of his Compassion. His passage and his work were not unnoticed by the others, the ruling Powers. Many obstacles were raised for him, but always the light of Truth blazed up, cutting all fears with facts, all doubts with truths and all viciousness with harmlessness and justice. Here a light and there a light, here a heart and there a mind, here a pilgrim and there a drudging worker, gathered together, illumined by that inner light that came from the Wise Brother, the tender friend, the Illuminator. And so a revival started and progressed, and now the children formed a Centre from which a change could sweep the nations, bringing back the Greater Wisdom, the Light of the Self within each, the Light of the Great Father.

Here we are within the garden, living, learning, striving, feeling; working with and for the others—some known and some we do not know—and each has his brothers, each has his sisters, his good companions. The path is that of sacrifice, winding ever upwards to the morrow, the daybreak of great actions. Do we hope, and do we trust the Future? Are we bound or are we free? Do we reverence the Masters? Are we making ourselves worthy to be their Companions? Are we throwing off the cloaks of darkness and girding ourselves with sunrise colours? Are we recreating our garden?

“The most intelligent being in the universe, man, has never, then, been without a friend, but has a line of elder brothers who continually watch over the progress” of humanity. Eighteen million years ago, Beings of Light or *Kumaras*, lighted up the mind of man, that was lying latent like an unlit candle, and these divine instructors taught humanity, first notions of arts, sciences, architecture,

agriculture and also great spiritual ideas. In the passage of time these ideas are obscured. We are told that during the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made in a marked and definite way to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity by the elder brothers, by sending a messenger to give out spiritual knowledge. While the elder brothers preserve true philosophy they need the help of the companions to promulgate the same.

In 1875 the Theosophical Movement for our era and generation was launched at a very critical juncture in human history, when scientific materialism and religious dogmatism had made truth unwelcome. Theosophy entered the arena challenging science, religion and the whole of humanity to show that the Theosophical doctrines of Universal Brotherhood, Karma and Reincarnation are not mere Utopia or theory, but are practicable.

After nearly 140 years we find that there are only a few ready to preach and practice the philosophy which is the hope of the world. But we need not get discouraged. Discouragement comes because we wish for tangible results which can be observed. The result of our work is never immediately visible. Even when what has been accomplished on the outer plane is destroyed, the soul remains, and finds expression when the time is ripe. We are sowing the “seeds” and “those who know,” the Masters of Wisdom, are confident that in the course of time they will produce tremendous harvest. Gandhiji once wrote: “If the evolution of form takes aeons, why should we expect wonders in the evolution of thought and conduct? And yet the age of miracles is not gone. As with individuals, so with nations. I hold it to be perfectly possible for masses to be suddenly converted and uplifted. Suddenness is only *seeming*. For no one can say how far the heaven has worked.” That which is accumulating on the inner planes as the result of the efforts of a few will triumph in the long run and burst forth like the sun after a storm and illumine the earth. We are filling the reservoir which will supply refreshment to many, perhaps when those who helped to fill it are dead and gone.

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA SACRIFICE AND SACRAMENT—I

[Adapted from the Lectures on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, delivered at One West Sixty Seventh Street, New York City, 1927-28.]

IN THE MERE consideration of the method that Krishna employs to teach Arjuna we can derive a great lesson for all of us. We can see how Krishna leads Arjuna, step by step, for the understanding of these great Spiritual Truths, how he explains in each discourse one particular aspect of that Truth. But Krishna, before he gives the lesson for the day, pauses a moment, and always briefly reviews what he has already taught Arjuna, thus clearing the confusion that may still exist in Arjuna’s mind, and giving him one more opportunity to realize what has been taught. That is how in this discourse which treats specifically of true renunciation of action, we have a brief review or survey of all the previous discourses. We have seen the meaning of *Sankhya Yoga*, *Buddhi Yoga* and *Karma Yoga*. In this discourse the subject of action is again taken up and further illustrated. Krishna has explained that there are three distinct phases of action: action rooted in desire or *Kamic* action; action which is performance of our own duty, the fulfillment of our tasks and obligations, or *Dharmic* action; and finally, sacrificial or *Yajnic* action. The same duties are then fulfilled with a particular attitude of mind and heart, making of them real offerings or sacrifices.

It is a wonderful study to take the various verses in this discourse and group them according to these three types of action, and thus see for ourselves how Krishna describes again these types of action, adding further points to each description, and finally arrives at the new aspects of the truth he wants to present. Krishna again reiterates that man has to eliminate the impulses arising from desire and anger, from *kama* and *krodha*, which are known as the gates of hell. Further, Krishna tells us that this must be done before the liberation of the soul from the body, *i.e.*, we are not to wait until we lose our physical body and personality to achieve this result, but we must purify that

personality, whilst in the physical body. Krishna says there are certain enjoyments, pleasurable sensations, to be derived from following our desire nature. The natural contact of our senses with the objects of sense, and the directions towards which those desires run on their own do produce pleasure, and a certain type of happiness, but the “Wise man delighteth not in these,” says Krishna, because these enjoyments are really wombs of pain, as they have a beginning and an end. So that *kama* must be subdued at every step.

Then we become engaged in the right practice of our duties. While we are thus engaged in our own *Dharma*, we approach the Supreme Spirit in no long time, says Krishna in this Discourse. Please note the word “approach.” The performance of our duties allows us to go towards the Supreme Spirit, and to approach the final aim and goal, but still we are not united to the Universal Self, to the Divine Principle or Life—we only *approach*. At this stage, we have not only purified our *kamic* nature, because we have stopped gratifying our own desires, but also, in a certain measure detached ourselves from the actions we perform. Thus, we are not binding ourselves, says Krishna, by bonds forged by action. It is at this stage that we see ourselves as separate from our own actions, and verses 8 and 9 give the description of the attitude of that peculiar type of actor: “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.’” We can see that no action is possible unless we have a being to perform that action—an actor, the action itself, and the natural and legitimate reaction to be obtained through that action. When we are engaged in *kamic* actions we naturally cannot define among those three distinct things, but we are involved in the action and the result or fruit of that action. However, when we perform our duties, when we are engaged in the right practice of action, then we see ourselves, the actor, as different from the results of action, and from the

performance of deeds. It is, as the devotee pictured in this discourse, “I am separate from all my actions.” Even then, we can only *approach* the Supreme, and something more is necessary to reach the Supreme Self, for in this very performance of action, there is certain amount of detachment. We have all heard the phrase, “I am the slave of my duty.” Now the Spiritual Man cannot be the slave even of his own duty, and that detachment expresses or manifests itself as a certain tranquillity that is enjoyed. In other words, we are conscious that we have detached ourselves from the pairs of opposites, likes and dislikes, and we enjoy that tranquillity, thereby showing a certain amount of detachment. But we must come to the position when we will no longer be the slaves of duty, but will be above the duty itself. This is described in verse 21. Krishna says:

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.

It is this union with the Supreme which really enables us to have this imperishable bliss, which is distinct from inner tranquillity, arising from the performance of *Dharma*, and naturally from the enjoyment produced through and with the help of the desire nature. When we are really united to that Supreme Self we know ourselves as everywhere present, of course, because the Self is everywhere. Then we no longer say “I am separate from my actions.” We realize that the Self is present in every single deed and action. Therefore, the Self is equally present in the reactions or fruits of actions. We are not attached as we were when we were following the *kamic* principle, but we are united to them in the spiritual sense. It is then and only then, that we attain to the true restful position of Nirvana which is to be attained while in this physical body. “The self-restrained sage having with the heart renounced all actions, dwells at rest in the ‘nine gate city of his abode,’ neither acting nor causing

to act,” and therefore enjoys complete rest and in his own body he has the faculty of expressing the power of devotion, like *Atman* the Self, so that Self shines through all the gates of his own body.

We see how many various stages exist between performance of *Dharma* and the real understanding of sacrificial actions when we are united to the Supreme. In *Dharmic* action we are “dedicated” to our duty. In *Yagnic* or sacrificial action we are “consecrated” to our duty. You may, for example, dedicate yourself for the Cause of Theosophy, and work for Theosophy thereby helping and serving humanity. It is the first step, and naturally a good and splendid one, but something more remains to be achieved. A person can consecrate his very Self to the Cause of the Masters and humanity, so there is a difference. In the first we are still concerned with our own growth, progress and uplift; in the second, we have entirely forgotten self-improvement and self-growth. We think only of living that we may be of benefit to others. In *Dharma* we are really treading the Path of Liberation, we want our own emancipation, and are in a way attached to that final result. In sacrificial actions, we are treading the other path, known as the path of renunciation. When we perform duties, we begin to become unselfish, but when we tread the path of sacrifice, we are more than unselfish, we have become selfless.

As we review man’s evolution, we see that through the path of desire and passion, that is through *kamic* actions, long lives spent in the gratification of his own pleasures, man has built up for himself a very strong notion of personality; the centre of *kama-manas* has thus been produced in man. When man stops the performance of *kamic* actions, and enters the pursuit of *dharma*, or duty, man must change the centre, and build up the centre produced by the conjunction of, or union with *Buddhi-Manas*, then the *kamic* nature is purified and man has overcome desire and anger, and therefore errors and blunders. But something more remains to be done. Man, after having produced or created that centre, *Buddhi-Manas*, must link the centre with *Atman*, the Self; he must, therefore, go beyond *Buddhi*, the Spiritual Self, and contact *Atman*, the Universal Self,

and achieve for himself, the direct communion of his own personal and individual selves with that Universal Centre of Consciousness so that the full direct radiance of *Atman* is in everything the man does, feels, and thinks through his physical body. This is the ultimate goal. It is what is meant by the phrase, the union with the Supreme Spirit, that union is to be achieved only through sacrifice, which is not limited and partial sacrifice, but complete. That is, we must not only sacrifice the fruits of our actions, but the actions themselves, and finally the actor himself must be sacrificed. This also indicates to us the difference there is between sacrifice and sacrament. And remember that we go from sacrifice to sacrament—through sacrifice, performing, not with material things as mentioned in previous chapter, but with spiritual and through spiritual knowledge.

We may sacrifice physical possessions and property, or mental and moral qualities or faculties. For instance, we may sacrifice our wealth to help the poor, or we may sacrifice our knowledge to enlighten other people, we may sacrifice the faculty of discrimination in offering advice to help other human beings, but in all those sacrifices we are still separate from the thing we are offering. We and our wealth are distinctly separate, and we are still separate from the poor people we are helping. But when we are able to pour the very life energy of *Atman*, whether it is physical wealth or material or spiritual property—then are we really performing a sacrament. The thing we give is imbued with the very energy of the Spirit of the Universal Self everywhere present, and so we give ourselves in the offering or sacrifice. So a sacrament indicates the giving up of our own spiritual life and energy for the benefit of others. The greatest example of sacrament is, of course, that of Krishna himself. Krishna has kept on revolving the wheel of time, and was always engaged in action, not because he needed it for his own progress, but because he had to help all other human beings.

(To be concluded)

VAYU—THE GOD OF AIR

I

IN THE THIRD Chapter of Kena Upanishad we are given the allegory of ignorance of the gods or *devas* regarding *Brahman*. *Brahman* obtained the victory for the *Devas*. The *Devas* became elated by the victory of *Brahman*, and they thought, this victory is ours only, this greatness is ours only. *Brahman* perceived this and appeared to them. But they did not know It, and said: “What spirit (*yaksha*) is this?” When *Agni* was sent to find out what that spirit was, he ran towards It, and when asked, who he was, and what were his powers, *Agni* replied: “I am *Agni*, I can burn everything here, whatever is on this earth.” *Brahman* put a straw before him, saying: “Burn this.” He went towards it with all his might, but he could not burn it. Then he returned thence and said: “I could not find out what spirit this is.” Likewise, the god sent *Vayu* to find out the nature of this spirit and he was asked similar questions. *Vayu* replied that he could blow off everything, whatever there is on this earth. He was likewise asked to move the straw, which he could not, and returned back wondering who that spirit was. Finally *Indra* approached the spirit, but It disappeared from before him, and in the same space there appeared a woman: it was Uma, the daughter of Himavat. He said to her: ‘Who is that spirit?’ She replied: “It is *Brahman*. It is through the victory of *Brahman* that you have thus become great.” After that he knew that it was *Brahman*. Therefore, these *Devas*, viz., *Agni*, *Vayu*, and *Indra*, are, as it were, above the other gods, for they contacted the *Brahman* the closest, so to speak, “met” and “experienced” the *Brahman* first. *Indra* is, as it were, above the other gods, because he “knew” *Brahman* first.

In the article, “Modernized Upanishad,” Mr. Judge interprets the above allegory from the theosophical viewpoint. *Devas* refer to elemental spirits, which form the soul of the elements. He points out that the elemental spirits of all grades that work in nature on every plane, in air, water, earth, and fire, were evolved from lower

and less conscious states through the effort of the highest mind, over a long period of time. In the beginning, all life, all consciousness, all matter was in one homogenous condition. “*Brahman* obtaining victory for the *Devas*,” refers to evolution of the elemental spirits from One Homogeneous substance. They were evolved on many planes, each to a different degree. Some of these elemental spirits are considered to be of the higher order, and they are related to fire [*Agni*], air [*Vayu*], and nascent mind [*Indra*]. Elemental spirits of fire are the wisest, those of air are wise and powerful, while those of water are dangerous. These higher elemental spirits possessing consciousness peculiar to their own plane of existence were destined to become conscious human beings of the future.

Elementals or “nature-spirits” of the lower order will be evolved into men only after a very long period. The elementals of the air are called “spirits of air,” or sylphs, (*Apsaras* of the Hindus). Mr. Judge mentions that in case of “consulter with familiar spirits,” there is communication with powerful nature-spirits (elementals) of either fire or air element, which are sometimes friendly and sometimes unfriendly. They use inner senses of a person and make available to him knowledge which he cannot acquire in ordinary way. More or less, it is like a hypnotizer paralyzing the physical body and awakening the inner man. However, these nature-spirits are devoid of conscience, and they mainly act on and influence the lower nature of man, and hence, over a period of time, the moral qualities of that person are paralyzed. (*W.Q.J. Series No. 21*, pp. 6-7)

Vayu is known as the God of Winds or the God of Air. Lord *Vayu* has many names which are: “*satata-ga*” (ever moving), “*pavana*” (the wind) and “*gandha-vaha*” (the perfume bearer). He is also known as *Vata*.

When the five elements manifest within the body they are called *doshas*. Each element has its own fundamental nature. The element of *Akasa* or ether is the element which offers no resistance to change or motion, yet it provides the medium in which all change and motion occur. The earth element or *Prithvi* has the quality of solidity

and is virtually immutable. The only time *prithvi* ever changes is under the influence of the remaining three active elements of *vayu* (air), *agni* (fire) and *apas* (water). *Vayu*, which is commonly associated with wind, is responsible for all motion, as also drying functions in nature. Without *Vayu*'s impulse for movement, the cloud cannot move and it cannot release its water. When *Vayu* goes out of balance it drives the wind into cyclones and hurricanes. (*Ayurveda and Panchakarma*, p. 65)

The very foundation of Ayurveda—the theory of *Tridosha*, is based on the five great *Bhutas* or primeval elements, viz., *Prithvi*, *Apas*, *Tejas*, *Vayu* and *Akasa*, which when translated would approximately mean the elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether, respectively. *Akasa* and *Vayu*, the principles of ether and air, form *Vata*; *Tejas*, the principle of fire or luminosity forms *Pitta*; *Apas* and *Prithvi* or liquid and solid principles form *Kapha*. According to Ayurveda, man, as a creature of the universe, cannot be separated from the rest of it. What the elements (*bhutas*) are to the universe, the *doshas* are to the individual.

Tridosha defines the three fundamental energies or principles which govern all the physiological and psychological processes within the body and mind. Every physical characteristic, mental capacity and the emotional tendency of a human being can therefore be explained in terms of the three basic physical energies. These *doshas* have their own specific *gunas* (qualities), functions and *adhithanas* (special seats) through which they function. The regions where *Vata* predominates are called *Vatasthana*s (seats of *Vata*); where *Pitta* predominates as seats of *Pitta*; and where *Kapha* predominates as seats of *Kapha*. As long as each *dosha* functions aright in its own region, there is harmony of function in the whole system and that is health. If any *dosha* is disturbed in its own region, or enters into region of another *dosha*, the system is disturbed and the result is disease.

The area from head to diaphragm is *kapha* zone because the functions of the organs in this area are associated with the qualities

of *kapha*, such as, *moistening, mixing and binding* together. Likewise, the area from the diaphragm to the umbilicus is *Pitta* zone because the function of the organs in this area is *conversion or transformation*, which is the function of *Pitta dosha*. The *Vata* zone extends from the navel downwards to include large intestine, reproductive organs, organs of elimination and the legs. *Vata* controls the mechanism involved in *drying and separating* food. The colon and the bones are considered to be the primary organs of *Vata* in the body. But *Vayu* also governs the organs whose functioning requires movement in the form of contraction and dilation, such as, colon, uterus, urinary bladder, heart, blinking of the eye and the transmission of nervous impulses to and from the brain (*Ayurveda and Panchakarma*, p. 46 & pp. 69-73). The same book points out that our life span may also be divided into three stages. The period from birth to puberty being characterized by nourishment and growth in body's substance and size, is called *kapha age*. From puberty to middle age is called *pitta age*, as we notice body's growth potential being transformed into reproductive potential, and the increased "fire" gives people ambition, courage, and motivation to achieve their goals. Around the middle age we notice that our skin begins to dry and wrinkle, and the whole system begins to feel drying, separating and immobilizing effect of *vata dosha*, which dominates this phase of life. (pp. 74-75)

From the birth children are classified according to their *prakritis* (physical and mental make-up), i.e., *Vata, Pitta* or *Kapha*. The *vata-prakriti* child is generally lean, lanky and rough-skinned; it is likely to suffer from flatulence and is easily irritable. The *kapha-prakriti* child is sleepy and inactive. A *pitta-prakriti* child is not inclined to any of the extremes and is on the whole intelligent and good-natured. These may be compared to three *gunas* or qualities—*Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Rajas* or action is the characteristic of *Vata*; *Tamas* or inertia of *Kapha*; *Sattva* or purity is the harmony of all three, and *Pitta* is nearer to it than the other two.

Lord *Vayu* is known as life-breath or *Prana*. It is he who is the

basis of all life here. Inside our bodies he works as the five vital airs (*Panchaprana*).

In his book, *Mahabharata: A Tribute of Four Essays*, Indrajit Bandyopadhyay points out that in *Purusha Sukta*, Vayu is born from the Purusha's breath (10.90.13). In fact, it is said that *Agni* sprang from *Purusha*'s mouth, *Surya* from his eye, but *Vayu* sprang forth with his very breath, and stirred the whole to life. Thus, *Vayu* is not only wind of external nature, but it is also *prana vayu* (life-breath). In *Mahabharata* Narada is of the opinion that *Vayu* is the mightiest of all Gods—"Even Indra, or Yama or the Lord of Waters is not equal to the God of Wind in might." In *Mahabharata*, *Vayu* is believed to be father of Bhima, the third son of Kunti, and one of the Pandava brothers. Kunti conceived him as a result of a prayer to Vayu, asking him for a son. The author says that we find Bhima to have great energy and strength and also endowed with the speed of the wind. He is called Vrikodar, having stomach of a wolf, and hence a voracious eater. The author explains it by saying that being *Prana*, Bhima is also an "eater." *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says, "Whatever food is eaten, it is eaten by the vital force alone and it (the vital breath) rests on that (the food)."

Why does Bhima survive his wife and brothers and is the last to fall? To understand it allegorically, the author draws our attention to *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (1.5.21). The allegorical narrative is about the senses and organs quarrelling with each other for supremacy. The eye said, "I alone can see; I go on seeing. Nobody is like me." The ear says to the eye, "I alone can hear, you cannot hear. I am superior." So the eye went on seeing, but got tired. The ear went on hearing, but got exhausted. Swami Krishnananda explains that they got fatigued on account of excessive activity, and this is the incoming of death. The Upanishad says that everything sensuous was affected by death, but that hidden Power, the central *Prana* within, works as the force of the soul. The soul within us may be equated with the *Cosmic Prana*, and is not affected by death. The harmonization of the functions of these senses has to be effected

by another principle altogether. As we require an administrator to harmonize the individual persons working in an organisation, to avoid conflicts and chaos, likewise, there is a synthesising principle within us. The differentiated functions of the senses are brought together into a synthesis by an eternal principle within, which is *Prana-Sakti*, representative or ambassador of the *Cosmic Prana* [*Jiva*] or the Self in all. Hence, just as *Prana* survives death of the senses and organs, Bhima representing *Prana* is the last to fall.

In fact, in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (1.3.19), *Prana* is called *ayasa angirasa*, for it is the essence (*rasa*) of the limbs (*anga*). No limb can survive without *Prana*. If *prana* departs from any part of the body, that part dries up immediately. There is no vitality in that part of the body from which *Prana* is withdrawn.

Theosophy teaches that we are floating in the ocean of *Jiva*. *Prana* or breath is a specialized aspect of *Jiva* or ONE LIFE. H.P.B. describes *Prana* to be the radiating force or Energy of *Atman*—as the Universal Life, and the ONE SELF, and is the manifesting aspect of Universal Life. *Prana* or Life permeates the whole being of the objective universe, and *prana* is necessary for the functioning of remaining six principles in man.

In the Seventh Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, "And all these things hang on me as precious gems upon a string." God or the Divine is like a thread which runs through all the appearances, which are like so many pearls hanging on the thread. The centre of every being, every manifested thing is the same essence. In the Upanishads Vayu is said to be the *Sutra*, the thread that links everything together. In *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (III, 7.2) sage Yajnavalkya says, "Vayu, O Gautama, is that *Sutra*. By Vayu, as by a thread, O Gautama, are this world, the other world and beings held together. Therefore, O Gautama, they say of a person who dies that his limbs have been loosened; for they are held together by Vayu as by a thread."

(To be concluded)

BRAHMACHARYA—THE LAW OF CONTINENCE

BRAHMACHARYA is one of the terms of ancient Indian religious tradition with which people in general are very familiar. Like most of the ancient religious conceptions the true significance of this term is also generally misunderstood. Popular conception is that it means just celibacy or monasticism. The true meaning of *Brahmacharya*, however, is found in the etymology of the term itself: *Chara* connotes movement, and *Brahma* has reference to the Supreme Soul—meaning, movement towards the Supreme Soul. We are spiritual beings, descended into matter and involved in material nature for experience and emancipation, and for raising the animal nature to the stature of conscious godhood. Man is essentially divine, yet placed in material conditions, he loses sight of his godly nature, becomes identified with, and overcome by, the turbulent animal nature in which he is embodied. His mission and destiny is to learn, to control, and subjugate his lower passionate nature and render it subservient to the sovereign rule and purposes of his Higher Divine Self that shines in his heart. Purpose of human life is to learn to so think and live as to bring his whole nature—body, mind and heart—to accord with his Higher Self through study of the sacred Science of Life and strict observance of the laws of higher life as laid down in that Science. This conscious, intelligent effort and moral striving to live the higher life leading to the Supreme Soul is *Brahmacharya*. Such a study and effort is a great purifier of man.

Embodied life in this world of conditioned existence is the field of action in which the two forces of the two poles of man's being, the spiritual and the material, ranged against each other, struggle for supremacy in his life. Man is a free agent. He can choose either; to follow the behests of his Higher Self, in which case he ennobles and elevates his whole nature to divinity, which is conducive to his happiness; or to adopt an easier and more convenient mode of familiar sensations of material life for the gratification of his passions and appetites. The latter course seems personally more attractive

and desirable but immerses man into gross life of materialism and selfishness, which indeed is the source of all evils that befall man. In *Sanatsujatiya* it is exclaimed that he who mistakes his Self, the eternal Perceiver and Witness, which is other than his embodiment and perceptions, to be the body and objects of perceptions, what sin such a thief, who has lost his Self, will not commit! It is Ignorance of our true Self which accentuates the selfishness of man, which is the prolific parent of all the evils of human life which torment man. By heedlessness man becomes his own enemy. Hence the Buddha urges man to hasten towards the good and restrain his evil thoughts, failing which his mind inclines to delight in evil.

Restraint of the mind and the senses, and practice of the *paramitas* of perfection are not for saints who are perfect. The laws of higher life, which have been well ascertained, proven, and practised by Sages are laid down by them for the ordinary men and women of the world that they may, like those Sages themselves, cross over the ocean of tears of pain and sorrow to the farther shore of bliss of the freedom of Soul. In the Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali five ethical practices of self-restraint, followed by five positive rules of practice of higher life are laid down by which a man may purify his whole nature, develop virtues, and become fit to progress on the path of Self-knowledge. The five practices of self-restraint are: not killing, not stealing, veracity, continence and not coveting. It is said in the scripture that these are universal great duties irrespective of rank, time, place or compact. These devolve on every person to practise in the interest of his own true happiness and the good of the world.

Not-killing means practice of harmlessness and kindness. It is more than abstention from physically hurting any creature. While we inadvertently hurt or kill many small creatures in the very act of breathing and eating food in order that we may live, wanton killing is what is to be avoided. What is of greater consequence than physical destruction of creatures is the violence that is involved in our thoughts, words and feelings of negative import, such as, hatred, revenge, harshness, envy, greed, ingratitude, and so on. These not

only defile man, individually, but also society as a whole, through the tie of universal brotherhood. When non-violence is practised to the fullest extent whole natural world turns friendly and benevolent towards that person. By practice of veracity or truthfulness in all circumstances, his nature becomes purified, and becomes focus for rapid working out of past Karma of himself as well as of those who may be in his vicinity. Absence of theft is to be practised in mind and act. It means not only not taking what does not belong to one, but unflinchingly to return in gratitude the benefit one has received from others. We are all deeply indebted to the whole of Nature, and this indebtedness we can only try to redeem by unselfishness and altruism in practical life. Failing in this ethic we become as thieves, having taken from others and failing to reciprocate. Non-covetousness is an attitude of mind in which not only one does not covet another's possessions, even in thought and motive, but those of his own also. Such an attitude is the natural fruit of one who has intuitively apprehended the true nature of the Self to be the Self of All, and has a deep rooted conviction of universal brotherhood. Such an one becomes a trustee of his possessions, including his own life and Karmic merit, for the benefit of fellow-beings.

Continence, as already said, is not celibacy as is commonly understood, a mere physical abstention, but principally chastity of mind and heart. Generally it means restraint of senses and the mind as opposed to indulgence through them for mere gratification. It has also a specific reference to control and mastery of sexual urge, as required by the law of life. Referring to the views of Count Leo Tolstoy on this question in his novels *Anna Karenina* and *Death of Ivan Ilyvitch*, which was misunderstood by his critics in the Western world, H.P.B. wrote:

It is not “monasticism” but *the law of continence* as taught by Jesus (and Occultism) in its esoteric meaning—which most Christians are unable to perceive—that he preaches. Nothing can be more moral or more conducive to human happiness and perfectibility than the application of this law.

It is one ordained by Nature herself. Animals follow it instinctively, as do also the savage tribes. Once pregnant, to the last day of the nursing of her babe, *i.e.*, for eighteen or twenty months, the savage squaw *is sacred to her husband*; the civilized and semi-civilized man alone breaking this beneficent law. (*H.P.B. Series No. 17*, p. 43)

The Secret Doctrine teaches that the physiological Procreative faculty of the human-animal nature is divine gift in that it is the reflex on the physical plane of the intelligent creative Will-Force of the Higher Self which over-broods the mortal man, and that the former was gradually developed in the course of physiological evolution, for the purpose of reproduction of human bodies on the physical plane for soul's occupation. Both of these powers—the divine creative Will and the physiological procreation—are represented as two opposite poles in the human constitution. Misuse of the procreative faculty adversely impacts the spiritual part of man, with all its dire Karmic consequences. It is in perfect accord with natural law to put to use the reproductive function for bringing forth new bodies by the union of sexes for the purpose of providing tenement for the reincarnating souls. Natural law is not transgressed in this. However, the “curse” and the “sin,” of Adam and Eve, who are metaphorical type of early humanity, lie in the abuse of the holy mystery of procreation for mere gratification of lust. Karmic consequence of it was that, in the pre-historic past, the whole nature of the Fourth Race—physiological, mental and moral—changed, and man “has now [in our race] become the wealthiest heir on the globe to constitutional and hereditary diseases, the most consciously and intelligently bestial of all animals.” (*S.D.*, II, 411)

Civilized society has even elevated this vice to the status of a virtue so that use of contraception, abortion, sodomy, free love etc., have come to be accepted and encouraged as normal and desirable practices. Woman has come to be regarded as an instrument of pleasure and made an unfortunate victim of man's lust. Teacher warns that exaltation of this vice is manifestly man's ruin. H.P.B.

wrote:

The apotheosis of passion, from the bitter fruit of which man has everlasting need to be redeemed, is the surest sign of moral degradation. Liberty to love according to the impulse of the senses, is the most profound slavery. From the beginning nature has hedged that pathway with disease and death. Wretched as are the countless marriages, vile as are the man-made laws which place marriage on the lowest plane, the salvation of free-love is the whisper of the snake anew in the ear of the modern Eve. (*H.P.B. Series No. 20*, p. 29)

H.P.B. speaks of the need to emancipate humankind from this slavery, quoting from Tolstoy's writing:

For morality to exist between men and women in their daily life, *they must make perfect chastity their law*. In progressing towards this end, man subdues himself. When he has arrived at the last degree of subjection, we shall have moral marriages. (*H.P.B. Series No. 17*, p. 43)

Jesus warned that if one looks at a woman with eye of desire he has already committed adultery with her. In every woman the regenerate man sees the ideal of motherhood and sisterhood. This is moral and mental celibacy or continence which should govern the life of every man. In this lies the key to emancipation of woman from abuse and oppression. In ancient India the individual, family and social life was organized based on the laws of Higher Life which were well known and widely practised, and youth were well grounded in the law of continence during student life by precept and example of great Teachers. Woman enjoyed exalted status in society. Emancipation and perfection of man was the World Ideal towards which the civilization gravitated, and attained the pinnacle of perfection. Redemption of modern India from her abject degradation lies in recovering by her people the ancient Ideal of their forebears with the help of the light of Theosophy.

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: How to know the SELF to be the self of all creatures?

Answer: We can try to understand this idea at first intellectually and then realize it by living the life in the light of that understanding. For this, we may recall the dialogue between the *Gurudeva* and the pupil in the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 120). The *Guru* asks the pupil to lift his head and answer whether he sees countless lights burning in the dark midnight sky. The pupil answers that he senses one Flame with countless undetached sparks shining in it. The *Guru* then asks him to look around and into himself to see whether the light that shines within him is in any way different from that which shines in his Brother-men. And the pupil replies that it is the same. It is the outer garments that delude the ignorant into saying: "Thy Soul and My Soul." The hint for the realization of sameness of the Self in all is found in this dialogue. It is the outer garment that makes us feel different and separate from one another. The outer garments are our personalities which are continually changing while the Self within is unaffected.

The same idea is expressed a little differently in the *Voice of the Silence*: "The branches of a tree are shaken by the wind; the trunk remains unmoved." The "trunk" in the imagery, represents the Perceiver, or the real "I,"—the unchanging and the eternal aspect in man. The "branches," represent the personal "I," emotions and the evanescent aspects of life. When we are too elated or too dejected, we are only looking at the "branches." Both in happy and sad times it is good to remember, "This too, shall pass away." Our attention to people is very superficial. In our interaction with others, we are

only aware of the “branches.” We say, “I do not like the way she talks,” or “She is dull and boring,” etc. When we look at our child, we must be aware that some day it will lose its innocence and grow into an adolescent and then into an adult. The same book asks us to “seek in the Impersonal for the ‘eternal man’; and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha.” The more impersonal we are the closer we are to appreciating the real nature of everything.

One of the techniques for developing impersonality has been given by Mr. Judge when he asks us to curb the desire to push ourselves forward and not to monopolize the conversation, and he says if you do this for a week you will understand something of the meaning of “Man, Know Thyself.” We have been asked to meditate upon the truth that we are not the body, brain, mind, ideas, emotions or the astral man, but that we are THAT, and “THAT” is the Supreme Soul. We have to remind ourselves of this as often as we can. In the *Friendly Philosopher*, Mr. Crosbie points out that if we are developing the child-heart, if we are learning to love things beautiful, if we are becoming more honest and plain and simple, then we are travelling on the path of impersonality. We can see that by cultivating impersonal and unconditional love for the whole of humanity we come closer to the realization that “Self” is the self of all creatures.

We may try to bring this realization also by similitude that we find between ourselves and others, at the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level as shown by Mr. Judge in the article, “Universal Brotherhood a Fact in Nature.” Often, unselfish and altruistic work for all that lives and breathes, can lead to mystical experience—a self-certifying experience of the oneness of all. Jane Goodall is well known for her work for the protection of wildlife, especially the chimpanzees. In the forest of Gombe, she experienced ecstatic mystical moments of oneness with Nature. For few brief moments she felt that she was one with the birds, the trees, the river, the rain, the chimpanzees and everything around her.

Question: What has Theosophy to say on the rite of *Tarpan* (offering water), performed for the *pitris* or forefathers? Do the dead ancestors

come down to earth to quench their thirst?

Answer: In Hinduism, as with most religious cultures, *samskaras* are sacred ceremonies which mark important events in the life of an individual. Hinduism mentions sixteen *samskaras*, which include pre birth ceremonies, birth ceremonies, life ceremonies, death ceremonies and even after-life ceremonies. These ceremonies are looked upon as ceremonies of refinement, which tend to raise an individual beyond mere physical existence. The last *samskara* is called *Antyeshthi*, which includes all post death ceremonies, normally performed by the son of a deceased person for the welfare of the soul of the dead person, and also as a mark of freedom from the debt or obligation that he owes to his parents. In the honour of the deceased parents and forefathers, *Tarpan* is to be performed on every new moon day or *Amavasya* day, by offering water to the ancestors, to quench their thirst, and who become pleased and bless the person. Etymologically, the word *tarpan* means satisfying, and it includes the rites aimed at satisfying the departed souls, especially one’s forefathers.

According to Hindu philosophy every human being is under five great debts, called *panch maha runas*, and to clear off these debts he has to undertake five great sacrifices or *panch maha yajnas*. These are, sacrifice to the supreme (*Brahma yajna*), sacrifice to our progenitors (*Pitri yajna*), sacrifice to the gods (*Deva yajna*), sacrifice to the lower kingdoms of nature (*Bhuta yajna*) and sacrifice to mankind (*Nara yajna*). But these sacrifices are not to be performed literally by following the dead-letter meaning of the scriptures. Progenitors (*Pitris*) are not the ancestors, such as father, grand-father or great grand-father of the person. They are the ancestors of whole of humanity. There are solar or *Aganishwatta pitris* who gave man the light of mind, making him a self-conscious being, able to think and choose. Then, there are Lunar Ancestors (*Somapa Pitris*) in *Manu Smriti*, who evolved, over long ages, in the beginning of our planetary evolution, the ethereal model for the formation of our Astral bodies on which the physical is built by terrestrial forces. We fulfil

our debt to these ancestors by making good use of our mind and by keeping the astral body pure, so as to provide a fit vehicle for the Higher Self to shine through. By keeping the mind and body pure, one maintains the purity of the family line, to which highly evolved Egos could be attracted to incarnate for benefiting humanity.

The after-death states being effectual states, the state of the person after death would depend upon the kind of life lived. It is absurd to believe that good or bad actions of the relative of the departed person can lighten or overburden his Karma. As long as the Ego, the Real Man, is in *Kama loka* or the purgatory of the Christians, *i.e.*, for a short time after death, it is possible for it to get affected by the thoughts and prayers of those who were closely associated with it. “The Real Man in ordinary cases, goes practically at once into the *Devachanic* state,” writes Mr. Crosbie. However, the Ego may be detained in *Kama loka* by the enormous force of some unsatisfied desire, and from which it can be released by prayers and other ceremonial offerings. Many of the after-death ceremonies in all religions are performed in order that the soul of the dead should not become a *bhut*, a restless, wandering soul, in the earth’s atmosphere. But once the Ego departs to *Devachan* or *Swarga* or Paradise, it cannot be affected by anything done on earth. The Ego is in a state of complete or unalloyed peace and bliss. The soul of the deceased is clothed in the most ethereal body, which has no need of, and cannot be nourished by food or water offered by the relatives on earth.

We might say that all these rituals are reminders for us to be grateful to our forefathers and parents, the latter being directly responsible for providing us with a physical form. Commenting on *Shraddha* ceremony performed for the dead, Swami Dayanand Saraswati says that the original meaning of the word *Shraddha* is *Shraddhà* or “devotion,” and signifies true service of the living parents with all devotion, not the dead. And it is, therefore, useless to offer *Pinda* (rice balls) in honour of the dead, as it results in no good. Probably the same may be said about the rite of *Tarpan*.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Is creativity in the air rather than within us? Creativity is a living throbbing entity which is touched upon and enhanced by many human minds and then visits you as an inspiration. We are often reluctant to ride the wave of creativity. How do the same ideas visit people in different parts of the world at the same time? When we are focused on our passion or purpose we seem to be in attunement with the spirit of the times, and vibrating with higher frequency we are able to catch ideas, which simply flow to us. We seem to pluck them from the air, and that might explain how two scientists situated in two different parts of the world make the same discovery, or a filmmaker, an author and a painter might all be working on the same theme. We might say creativity is not the sole preserve of just a few, and the masterpiece is not the work of just one genius. Virginia Woolf describes masterpieces as the outcome of years of thinking in common by the mass of people.

Elizabeth Gilbert, the author of the book, *Big Magic—Creative Living Beyond Fear*, believes that creativity seems to have a mind and will of its own, and if the person is lacking in will and dedication, it can move on to the next fertile mind. She seems to suggest that inspiration and genius are every human being’s birthright. She describes ideas to be energetic, invisible life forms which whirl around us, as if searching for a human partner. When they visit an individual that individual gets an inspiration, and which, if the individual is distracted, will move away to someone else. In some, genius is not inborn, but is the result of hard work. Inspired by the Romans, Gilbert considers Genius a disembodied spirit that assists talented, hard-working artists. Chase the ideas, create the perfect soil, and who knows what may be awaiting you? asks Vinita Dawra Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, October 25, 2015)

There is no such thing as “originality.” However, while we cannot be original, we can be creative—like an artist or a genius. The abstract ideal and ideas can be given a form using materials and

instruments available on our plane. For example, “love” is an abstraction but it is not a *new* idea. Everyone feels it but is unable to express it—though we all have words at our disposal. But, Shakespeare could describe love very graphically in his sonnets. He seems to bring the idea of love from the abstract plane to our plane through the medium of words. That is the task of an artist—giving to airy nothing a local habitation and a name. A genius is not made in isolation as suggested in *Through the Gates Of Gold*:

If the mind of man is turned upon any given subject with a sufficient concentration, he obtains illumination with regard to it sooner or later. The particular individual in whom the illumination appears is called a genius, an inventor, one inspired; but he is only the crown of a great mental work created by unknown men about him, and receding back from him through long vistas of distance. Without them he would not have had his material to deal with....The poet...is the essence of the poetic power of his time, and of the times before him.

Often, when one writes a beautiful novel, a poem, or makes a discovery, it is the result of the idea drawn from others around. When we take up a thought, and seek more understanding, a finger, or a long darting current, flies out from our brain, which goes in all directions and touches all other minds to receive the information. “When the unseen messenger from one mind arrives and touches the real mind of another, that other gives up to it what it may have of truth about general subjects. So the mind’s finger or wire flies until it gets the thought or seed-thought from the other and makes it its own. But our modern competitive system and selfish desire for gain and fame is constantly building a wall around people’s mind to everyone’s detriment.” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 196)

Theosophy posits the existence of invisible register called Astral Light, which acts as the repository of the ideas, the philosophy, the arts and sciences of long buried civilizations. The pictures from the astral light are continually being projected in the brains of the living

men. This explains how it is possible for two scientists, thinking along similar lines on the same subject, to pick up relevant ideas from the astral light, and hence make the same discovery at the same time.

Once we have the courage to break the wall we would realize that underlying apparent differences there is unity. “We become a minority not when we speak a different language, eat different food, are more or less intelligent, or more or less educated, rich or poor, or when our beliefs are different. Rather we become a minority when our ego begins to identify itself with these apparent differences, ignoring the vast oneness underneath these differences. Consequently, we fail to see others in ourselves and ourselves in others. We fail to connect at a very deep level with people or even animals who appear to be different from us” writes Anil Bhatnagar, a resident of New Delhi. The author narrates a poignant incident in his life, when he saw a tramp, unbathed and wearing a long, dirty, black tattered coat in the hot afternoon, picking up with his cupped hands cooked chick peas curry thrown by somebody in the drain. The sight was repulsive and his first instinct was to run away, as he could see him to be the extreme personification of the word “minority”—left alone and abandoned by fellow human beings. But he overcame the instinct to run away and decided to go home and fetch some food for this urchin. As he handed over the bag of food to the urchin he snatched it and began to eat, while the author was overwhelmed with the emotion of pity and pain.

The author writes that in reaching out to a person who was radically different from him, he felt an expansion of his being, and realized that when we create barriers we separate ourselves, and in abandoning others, we abandon ourselves. We cannot make others feel like minority without contracting ourselves in some way. And we cannot give without receiving. Small, ordinary acts of kindness can break the wall of separation and let our deeper oneness flow

and merge with other people, who are essentially, just like us. Every day life offers us opportunities to pull down these walls to reach out to a person who is not only just like us, but in fact, *is* us, writes Bhatnagar. (*Life Positive*, October 2015)

In his poignant short story, “Her Lover,” Maxim Gorky describes the plight of a prostitute, a “fallen” woman, who had nobody in the world to treat her kindly, so she had invented a friend for herself, in her imagination, and to whom she was writing letters. The story ends with Gorky’s insightful and ironic remark: “And who are the fallen classes, I should like to know? They are, first of all, people with the same bones, flesh and blood and nerves as ourselves....In reality, we also are fallen folks, and so far as I can see, very deeply fallen into the abyss of self-sufficiency and the conviction of our own superiority. But enough of this. It is all as old as the hills—so old that it is a shame to speak of it.”

Yes, it is indeed a shame that though every religion down the ages has *preached* this doctrine of brotherhood, we still have among us the lonely, the poor and the persecuted. Mr. Judge points out that universal brotherhood is a fact in nature, whether we recognize it or not. It is a sound doctrine and yet we fail to practise it because we have denied it in the heart. H.P.B. points out that there is no such thing as separateness.

Modern man experiences isolation and a deep sense of insecurity and anxiety, all of which arises out of the feeling of separateness. It is by drowning ourselves in work, amusements, drinks and drugs, and buying ever-new things that we seek to escape loneliness, anxiety and insecurity. Each of us lives in a world of his own, maintaining superficial contact with others. With our set pattern of thinking and feeling we refuse to adjust with other minds and hearts. Only those people interest us who share our tastes and outlook on life. But groups of such companions with common interest create a barrier between themselves and others, and thus form a *partial brotherhood*.

It is by giving that we receive. “The reason you have had help is

that in other lives you gave it to others. In every effort you made to lighten another mind and open it to Truth, you were helped yourself. Those pearls you found for another and gave to him, you really retained for yourself in the act of benevolence. For when one lives thus to help others, he is thereby putting in practice the rule to try and ‘kill out all sense of separateness,’ and thus gets little by little in possession of the true light,” writes Mr. Judge. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 1)

Do things exist only when we see them and measure them? The study which appeared in *Nature Physics* refers to a series of experiments carried out by a team of scientists at the Australian National University at Canberra who observed the passage of a helium atom as it passed through a tiny grating—and noticed that it only came into existence when it was measured at the end of its journey. Does it mean that the atom did not have any real existence before it was measured? The experiment is trying to suggest that things exist because you are seeing or observing them. But then someone can argue that does that mean that all those things in the next room, which one is not able to see, do not actually exist? When Einstein was asked this question in the context of quantum theory he had sarcastically asked, “So are you trying to tell me that when I do not see the Moon, it is not there?”

In the act of creation, only a make-believe reality is created in which things hidden from the observers—like stuff in the other room, the dark side of the Moon which never faces the Earth or galaxies unobservable by even the largest telescopes—have only a shadowy kind of semi-existence, that become fully real only when interacting with observers. We do the same when we create our own make-believe realities, such as, in the indoor film set, which consists of a bedroom, a bed, a dresser and some stools. If the action consists of an actor having to open and take a necklace from the top drawer of the dresser and wear it, then the viewers will only be shown the top

of the dresser and the first drawer with its contents, and the rest of the drawers and their contents will be focused on if those are required to be shown to the viewers. Till then, they are full of possibilities and potentials. Einstein in negating the idea that the unseen is unreal probably believed that creation is restrained and mysterious and though he was an agnostic, he still metaphorically maintained that “the Lord is subtle,” writes Mukul Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, October 25, 2015)

“Seeing is believing,” is the sentiment expressed by both, scientific materialism and materialistic philosophy. What cannot be touched, sensed, analyzed, classified has no existence. There is invisible side of both man and nature. Unfortunately, science has limited its scope by relying exclusively on physical senses, laboratory experiments, observations, analysis and reasoning. While these are excellent tools for investigation of the physical world, they are inadequate for investigation of the psychic world, and are absolutely useless for getting even a glimpse of the spiritual world.

In fact, what we see of people and the world in the present is only a fragment of their total selves. It is like a tip of the iceberg. The real part remains hidden until we develop necessary senses and perception. H.P.B. gives an analogy of bar of metal dipped into ocean. Let us take the atmosphere to represent the future, the cross-section which touches water, and which joins and separates the ocean from the atmosphere, to represent the present, while the portion which is in the ocean to represent the past. We cannot say that the bar of metal came into existence when it left the air, and ceased to exist when it entered water. So that it exists only at the cross-section. Similarly, the real person or thing does not consist solely of what we see at any particular moment but is composed of all that (sum-total) which existed eternally in the “future,” and passes through what we call “present” and shall exist for eternity in the “past,” and in between momentarily they give us a glimpse, of the cross-section of their total selves.