

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE MEANING OF PAIN

“SORROW is,” taught the Buddha. Pain is an integral part of conditioned existence. Pain is always standing at our door, keeping the door ajar, so that it can enter at any time it sees fit. What has given it this right? *We* have given it the right, as we primarily desire pleasure. But in our search for pleasure we find that pain is a co-ruler with pleasure, says *Through the Gates of Gold*. It is a package deal, so to speak. In this continuous war between pain and pleasure, we hope that someday pleasure will win, and then we will be happy forever.

Pain is a sensation which cannot be notionally defined. In fact, no sensation can be accurately defined or described to anyone who has not personally experienced it. We have to use words like stabbing, burning, drawing pain, or acute and dull pain. The word “pain” is derived from the Latin word “*poena*” meaning punishment, which brings home the undesirable nature of pain.

Buddha taught that all conditioned existence is suffering or pain. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, points out that there are three kinds of suffering: (1) Actual suffering, as when we have a toothache, bruised hand, etc. (2) Potential suffering: We see that the process of birth, growing up, old age, up to death, is full of suffering. There is suffering arising from our likes and dislikes. It does not mean that there are no pleasant experiences in the world. But it means that at the bottom of even pleasant experiences, there is pain. There is

concealed suffering. Something may be a source of pleasure but it may be tied up with anxiety, as we are afraid of losing it. It could be a person, a thing, or position or power. The predicament of the person who enjoys position or power is described in Buddhism by giving an illustration of a hawk. Suppose there is a hawk that takes a piece of meat and flies away holding it in his beak. Soon, hundreds of other hawks will be seen flying after him. Some peck at his body, some at his eyes, trying to take away that piece. In the same way, possessing many pleasures in this highly competitive world is like holding a piece of meat. To look at, a person may be happy, surrounded by all the comforts of life, but there may be underlying anxiety and suffering. There is always *potential suffering* attached to everything in this world. (3) Metaphysical suffering, arises from the realization that nothing mundane, earthly or conditioned can give full or final satisfaction.

Pain could also be divided into two broad categories: *Necessary* pain, which must be endured as part of the process of growing up. *Unnecessary* pain is that which arises as a result of breaking the harmony of nature, or as a result of disobedience to the law. When we experience, for instance, giving way to our own evil temper or to any of our own weaknesses, in this present life, we know that it causes our own suffering and the suffering of those around us. It is unnecessary suffering. We always are the free agents, choosers, and we can avoid that particular type of pain throughout our growth. Anger, desire and greed are the three gates of hell. Lord Buddha teaches that “desire” is the source of suffering.

The Buddha says, “What grief springs of itself and springs not of desire?” In satisfying desires, we experience pain. It is because either we do not get what we wanted in the first place or, even if we do get what we wanted, in due course it all turns to dust and ashes in the mouth. *Or*, it may happen that having got what we wanted there is in us the desire to cling to that thing or that person forever, and that is not possible in this conditioned world, wherein all things are impermanent.

Pain is necessary not only for physical growth, but is also an integral part of spiritual growth. Spiritual life involves effecting a transition from being a good person to becoming a spiritual person. There is a great gulf between a good man and a sinner, but there is still greater gulf between a good man and a spiritual man, one who has attained to knowledge, says *Light on the Path*. A spiritual man is one who is the personification of self-sacrifice and has reached the extinction of desires. A “good” person has still to achieve these qualities. Growth involves change, and there can be no change for the better, without proportionate suffering. Spiritual growth calls for leaving behind the familiar. We start with our ordinary self with its various desires and interests and discover with pain that morality often requires giving up of some of our desires that we consider legitimate. We experience an inner conflict. “Living the higher life” means waging a war not only against our *vices*, but also against our habits, beliefs, pet theories and our likes and dislikes, and that is a painful process.

But “growth does not depend on the *amount* of pain or pleasure that is endured, but on our *attitude of mind* towards all that may meet us on life’s journey,” writes Mr. Judge. Some of us suffer intensely and then at the end of it say, “I want to forget the whole thing as a bad dream.” We then carry on with life just as before, all the time hoping that we will not be placed in a similar situation again. Mr. Crosbie gives an example of a cat. A cat out in the cold will cry to come in, but once inside and warm, it will go out again without any hesitation, without any recollection of the state it had shortly before suffered. Some of us human beings come dangerously close to similar state of existence (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 121). A simple example will illustrate the point. If overeating of ice-cream led to a bad cold and cough that lasted many days, we become temporarily wise and say that it is not worthwhile enjoying a few moments of pleasure that leads to many days of suffering. But at the next occasion we again fall prey to the same temptation and undergo the same suffering. To grow as a result of pain, we need to *learn*

from the experience. If we find ourselves being placed in the similar predicament again and again, it shows that we have not learnt the lesson. When the lesson is learned the necessity ceases.

An ordinary person shuns pain, he almost wishes that God should take away the pain, and bring in pleasure, like a magician makes things appear and disappear with his magic wand. “How I wish I could get back my carefree days of youth!” says one, while another anticipates a future filled with comforts and luxuries. The difference between the saints and ordinary people like us, is that we look for happiness, not realizing the importance of pain as a purifier and uplifter. But often there is a warped understanding of the necessity of pain. We then *seek* pain, or seek to inflict it on others, or even abstain from helping others in pain, saying that pain purifies and makes for growth! A religious fanatic glorifies pain. There were Christian saints, who tortured their bodies, for the “greater glory of God.” There is the belief that “the more I torture my body and the more I suffer, the more I glorify the God.” Of those who torture their bodies, Shri Krishna says, “Those who practice severe self-mortification not enjoined in the Scriptures are full of hypocrisy and pride.... They, full of delusion, torture the powers and faculties which are in the body, and me also, who am in the recesses of the innermost heart.” (*Gita*, XVII)

Are we trying to say that pleasure has no place in one’s struggle for spiritual life? The book, *Through the Gates of Gold*, points out that the stoic, who subscribes to the philosophy of being indifferent to pleasure and pain, misses the point and thus throws away the baby with the bath water. There is the need of testing and valuing every joy and pain our existence brings. Our involvement in any event is like raw material, and reflection upon it is like processing of raw material. We process it best when we are detached. We can learn to experience pain and pleasure with detached concern. Ordinarily, we get completely involved in both our pleasurable and painful experiences. But in order to evaluate the experience, we must become an observer. A person is able to maintain his balance

while he is standing or walking because the perpendicular from the centre of gravity of his body falls within the base of support—between his feet. When we bend forward or backward too much, the perpendicular from the centre of gravity no longer falls within the base of support. Our psychological base of support is our higher nature, which gives us a true sense of “I am I.” When there is a sudden surge of emotion, such that it is all centred in one feeling, then our awareness of “I am I” goes awry and falls, so to speak, outside the base of support. We begin to identify ourselves with the thing we are contemplating. As a result people go mad with grief or with sudden good news.

A spiritual man is affected by pleasure and pain, but does not allow them to shake him or influence his decisions in any way. We can do this by assuming the position of an observer. Then, while one aspect of our consciousness may be involved in painful or pleasurable experience, the other aspect becomes a witness. It is then that we are able to learn from both pain and pleasure. In the midst of all the pleasures of life, a point of satiation is reached, waking up that person to higher possibilities. We also become aware that pleasures of the world are as fleeting as the scene or pattern formed in a kaleidoscope. In fact, the law of diminishing returns seems to govern the realm of pleasures. We do not derive the same pleasure when we repeat the experience—of eating ice-cream or of a trip abroad—the second time, and still less the third time, and so on.

Likewise, there are those rare few who are able to see that just as there is pain concealed beneath pleasure, there is also pleasure, nay, happiness and bliss concealed beneath pain. They begin to value pain and adversity. The “easy” and happy times are the periods of rest; the “hard” times are the periods of training—opportunities for gaining strength and knowledge, writes Mr. Crosbie. Right response to pain comes when we recognize that true happiness lies hidden within this pain.

We love to hear the stories of people who have been transformed by their disasters, saying, “I wish it had not happened, but I am a

better person for it,” because it supports a psychological truth that there is a built-in human capacity to flourish under the most difficult circumstances. “Those who weather adversity well are living proof of one of the paradoxes of happiness: We need more than pleasure to live the best possible life. Our contemporary quest for happiness has shrivelled to a hunt for bliss—a life protected from bad feelings, free from pain and confusion....Compassion, wisdom, altruism, insight, creativity—sometimes only the trials of adversity can foster these qualities, because sometimes only drastic situations can force us to take on the painful process of change. To live a full human life, a tranquil, carefree existence is not enough. We also need to grow—and sometimes growing hurts....” (*Psychology Today*, March-April, 2006)

“Pain arouses, softens, breaks and destroys,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*. Pain arouses. It is only when pain comes that we sit up and ask questions of life. Pain softens. For instance, Viktor Frankl mentions in his book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, the case of a doctor in a concentration camp, who was the most ruthless, satanic, Mephistophelean figure. Later, he was taken prisoner by the Russians, and died of the cancer of the urinary bladder. A person who was with him in the prison told Dr. Frankl that before he died he showed himself to be the best human being. He helped and consoled everybody in the prison and lived up to the highest conceivable moral standard (pp. 154-55). His own suffering must have softened him. Often, we sympathize with others only if we have passed through similar troubles. The best response to pain has been beautifully expressed by Eugene Kennedy, thus:

What is this pain that will not kill us, this ache that has learned how to follow us so closely through life? It is the pain of being alive....We can do more with our pain than suffer it...We should not let it keep us from reaching out to others....Our pain will grow less as our hearts grow larger.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT A BONE THAT SCARED A KNIGHT

A STORY that recalls the mysterious deaths of Lord Carnarvon and fourteen others following the opening of the tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amen was recently recounted by Sir Alexander Seton in *News Chronicle*. He and his wife brought back last year as a souvenir of their Egyptian holiday a bone obtained from a tomb “of the pre-mummy era,” situated in the desert behind the Great Pyramid. A dragoman begged Lady Seton not to take the bone back with her but to leave it where it was or to replace it. But the bone, later identified as a female sacrum, was taken to the Setons’ Edinburgh home and ensconced in a small glass case on the drawing-room table.

One night a child visitor who knew nothing of the bone was terrified by seeing a strange figure walk across the landing into the drawing-room. A lady who was a guest in the house also saw a figure, and her description tallied with the child’s. First Sir Alexander fell ill, then his wife, their child, the nurse and the maid. Alone in the house one night Sir Alexander suffered from a feeling of such frightful and inexplicable panic, “the dread of knowing one was not alone,” that he left the house next day and stayed with friends.

Sir Alexander packed the bone for posting to Egypt. He went out and on his return found the parcel had been damaged by a fall, caused conceivably by the cat; none of the family had been at home. He restored the bone to its glass case on the table. “It was from that moment that we began hearing things, feeling things.”

Three witnesses saw the bone in its usual place at two o’clock on the afternoon of the final act of the drama. Perhaps half an hour later when Sir Alexander opened the closed door of the empty drawing-room he found on the thick pile carpet a clear two or three feet from the table the half-pound plinth on which the glass case had stood and the case itself, with its four sides and the bone completely shattered. He concluded: “I can only assume that the

old story that the Egyptians particularly had powers of cursing anyone who disturbed their earthly remains, had something in it.”

Theosophy affirms that there is indeed “something in” many folk belief branded by the sophisticated as superstition; not only affirms but explains.

One aspect of it is explained in “A Night of Many Wonders,” an article that appeared many years ago in the *New York World*. It is an account given by a well-known Russian lady and a great traveller, of an event that took place in the Desert, and written by a fellow of the Theosophical Society, and appeared in *The Theosophist*, April 1884.

[Taken from *The Theosophical Movement*, August 1937.]

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The belief that the Egyptians had the power to curse anyone, who disturbed their earthly remains could be understood in the light of the explanation in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which says that “belief in immortality and physical resurrection was central to Egyptian religion.” There was “a belief that when all of the elements that were present in life—soul, name, shadow, heart, and body—were reunited, the person would be resurrected, as the god Osiris was after his brother killed and dismembered him.” Hence, it is necessary to have all the parts of the body, as the missing part of the physical body would make resurrection, or “rising in the body,” impossible. Hence, in the above anecdote the ghost of the dead person was seen visiting the place where a bone from his dead body was brought. In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 69) H.P.B. describes apparitions of “unrestful ‘souls,’ hovering about the spots where they were murdered, or coming back for some other mysterious reasons of their own.” Often these apparitions are drawn to a particular spot by some attraction or association.

H.P.B. observes that when a person dies a violent death, the last thought of such a person may be so strong that the tragedy may be re-enacted a thousand times before the thought fades out. In the article, “A Night of Many Wonders,” we are given several examples

of ghosts which are but objectivization of the last thought of a dying person. The article mentions the newspaper report of a man who committed suicide in his bathroom. A friend ran for a doctor, against the will and wish of the dying man. On the way he was startled at seeing for a moment the image of the dying man, clad only in his nightshirt, grasping his pistol and bleeding from his death wound. It was at a considerable distance from the house. The apparition disappeared almost instantly. It was corroborated by many eye-witnesses. It was the intense desire of the dying man to stop his friend that became objective, as the astral man left the physical.

Such an apparition could be produced by the conscious or unconscious thought of the dying person and is known as *mayavi rupa*. *Mayavi rupa* is described as “walking thought.” It can pass anywhere and can travel many miles away from the body. But the article points out that there are ghosts and ghosts. The other kind of ghosts are the astral remains of a person, known as *kamarupic* shell. It is the astral body with lower desires and thoughts of the dead person impressed upon it.

Cremation, *i.e.*, burning the body by lighting the fire or in an electric crematorium is considered to be the best method of disposing of the physical body as it facilitates quick disposal of the physical body, and which in turn helps to separate psychic body or *Kamrupic* shell from the physical body. Mr. Judge writes: “Cremation has no direct effect on any of the sheaths or vehicles, but it must have the indirect effect of freeing the astral form from the influence of the material body and thus give the astral a chance to more quickly dissipate.” In case of burial, it is quite likely that the astral body remains attracted to the physical form. Thus, in the above case, when the physical remains were disturbed, and a bone from the dead body was brought home, it could also have been the *kamarupic* shell (ghost) of the deceased woman that was seen wandering in the house of Sir Alexander.

“The death of the body means a return of the ‘Lives’ of the body to their respective elements. In cremation this return is immediate.

The Ego then has no point of physical contact and is free to work out and assimilate of the last life lived” (*Theosophy*, March 1929). Thus, it appears that not only the *kamarupic* shell, but also the Ego may remain attracted, for some time, to the physical form it had inhabited in the life just ended. H.P.B. mentions a curious case of suspended animation, in which the dead man revived on his own when the burial party was attacked by robbers. Suspended animation is that state from which the patient spontaneously recovers, through an effort of his own spirit, which may be provoked by any one of many causes. In these cases, the astral body has not parted from the physical body; its external functions are simply suspended; the subject is in a state of torpor, and the restoration is nothing but a recovery from it. This recovery from the state of torpor can happen as a result of a great shock. This shock could often be the fear of desecration of the physical form. The resuscitation of the dead man is explained by saying that the soul was hovering at that moment near the dead body. When the burial party were attacked by robbers, they were frightened, and their fright was communicated sympathetically to the soul that hovered near the body. “The soul was seized with horror at the idea of its remains being desecrated, re-entered violently into its body to raise it and save it,” writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 485)

“The Boarded Window,” is a short story by Ambrose Bierce, of a man named Murlock who lived alone in his cabin and was found dead one day. He was buried near the cabin next to his wife. The narrator tells that in 1820, Murlock had returned from hunting to find his wife in dire fits that eventually caused her to die. He found himself alone with her dead body, and later fell asleep. At that moment came in through the open window a long, wailing sound, perhaps it was a wild beast. When he awoke he felt some other presence in the room, and he could feel the table shake, but could not see clearly in the dark. He fired his rifle to see what was going on, and witnessed a panther dragging his wife by the neck. Upon examining the wife’s corpse, he saw that there was a part of the panther’s ear in between her teeth. Some have interpreted the story

to mean that Murlock incorrectly thought that his wife was dead. Here again it could be the case of apparent death or suspended animation, so that the soul that could have been hovering in the vicinity of the body, might have been shocked at the thought of the panther desecrating the body, and so entered it temporarily, fought the panther, to protect the body.

The disasters may be ascribed to the elementals that guard the earthly remains of the dead, and act in accordance with the wish of the dying. It is comparable to what is said of buried treasures. In some cases, very strong desires are fastened to the buried treasure and the person or persons burying the treasure may have wished that the treasure must be restored back to them and none other. In the article, “Can Stones Carry a Curse?” (*The Theosophical Movement*, January 1959), mention is made of the 44½-carat blue Hope diamond, which was taken to France, in 1642, by a French Adventurer, Jean Tavernier, from Krishna river mines in India. Some say that it was dislodged from the forehead of an idol. Whatever may be the truth, tragedy or great misfortune has befallen many of its possessors. These disasters have included being torn to pieces by wild dogs (Tavernier’s fate), murder, suicide, fatal accident, destitution, and, in the case of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, death on the guillotine. One of the explanations is to be found in the power of human will, which is described as the greatest of all magnets. H.P.B. points out that by a determined concentration of the will, an inert object, such as stone or paper or cloth could be imbued with protective or destructive power. A talisman is a piece of cloth or paper or stone which is imbued with pure magnetism and carries potency for good so as to protect the person carrying it, from every evil influence and calamity. On the other hand, a curse laid on the inert object could bring about disasters on the possessor of the object.

THE LIVING POWER OF THEOSOPHY

WHAT does Theosophy mean to students of the philosophy? To live in accordance with its eternal and ethical principles is certainly uphill work for all those who are in earnest. How can Theosophy become a living, vital force in the world of men? It may appear to some that the impact of the Theosophical Movement upon the affairs of men is hardly noticeable. Is this really true? The object of H.P.B.'s mission was in the first place to make the world aware of the very existence of a body of knowledge which she called Theosophy.

Students are brought to the realization that words of Truth and Wisdom are also words of power, for Truth is life-giving. These words have to be made alive in the innermost recesses of one's being. The teachings of Theosophy were never meant for head-learning; nor were they given for the benefit of a few chosen individuals. They contain the *seeds* of all possible growth. The lack of response shown by superficial enquirers may be struck by the greatness and beauty of an idea, or the heart moved by the wisdom and compassion of great living beings, and this is enough to start him on an entirely new path. How many have not had their outlook on life completely changed by the sudden realization of a truth, the import of which might be missed by another! Thus a small seed almost inadvertently dropped into the right soil might in time grow and fructify. Theosophy is life-giving because it is so rich in those germs of truth which, if given out generously and bountifully to the world, may result in a rich harvest, in the sense that more hearts and minds may become devoted to the cause of truth and to the living of a purer and more humane life.

The teachings of H.P.B. have a redemptive effect on the mind. The *Manas* of the race has grown in a curiously misshapen fashion and has to be attended to with care and love. True seed-ideas germinate and thrive only in the soil of compassionate love. This is a fact of the spiritual life. Love is indispensable in the work of creation. The mind shapes into form that which has first been uttered

by the heart. As the heart is vital centre in the physical body, so is true love or compassion the living focus, on the plane of our true inner being, whence radiate life-giving rays. Compassion does not spring up from weak and diseased heart and souls; it is the firm and vibrant language of the diamond-hearted ones. It bespeaks absolute purity and perfect light. It is only such hearts that can sustain the mind in its work of creation, destruction and regeneration, the three aspects of life eternal. It can be said that the perfect assimilation of the spirit of the teachings enables the disciple in time to vibrate in unison and harmony with the spirit of life itself.

H.P.B. did not come to start a new religion or even a new philosophy. Here was a different and rather a unique task. She was the true magician whose words of love and power could stir to new life long-forgotten spiritual truths and aspirations. She made man feel his greatness and power, showing by deeds the extent of his capacity. Her own genius fills one with sheer wonder. Was she herself a living example of what she taught?

If only a few could tap that true life of Theosophy, then indeed would they transform and help men to see and hear from a different angle. The word "action" would take a new meaning. It is because students of Theosophy are not true to themselves and therefore also to the spirit of the message that they do not see their way more clearly. It is obvious that in our world today the word "ethics" needs rethinking, to say the least. For men do great wrongs without knowing it; yet is it not felt at the same time that the voice of the inner god is not completely smothered? Is not the task, therefore, a most worthy one? Is not the outlook of the spiritual man essentially an optimistic one, always trusting the good in others, in friends and foes alike? Did not the Masters and H.P.B. place great faith in human nature when they struck again the first notes of the ageless wisdom? That wisdom brings the message of faith and trust, whatever the outside circumstances might appear to be. For the real work is undertaken on the plane of being which is beyond the reach of the wicked and selfish.

The knowledge made available to us comprised also the fact that there exist in the world highly evolved beings whose moral stamina, Will and faith would rouse others to listen to the words of wisdom, which are also words of power. Can we find a more comforting idea than that of the existence of a living fraternity of perfect human beings who form an unbroken chain round the globe, and that even at his darkest hour no man is left completely without succour or hope?

All those who genuinely deplore the blackness of the age and the depths of misery and ignorance in which so many live, are offered the opportunity to share in the redemptive work. It implies being a living and shining centre, a nucleus. For, to serve and help, though in silence and unthanked, is real life, and to live for self alone is death. In the last analysis, what counts in that self-redemptive work is not so much rushing out “to do, to do,” but the will *to be*. In order to be, one has first to live in spirit by conforming one’s life to the highest ideals conceived or conceivable at any particular time. It is said that to be born as a man is not easy. Are we going to miss the wonderful opportunity we have as human beings by not attending to the divine in us?

To appreciate the Theosophical Movement at its true worth it is of paramount importance to keep in view the distinction between Theosophy and all human endeavours to apply and practise it. “Human nature prevails generally.” When Theosophical endeavours are recognized to be just such, and no more, then there is less likelihood of Theosophy being misconceived or students led astray. The history of the Theosophical Movement unfortunately reveals a multitude of mistaken notions resulting from identifying Theosophy with the follies of human nature. The consequence is a confusion of what has all too often gone under the name of Theosophy with Theosophy itself. Hence the question “Is this Theosophy?” becomes a vital one for deep and thorough search and meditation.

To understand a Movement which exists to enlighten man, human nature has to be seen and understood for what it is. But that is not

all. The potentialities of the godlike and the perversity of the demoniacal natures—both under the Law of Karma—have to be discerned. Possibilities of Divinity lie in all. This is no mere figment of imagination. It is the sole hope for mankind.

The Theosophical Movement can be attributed to no one individual. “Where thought has struggled to be free, wherever spiritual ideas, as opposed to forms and dogmatism, have been promulgated,” there is to be discerned the Theosophical Movement. On the rock of personality individuals and organizations often founder. This is because the personal element in any situation can be ceaselessly self-deceiving. Therefore, in Theosophy so much emphasis is placed on the profound fact that “Truth...is alone eternal and supreme.” However, impersonality does not imply any indifference to the performance of duty. Nor does it mean ceasing to love the good and the noble among men. Non-self-identifying attachment for the members of a family, for instance, never meant a disavowal of Karmic human relations.

Theosophy is Spiritual Knowledge, the science of life and the art of living. Hence it demands devotion to the light that comes from *within*. Therefore, genuine loyalty is above all due to that which is True, while gratitude is that sterling quality of character which manifests itself as true devotion.

Theosophy can be made a living power in life when it is realized that “living truth” is the truth we live, not what anyone may think or say or do about it. Let each one strive simply to be and do his or her best. Keep in view the true and highest interest of mankind, or that portion of it which under Karma we may truly serve. “To practise, to learn, to live, for and as the All—is to manifest the Living Power of Theosophy. This living power of Theosophy lies latent, buried deep down, in the heart of every man. Therefore everyone who is not a Theosophist is a Theosophist in embryo,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

MASTERS—I

[These extracts were originally published in *The Theosophical Movement* magazine during the years 1954-1965 under the title “Extracts from Unpublished Letters.” In these extracts student-aspirants are likely to find practical suggestions and hints in applying Theosophy in their daily lives. “The experience of one student is, on the whole, the experience of all. Details differ, however.”]

OF COURSE it is only through H.P.B that the lost knowledge about the living presence and loving labour of the Masters has come to us. But in very many places those like Judge, Damodar, etc., have written out of their knowledge and experience and this is a great aid. Feeling the Master is not a mundane, emotional experience; it is the Higher Feeling—we do not see, but we *feel*. It is a memory and an anticipation. We have known the Lodge and the Brothers in ages past. They brought to birth self-consciousness in us and imprinted Fiery Wisdom which we now name innate ideas. It is of the substance of Divine Intuition. This latent memory is awakened by a contact with Theosophy in particular, and with mysticism, etc., in general. Definite knowledge about the Masters is possible. But to begin with, you need theoretical knowledge acquired by study and that inward experience in Faith felt, known and realized.

The Masters ought not to remain for you abstractions. They are Living Men. A re-study of our *Pamphlet No. 13*, [A pamphlet containing articles: 1. Genius 2. Mahatmas and Chelas 3. Are Chelas Mediums?], the whole of it, will prove useful. Their own letters reveal Their human side; these do not reveal Their Divinity so very well, for that is hidden behind Their humanity. No doubt physical-plane contact has its advantages, but it also has its grave dangers. “Seek not for thy Guru in the pleasure-ground of senses,” and it is equally significant if we take the other number of the pair and say, “Seek not for thy Guru in the pain-ground of senses,” for They are of the substance of Joy, *Ananda*. In the Hall of Wisdom, *i.e.*, in the

detachment created by meditation-study in *Jagrat* and thence proceeding to *Sushupti*, we can touch Their real nature. Our Theosophical work often becomes irksome because we proceed by worldly ways instead of turning within to the calm of *Manas* which follows the detachment of *Antahkarana* and is followed by the Compassion of *Buddhi*. Imagination in *Jagrat* aids the passage to realization of Them as Beings of Power, Holiness and Compassion. The Higher Self is difficult to reach, as Judge says. Therefore seek the Bridge, the Masters. Make Them real, make Them a part and portion of all your waking hours. There are strength and bliss in the very effort.

It is through the Higher Mind that Masters can be realized. But in that Mind, on its plane, we, so to speak, already know Them. The Life is to be lived here; the *personal* life has to be transformed, made porous, as Judge says. Our tempers and moods, our temperament, these *have* to be attended to. In hours of study and meditation we may feel Them; it is in the routine of hourly events that They should be felt. The outer world can be shut off in periods of study and meditation. How not to be affected by it when writing letters and reading proofs, and how to feel Them in such tasks, is our problem. Therefore, it is not only thought but *life—prana*, if you please—which is needed. Thought brings them to the mind, but how to embody the feeling and memory of Them in our vocations and in our recreations? How to understand and utilize Their ubiquitous nature? We forget all about Them, Their very existence, when eating and sitting and doing our routine chores. To live the Life, now and here, is our task, and both now and here are *continuous*. We have to struggle here against the world; we are caught and shuttered by and in it. Keeping a quiet mind, a deliberate attitude, and using the presence of calmness which ideation upon Them creates—that is our solemn duty.

As to our remembrance in the affairs of life of the existence of the Master: It is true that we have to make the Master the sole object of devotion. It cannot be done as speedily as we wish. The faculty

of right remembrance is the clue. Remembering the Master more and more because we aspire to gain His Eye, His Ear and His Speech or guidance, we must come to the recognition that He is all the time everywhere, in all our affairs. Nitya Guru, He who is our Guide and Friend, the giver of Karma and Dharma, reveals also His ubiquitous nature—this is the ideal and we have by our earnestness attracted His recognition. We do feel inspiration in an increasing way—breadthwise and depthwise.

We should not expect recognition from the Masters even when we have become devotees. All that I would advise you is: go on in silence and secrecy with study and reflection. Universalize your mind; impersonalize your heart; work on your own personality. Your form of service—writing, correspondence, conversation, cultivating friends (*sat-sang*) should be persisted in. Steadfastness is triple—according to the *gunas*. Please reflect upon the verse in the *Gita* on *sattvic* steadfastness (holding power).

Masters teach, help, guide, instruct, inspire, bless. They leave chelas free to absorb, to osmose what they can, how they can; but They adjust, adjust the mind of the chela. They do not interfere with the chela's Karma but aid him to do his duty, his own Karma, and thus learn.

As to how we get ideas from Nirmanakayas and Adepts: Numerous are the grades and types of these Beings. There are those who are not fully evolved but are on their way to the Great Renunciation. The Beings who form the Guardian Wall are of one type. Some of these High Ones, it is said, continuously meditate, radiating Influences which may be absorbed by whosoever is consubstantial. They do not direct these at this or that person. Similarly the Mahatmas, including our Blessed Masters, send out thoughts, and these fall on any member of the human race. Then there are men in this world who have done noble work, *e.g.*, Lincoln, Gandhiji, etc., who receive specially formulated ideas. They may be compared to chelas of Masters who receive specific aid from their respective Gurus. Supposing you are writing an article; you

have become concentrated and the currents of your thought become consubstantial with what the Nirmanakayas or Mahatmas have ideated upon; then you catch the benign influence and you may not know anything about it; or, being an informed student of the Esoteric Philosophy, you may feel that some help was derived if not specifically given. That is one thing. Another: because of your devotion you may attract the attention of some Helper who may drop an idea to enable you to get along by developing it. Or, you are a chela who may be aided by your own Guru, unconsciously to yourself or deliberately, so that you become aware of the source.

The mantram words of H.P.B.—“Where thought can pass they can come”—are not only profound; they are true. Also, in the term “ubiquity” much is enshrined. For the ignorant it is entombed. Out of tombs we have to create our shrines. We live in the midst of death; this is not only true on the plane of gross matter and of the body. For us the truth is that we do not live; we keep company of the dead, having known and touched LIFE.

Individualized personalities are those of the great perfected Adepts. Mahatmas have personalities, but they are not personalities in the sense of our personalities. There is a division between our personalities and individualities. When a personality is purified and elevated and becomes a channel and an instrument of the individuality, then that personality is an individualized personality.

CAN the power to help of the *Mahatmas* be for any cause inhibited? The answer is, It can...If the channel through which water is meant to flow is stopped up, the water will not run there, but if a clear channel is provided the current will pass forward. Occult help from Masters requires a channel just as much as any other help does, and the fact that the currents to be used are occult makes the need for a channel greater. The person to be acted on must take part in making the channel or line for the force to act, for if we will not have it, they cannot give it.

—W. Q. JUDGE

UNDERSTANDING WISDOM OF GANDHI

Be what he may, once that a student abandons the old and trodden highway of routine, and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought—Godward—he is Theosophist; and original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth with “an inspiration of his own” to solve the universal problem.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

GANDHIJI was one such independent seeker after eternal truth—God—with an inspiration of his own. To the earnest seekers after truth, study of Gandhiji’s lucid account of his experiments in actively practicing of the virtues of truth, non-violence and continence, in his own life, is of inestimable value. Of eminent scholars we have many but relatively very few indeed are there at any time in the whole world who put into practice in full measure in their own lives the precepts of the religion they study and profess. This is not surprising because to give oneself over entirely and unreservedly to truth and non-violence requires a love of truth for its own sake and a self-abnegation, even martyrdom, and few are there who have the moral stamina to sustain it. He never claimed to be a saint. In fact, he registered strong protest against attaching the honourific title of *Mahatma*, to his name. He called himself a humble searcher after truth and an experimenter in the application of the three virtues in his private and public life. He openly admitted that he made mistakes in his search but learned from them and grew in experience. He said:

The only virtue I want to claim is Truth and Non-violence. I lay no claim to superhuman power. I want none. I wear the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of my fellow-beings wears, and am, therefore, as liable to err as any. (*The Mind of the Mahatma*, by R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao; Navjeevan Publishing House, p. 13)

Gandhiji was much misunderstood. He was called a man of fad, a crank, hallucinated, dogmatic, and so on. Those who thus accused him were intellectuals, and even those learned in *Shastras*,

and he is so accused even to this day. Obviously, they do not understand the meaning, philosophy and power of Non-violence and Truth to be the supreme power latent in everyone, which, if allowed to flower forth in us, is an irresistible spiritual power that can conquer all opposition, transform hatred and enmity into friendship. These two divine virtues are the very spirit and foundation of Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina, Christian, Islamic and many other old religions and philosophies, and are not his invention. The virtues of truth, non-violence and continence are to be practiced by everyone at all times, not merely by saints and yogis, according to the religious teaching. They have a scientific basis in the dynamic reality of higher life.

It is very easy to talk of *Ahimsa* and *Satya* but not easy to practice them in practical, everyday life, in all situations. To practice them requires conviction, moral and physical courage, unflinching will and determination, and purity of heart, mind and body, and sacrifice of personal self on the altar of Truth. Few indeed have the courage and moral stamina to attempt the task.

Gandhiji dared to practice them openly, sacrificing all considerations of personal comfort, reputation, and even his life. He experimented with their application in every situation, great or small, learning from mistakes, and growing all the time, which made him a man of highest character and integrity, immeasurably superior to mere scholars who talk, but dare not practice what they preach, and who quote learnedly from sacred texts which they will not apply. He thus unfolded latent divinity in him into an irresistible power which conquered hearts and minds of adversaries, evoked love of his countrymen and of the world.

Gandhiji is a rare devotee who exemplified in thought, word and deed, the divine virtues of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*. It is only such daring explorers of Truth that contribute to higher progress of mankind towards humanism and divinity.

What are Truth and Non-violence? Truth is unity of Self, *Atman*; it is essential Oneness of humanity, of all beings.

The man who is endued with this devotion and who seeth the unity of all things perceiveth the Supreme Soul in all things and all things in the Supreme Soul. He who seeth me [Krishna] in all things and all things in me looseneth not his hold on me and I forsake him not. And whosoever, believing in spiritual unity, worshippeth me who am in all things, dwelleth with me in whatsoever condition he may be. He, O Arjuna, who by the similitude found in himself seeth but one essence in all things, whether they be evil or good, is considered to be the most excellent devotee. (*Gita*, VI)

This is the Truth which Gandhi said he felt in every fibre of his body, by which he was guided in all things he said and did, and he saw divinity in all, especially in the poor and oppressed classes of society with whom he identified himself and served them. He was a true *Adwaitee*.

Logical corollary of truth-*Satya* is Non-violence-*Ahimsa*. There is none, including one's enemy, different from Self which is One, and, therefore, is part of Oneself. Therefore, to hurt anyone, to do any injustice to any creature, is violence, as it disturbs the harmony of life, convulses society, and hurts the offender himself.

To think and live in accordance with the perception and knowledge of the Unity of Self precludes harming even one's detractors and persecutors, but bless them, and forgive their transgressions, and do good to them in return. It is by this living the higher life that man elevates himself to godhood, transmutes enmity into friendship, and radiates from his own life spiritual influence, which regenerates his fellowmen. This is *Ahimsa*-Non-violence.

Karmic implication of observing the virtues of Truth and Non-violence in one's life, or their neglect, is deep and far reaching, which has a bearing on the destiny of the race.

We cannot recommend too strongly mercy, charity, and forgiveness of mutual offences. *Resist not evil*, and *render good for evil*, are Buddhist precepts, and were first preached in view of the implacability of Karmic law. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 198)

There are numerous pre-historic, historical and contemporary instances of the irresistible transforming power of Truth and Non-violence. Practice of non-violence is not appeasement and cowardice, as thought by many, but requires great moral and physical courage, and an unshakable faith in Truth-*Satya*-God. It elevates man to godhood.

In Gandhiji's criticism of western civilization in his little book *Hind Swaraj* we can glimpse the depth of his profound wisdom as to what constitutes true civilization. He said that whatever he wrote and said at any time in his life's journey God-ward was provisional, which he said he revised as his inner growth developed, thus approaching truth nearer each time. But, he said, as far as the views he expressed as regards the modern industrial civilization is concerned—which he called godless and satanic—was final and unalterable. Only those who truly apprehended the essence of the spiritual culture of ancient Aryavarta can appreciate the wisdom and truth of the evils of modern industrial civilization which he articulates with consummate skill, insight and convincing arguments. It is indeed remarkable that Gandhiji's critical view of modern material civilization perfectly coincides with those of H. P. Blavatsky. Gandhiji wrote:

Civilizations have come and gone, and in spite of all our vaunted progress, I am tempted to ask again and again, "To what purpose?" Wallace, a contemporary of Darwin, has said the same thing. Fifty years of brilliant inventions and discoveries, he has said, have not added one inch to the moral height of mankind. So said a dreamer and a visionary—Tolstoy. So said Jesus, and the Buddha, and Mahomed, whose religion is being denied and falsified in my own country today. (*The Mind of the Mahatma*, p. 233)

"Real culture is spiritual," wrote H. P. Blavatsky:

It proceeds from within outwards, and unless a person is naturally noble-minded and strives to progress on the spiritual before he does so on the physical or outward plane,

such culture and civilization will be no better than the whitened sepulchres full of dead men's bones and decay. (*H.P.B. Series No. 2, p. 36*)

He wrote *Hind Swaraj* in 1909 and the world has progressed phenomenally since then in science, technology and industrialism; and the world's problems too have grown *pari passu* with material development, which seem to threaten the very survival of the civilization itself.

He strongly advocated for India a decentralized socio-economic development and moral improvement of the nation with village as the basis and unit of development; the virtues of agro-based, labour-intensive cottage and village industries; production by the masses instead of mass production; simple living and high thinking. This is the model Gandhiji recommended and diligently worked for, which alone can bring equitable social and economic development which ensures work for all, together with moral improvement and spiritual development of the populace. The rich and the well-to-do would be the trustees of their possessions and talents which they would use for the welfare of the society as a whole, and for the uplift of the downtrodden. This is his philosophy of SARVODAYA.

The world is sick today with wars and violence, brutality, environmental pollution, corruption, terrible social evils and human degradation.

The one and the only means for humane, all-round development of man towards his higher possibilities as a moral and spiritual being is the development model conceived in Gandhiji's idea of Sarvodaya.

World will recognize this natural civilizational ideal one day—however far its consummation may be. Gandhiji justly said that his own life is a message. It truly is. The ancient living ideal of Truth, Non-violence and Continence, which he practiced, and set an example of their application in his own personal and public life to the whole world, will continue to inspire millions for centuries to come.

THE CONCEPT OF TIME

I

GENERALLY we reckon time in hours, minutes and seconds, following the rotation of the earth around its own axis. When the earth goes around the sun, it is one year, which gives us four seasons. But apart from this, there is a sense of time that is subjective. Besides defining time by the motion of the earth, we can define it in our conception. *Time is something created entirely by ourselves*, says a Master of Wisdom. Time seems to *fly* in happier moments, while it seems to drag on, ever so slowly, during painful experiences. Thus, one moment of intense agony may appear as an eternity to one person, while months and years may seem to fly like one brief moment to a person surrounded by bliss.

In one of the Yoga aphorisms, Patanjali speaks of the ultimate divisions of time, *i.e.*, moments (*kshana*) and the order in which these moments precede and succeed. The (*kshana*) or moment, that cannot be further subdivided, is smaller than a second, nanosecond or pico-second of science. It may be looked upon as minutest particle of time. We are aware of, and can distinguish, such periods as days or hours. There are born mathematicians who can perceive the succession of minutes and can tell without a watch how many minutes would have elapsed between any two given points in time. A yogi is able to distinguish between succession of *moments*.

In his comments on the above-mentioned aphorism, Shri B.K.S. Iyengar writes that moments succeed each other in sequence, and these sequences put together constitute time. Thus, moments are like spokes in the wheel of time. The movement of moments, in past, present and future constitutes chronological time. The yogi remains attentive to the moment and does not allow his attention to slip into the movement of moments and thus conquers chronological time, experiencing timelessness.

A different form of timelessness is experienced in the absence of a clock, watch, and even sunrise or sunset, which give some inkling

of the passage of time. In an article in the August 11, 2018 issue of *New Scientist* magazine, Laura Spinney recounts the experiment carried out by geologist Michel Siffre, in July 1962, who descended into the cave 130 metres below the surface, removing his watch, and with a torch as his only light source, deprived of all reminders of the passage of time, he lived underground, alone, for 63 days. Being a geologist, he had originally planned to study the glacier, but it turned out to be the first study of the human response to living with no information about time. Siffre was the first to show that our body might have its own clock. Since then, Chronobiology has become an important field of research. Without seeing day and night, and with phone as the only means of communication with those on the surface, he called them up on waking and before going to sleep. His perception of time had changed: “Two seconds passed, I perceived one,” said Siffre. Not just that, in the cave, his sleep-cycle, had increased to 24 hours and 30 minutes. He had gone to sleep and woken a little later each day, until he had become nocturnal—active during night.

In an article titled “Psychological Time,” in the November 1964 issue of *Scientific American*, the author John Cohen, comments on biological clocks, or living being’s innate sense of time. The ability to wake up “at a pre-appointed time, often just a few moments before the alarm clock goes off,” is given as a familiar human illustration of such a mechanism. Likewise, it is illustrated in animals, by the ability of the hibernating animals to enter into and emerge from hibernating state at definite time. These phenomena are caused by the associative power of memory, and memory is one of the results of time. H.P.B. states that memory is “simply an innate power in the thinking beings, and even in animals, of reproducing past impressions by an association of ideas principally suggested by objective things or by some action on our external sensory organs.” Our body is made up of atoms, and atoms are made up of “lives.” Every atom has a life and memory of its own. Memory in the “lives” when *innate* is called instinct. Instinct functions through readymade

nerve connections, which ensure that such-and-such a response will occur in a certain situation. In case of habit these nerve connections are made through exercise, when “lives” in the body are repeatedly given certain kind of impressions, day after day. There is periodical return of these impressions. If we eat at regular times, our digestive system is ready and active at that particular time, producing a feeling of hunger.

By paying attention to cyclic return of impressions, we can save time and effort in training of mind and body. If we eat at regular times, our digestive system is ready and active so that food is digested well. If we study at a fixed time every day, then mind comes ready for work so that more work gets done.

Without a watch or a clock we do not have an accurate perception of the passage of time. When one dozes off while travelling, judgment of the time interval becomes very erratic. So also, our judgment of time interval is warped during dream state. In a dream sent by a guru to the disciple, a tiger was pursuing him. The disciple had the feeling that he ran for many miles and for hours together. But when he was woken up from the dream, he realized that the actual time elapsed had been only a few minutes. It is very intriguing that a drowning man should see his whole life pass before his mind’s eye in a flash. For the Ego there is no past, present and future, but an Eternal Now, so that the soul in *Devachan* (*swarga* or paradise) experiences no passage of time, as is experienced during earth life. Mr. Judge writes:

Any man can see that after many years have slipped away he has no direct perception of time just passed, but is able to pick out some of the incidents which marked its passage, and as to some poignant or happy instants or hours he seems to feel them as but of yesterday. And thus it is for the being in *Devachan*. No time is there. The soul has all the benefit of what goes on within itself in that state, but it indulges in no speculation as to the lapse of moments. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 95)

Time, as we understand, is dependent on our consciousness, and

it is an illusion. Even if it is not admitted as an illusion, we can at least describe time as a function of consciousness. Time is but a by-product of consciousness. Thus, “Time is an illusion produced by the succession of our states of consciousness as we travel through eternal duration, and it does not exist where no consciousness exists in which the illusion can be produced; but lies asleep” (*S.D.*, I, 37). If we had no consciousness, as on the physical plane, when we are asleep, we should not be subject to this time process. If we had all-consciousness, then too, there could not be a time sense, but an experience of timelessness. In the experience of the seer and the mystic, past, present and future merge into the Eternal Now. Aldous Huxley writes: “But, alas, when he [mystic] emerges from his ecstasy, he finds the current still flowing—realizes that it has been flowing even while he imagined that he had altogether abolished it.” Even we mortals take no cognizance of time when we are completely engrossed in a task, or during periods of unalloyed happiness, just as *Devachanees* lose all sense of time because their cup of happiness is full to the brim.

The subdivisions of time are man-made and subjective. Continuous time, or rather duration is a symbol of One Reality, often described as the “ever-rolling stream.” In that un-resting continuance, seasons, birthdays, anniversaries, are but artificial marks set up by man for his own convenience. But for these marks, it is hard to see how man could be conscious of the flight of Time.

In Time there is constant change, it is a process, and yet underlying that process there is continuance. It is just like persistence of man’s identity. The personality—the body, the emotions, the thoughts change ceaselessly, but yet there is a continuity, and the man of sixty knows himself to have been the boy of six. Thus, there is a persistence of conscious identity, despite the processes of our conscious life. So also, the past is memory—retrospect; the present is experience—momentary; and the future is anticipation—prospect. But the experience of the present merges into the memory of the past, and the anticipation of the future materializes as the experience

of the present.

A Master of Wisdom says that “past, present and future” are clumsy words. The subdivisions, which seem natural, are man-made and purely subjective. It is impossible to point out the dividing line between the past and present, or the present and future. Even as we say, “now,” it has moved into the past. Our divisions of time are relative to the observer.

By means of analogies H.P.B. explains that we seem to have only an illusion of a present moment. What we call present is like a mathematical line which divides future from the past, both of which being part of the eternal duration. We can imagine a circle with a horizontal diameter which divides it into two. The upper half may be called future and the lower half may be called past. That which connects them both is just a thin mathematical line which we can call as present. As compared to the large portion occupied by the two halves, the space occupied by the thin line is very small. Before we know it, the future moment turns into the past. The term “duration” applies to that which has no beginning and no end. In that sense, we can never have an experience of “duration” while we exist in the phenomenal world. There is constant change or *nitya pralaya* going on. Nothing remains without change even for *the billionth part of a second*. Our sensation of “present” is really blurring of momentary glimpses, or succession of glimpses as given out by our senses, as those impressions pass from the region of future to the region of memories which we call past. It is comparable to what happens when we see an instantaneous electric spark.

Science tells us that the image persists on our retina for one-sixteenth of a second. Hence, even before the impression produced by an image has gone out, another one superimposes it, thereby producing the illusion of continuity. This is called “persistence of vision.” This principle is used in movies. It presents to us a series of still images in quick succession within certain time, thereby producing the illusion of actual movements. If someone rotates a sparkler in a circle or makes a figure of eight, our eye actually receives

images in quick succession, which persist on the retina, and produce an illusion of seeing a circle or a figure of eight made by the sparkler. Thus, we experience only a “sensation of duration” in what we term as “present” when the succession of moments are blurred so that we do not have perception of the beginning or the end of the moments as in case of the instantaneous electric spark. We may have similar experience when we are completely and deeply engrossed in some work and have lost all sense of time.

Teachers, down the ages, and especially, the new age gurus advise us to live in the present moment. Shri Iyengar points out that we are so habituated to fly from the present that the experience of trying to stay in the present moment, even for an hour, could be daunting. If we can live in the moment, whether it is good, bad or indifferent, without longing or sighing, then we are free. During periods of true bliss, when we forget the past and the future, we touch the Eternal. But we are unable to live in such a state for long, because memory of the past and anticipation of the future continually engulfs us. We look before and after and grieve over what has been and are unduly anxious about what is to be. Thus we miss the opportunities that are ours now. “Kill in thyself all memory of past experiences. Look not behind or thou art lost,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. The suggestion is to forget the emotional experiences attached to the past events that tend to take control of our mind and colour the present and the future. Once we have extracted the lesson from an event, we must let it pass without brooding over it. Our capacity to do good in the present is adversely affected when we dwell over the past, which drags us down from our present level of consciousness. Mr. Judge has said, “The Past! What is it? Nothing. Gone! Dismiss it. You are the past of yourself. In you, as now you exist, lies all the past. . . . Then regret nothing, not even the greatest follies of your life, for they are gone, and you are to work in the present which is both past and future at once.”

(To be continued)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What is really going on when we encounter uncanny connections? When the author was looking for a license plate for his son’s transportation-themed bedroom, he hit upon a 1938 plate, which was the same year when his father was born. He says that stumbling upon that plate at the moment when he was missing his father, and the fact that the plate led him to someone who was also missing his father, was not a mere coincidence, which is also the view of Psychiatrist Bernard Beitman, a visiting psychiatry and neuro-behavioural sciences professor at the University of Virginia, and a coincidence researcher. These coincidences indicate that we are all connected. Beitman says it is synchronicities, “indicators of an invisible network that connects everyone and everything.” He suspects that humans transmit some unobserved energetic information, which other people process or organize into emotion and behaviour. “Just as sharks have ampullae in their skin that detect small electromagnetic changes to help them locate their prey . . . it is possible, may be even probable, that humans have similar mechanisms that detect coincidences,” says Beitman. Though there is no evidence for this, Carl Jung and Austrian biologist Paul Kammerer seem to have pursued the same line of thinking.

Another explanation of coincidences is based on our brain’s need to seek pattern and order. A 2015 study published in *New Ideas in Psychology* reported that coincidences are “an inevitable consequence of the mind searching for causal structure in reality.” We try to seek similarities and patterns. And yet, it is not just recognizing the pattern that makes a coincidence, but also the meaning we ascribe to it. David Spiegelhalter, a risk researcher at the University of Cambridge says, “It is chance,” and claims that coincidences are in the eye of the beholder. He collects anecdotes of coincidences and has accumulated more than 5,000 stories since 2012 as part of an ongoing project. A classic example is given: In a room of 23 people, there is just over a 50/50 chance that two of

them will share a birthday. “Most of us would view that as an inexplicable coincidence, but mathematically law suggests that such events are random and bound to happen. Any meaning we attribute to them is all in our heads.” When people are predisposed to see a coincidence, then the brain sees a pattern that does not exist, says Beitman.

Regardless of what triggers coincidences, research suggests that they are more likely to happen to certain people. “People who describe themselves as religious or spiritual, those who are more connected with the world around them and those who are seeking meaning—or in distress and searching for signs—are more likely to experience coincidences,” says Beitman. According to a study in *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, published in 2002, people that are more likely to experience coincidences are also more likely to believe in the paranormal. “Keep a log of the coincidences that occur in your daily life. The more you notice coincidences, the more likely they are to happen to you,” writes Amy Paturel. (*Discover*, September 2018)

Our universe is an orderly universe governed by Law. However, we are not always able to understand the working of this Law. When we are unable to find any rational explanation or cause, we call it a *chance*. H.P.B. puts it thus:

Most certainly chance is *impossible*. There is no “chance” in Nature, wherein everything is mathematically co-ordinate and mutually related in its units. “Chance,” says Coleridge, “is but the pseudonym of God (or Nature), for those particular cases which He does not choose to subscribe openly with His sign manual.” Replace the word “God” by that of *Karma* and it will become an Eastern axiom. (*S.D.*, I, 653)

Many of the coincidences could be explained on the basis of premonitions when one becomes aware of the future event. It could be through Warning dreams or Prophetic dreams. For instance, a person dreaming of the death of a loved one, only a day before it

happens, or dreaming of a dog, which he sees later in his aunt’s house, could be explained on the basis of Warning or Prophetic dreams. Our Ego is omniscient on its own plane and sometimes succeeds in impressing our brains with the pictures of the future event during sleep.

Certain other seeming “coincidences” could be explained on the basis of telepathy or thought-transference. It is a common experience that another person speaks of a matter about which we are thinking. We may be thinking or speaking of another, and just then he appears unexpectedly. We write or may think of writing to someone and his or her letter arrives. Such occurrences are so frequent and common that we could not brush them aside as mere “coincidences.”

There are cases when two scientists, thinking along similar lines on the same subject, write about and make same discovery at the same time. Theosophy posits the existence of invisible register called Astral Light, on which all the thoughts, feelings and events of past, present and future are impressed. It is like a sensitive photographic plate. Hence, it acts as the repository of 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 gives meaning not only to the oft-recurring ‘coincidences’ of two or more inventors or scientists hitting upon the same ideas or inventions at about the same time and independently of each other, but also to other events and curious happenings,” writes Mr. Judge. (*Echoes from the Orient*, p. 62)

The Greek goddess of moon is Luna and she has given us the enigmatic word lunacy. There is a belief that moon and madness are somehow related. How does moon cause madness? Moon affects water bodies, and according to Aristotle, human body was largely made up of water. Lunar effect might be most manifest in the brain which is the seat of emotions and sanity, as it was very watery. Doctor Hippocrates wrote: “One who is seized with terror, fright and madness during the night is being visited by the goddess of the

moon.” John Milton also refers to moonstruck madness in *Paradise Lost*, saying, “When the moon is in the full, then wit is in the wane.” Thus, “An imaginary mechanism was fabricated. The moon works its mischievous magic by disrupting the alignment of water molecules in the nervous system!” writes Dr. A. P. Jayaraman.

However, science claims that gravitational force of the moon affects only open bodies of water, like lakes and oceans. It does not affect contained sources of molecularly bound water such as that found in the human brain. Astronomers who have assessed the impact of gravitational force of the moon on our body say that the force exerted by moon is very negligible as compared to earth, which exerts 5012 times more force on a person than the moon. Scientists are communicating observations made during lunar eclipses to help people cultivate a rational world view. But in spite of all the scientific explanations, superstitions and misconceptions about the moon persist. “Studies conducted thus far have failed to provide credible evidence showing any correlation between lunacy and the full moon. There are five factors that provide insight into why people believe in the lunar lunacy effect: media effects, folklore and tradition, misconceptions, cognitive biases and community reinforcement,” writes Dr. Jayaraman. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, September 30, 2018)

Doctors and nurses have claimed, for many years, that full moon nights are busier, crazier and more dangerous than other nights. Is the connection merely psychological? Traditions and folklore help to keep alive certain truths in the memory of ordinary people. Many traditions are universal. The moon acts perniciously upon the mental and bodily constitution of people in more than one way. In the article, “Whence the name Lunatic?” H.P.B. observes that it has been proved by a series of experiments that even a person of remarkably strong nerves could not sit, lie or sleep for a long time in a room lit by moonlight without injury to health. There exists a connection between phases of the moon and various plant, animal and human diseases. Lord Bacon used to fall down senseless at the beginning of every lunar eclipse and returned to consciousness only when it

was over. Charles the Sixth, in 1399, became a *lunatic* at every new moon and at the beginning of the full moon. An intimate connection has been observed between certain nervous diseases, such as epilepsy and neuralgia, with certain phases of the moon, and the cure for that is the sun.

The moon is the parent of the earth. For being constantly vampirized by her child, the earth, the moon revenges herself by soaking the earth, through and through, with the nefarious, invisible, and poisoned influence which emanates from the occult side of her nature. “For she is a *dead*, yet a *living body*. The particles of her decaying corpse are full of active and destructive life.” (*S.D.*, I, 156) Our astral body, the design body for the physical, is the gift of the lunar pitris, the advanced beings from moon, showing an intimate relation between the moon and astral body, which in turn is connected with *Kama* and *Prana*. In cases of incurable insanity, the connection of the lower and higher man is destroyed forever (it is only *paralyzed* in temporary insanity), and the lower mind functions on the *astral plane*. This may perhaps explain why during full moon nights, insane people become more insane.

According to an article in the magazine *Nautilus*, though there is a common belief that high IQ equals genius, Dean Keith Simonton, a psychology professor at the University of California, says that the IQ-genius correlation is a fallacy. It appears that you do not need high IQ to be a genius. Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton are considered geniuses. Can we consider Samuel Morse, who gave us Morse Code and Henry Ford, who found faster way to make cars, also to be geniuses? The Oxford dictionary defines genius as “exceptional intellectual or creative power or other natural ability.” This definition does not say that to be a “genius” one needs an IQ above 150. In a Stanford study that started in the 1920s, researchers tracked the careers of 1,528 children with extremely high IQ, the average IQ of the group being 151. If high IQ equals genius then most of them would have grown to be eminent scientists, writers,

leaders, composers, painters, etc. “But none of them grew up to become what many people would consider unambiguous exemplars of genius.”

On the other hand, some “rejects,” children who did not score high in IQ tests, shone bright. One of them was Luis Alvarez, whose work on hydrogen bubble chambers for study of elementary particles, won him the physics Nobel Prize. James Watson, the co-discoverer of DNA’s structure, Cervantes, who wrote *Don Quixote*, and Copernicus, who showed that the Sun was at the centre of the solar system, did not have high IQ. “The highly eminent can have IQs lower than average, and supremely high IQs can be associated with relative obscurity,” says Simonton. (*Sunday Times of India*, October 14, 2018)

We may correlate creativity with genius. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* a creative person relies strongly on intuition instead of adopting rational approach while solving the problems of life. Above a certain level, intelligence seems to have little correlation with creativity, *i.e.*, a highly intelligent person may not be as highly creative. The Nineteenth-century British scientist Sir Francis Galton, used the term “genius” to designate creative ability of an exceptionally high order. Talent refers to a native aptitude for some special kind of work and implies a relatively quick and easy acquisition of a particular skill. Genius involves originality, creativeness, and the ability to think and work in areas not previously explored and thus to give the world something of value it would not otherwise possess.

H.P.B. sums up the idea in the article, “Genius.” What is the difference between the ordinary man, an idiot and a genius? The Ego in each of these cases is of the same essence and substance. No Ego differs from another Ego, in its essential nature. That, which makes one person a great individual and another a silly person is the capability of the brain and body to transmit and give expression to the light of the *Inner man* within, writes H.P.B.