

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 9, No. 6

October 17, 2017

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

ENDS AND MEANS	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	9
SATYAKAMA—SON OF JABALA	
STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA	14
THE TREE OF LIFE—I	
THE STATUES OF EASTER ISLAND	19
“MAN, KNOW THYSELF”	23
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	28
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

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ENDS AND MEANS

THE ENDS are the goals or the final results. The means are the methods used to achieve the ends. When we say the means are more important than the ends, it implies, among other things, that *how* we do something is more important than *what* we achieve. Mr. Judge advises, “It is not *what* is done, but the *spirit* in which the least thing is done that is counted.” The attitude of mind and the motive, and also readiness to put in one’s best effort is important. There is the well-known story that when *Ramsetu*, a bridge, was being built over the sea, for Rama and the army of monkeys to go to Lanka, a little squirrel was tirelessly bringing small pebbles to aid in building that bridge. The monkeys pulled out rocks and heavy stones from the mountains and carried them to the sea. The monkeys made fun of her when she said, “I am helping Rama build the bridge.” But Rama was very pleased with her work, and reprimanded the monkeys, saying, “Your strength or what you do is not important to me. What matters is your love.” He lifted her and stroked her back with his fingers, and that is how the squirrel is said to have got her stripes.

On the other hand, “a means to an end,” is an idiom. For instance, for some people, their job in the office may be only means to an end—a means to achieve the goal of monetary gains. Words are means to an end; the *end* being conveying of ideas. But how often we find people getting entangled in words, taking them to be ends

in themselves, clinging to the letter and not the spirit of the teachings? “A man wants to earn money in order to be happy, and his whole effort and the best of a life are devoted to the earning of that money. Happiness is forgotten; the means are taken for the end,” writes Albert Camus.

The Buddha teaches that *Dharma* in all its aspects is a means to an end. A boat enables us to cross the river, and once the river is crossed, we do not carry the boat on our head, but leave it at the shore. Likewise, if we begin to regard ethical rules or religious observances, which include meditation and the study of scriptures, as ends in themselves, then they become fetters, which need to be broken. In the journey towards spiritual perfection, every religious tradition speaks of certain stages, which are landmarks for spiritual growth. Buddhism mentions ten fetters which binds a person to the wheel of life and death. One of these fetters is *silavrata-paramarsa* or ethical rules and religious observances as ends in themselves. *Sila* is an ethical observance, or ethical rule. Thus, “you must not take life” is an ethical rule, and a non-vegetarian breaks the rule of “not taking life.” So, some vegetarians seem to think that meat eaters are sinners and cannot be spiritual. It is an old and true saying that the kingdom of God cometh not from taking or refraining from meat, nor from the refraining from anything whatever, but that it is *within us*. In other words, one cannot claim to be spiritual, only because he is a strict vegetarian—cows and elephants are also vegetarians! Wicked and gross thoughts are more harmful than the eating of a ton of flesh. Not eating meat is only a means to an end, because animal food necessarily imparts to the eater qualities of the animal. Also, eating meat tends to make the physical body grosser and denser, which proves to be a hindrance, when one has reached a higher stage in one’s spiritual development.

In his essay “The Three Parts of Morality,” Prof. C. S. Lewis explains, using a metaphor, that ultimately good moral behaviour in an individual or the society, by itself is useless unless it leads to attainment of the goal of human life. He asks us to think of humanity

as “a fleet of ships sailing in formation.” The voyage will be a success only if, in the first place, *the ships do not collide and get in one another’s way*; and secondly, if *each ship is seaworthy and has her engines in good order*. He says that even if these two aspects are ascertained, the most important question to ask is, where the fleet is trying to get to. However well the fleet sailed, its voyage would be a failure if, it were meant to reach New York, but actually arrived at Calcutta. Applying this to morality, he says that the practice of ethics must lead to harmonizing the things inside each individual; fair play and harmony between individuals, and ultimately, must help achieve the general purpose of human life as a whole. This demonstrates that even if the “means” are good and legitimate, if the end is not achieved then they are useless. Albert Einstein wrote, “Perfection of means and confusion of goals seem, in my opinion, to characterize our age.”

But often, when we are focused on achieving a certain “end” or result, we tend to pay little or no attention to the method or means employed to achieve the desired end; bent on achieving “by hook or by crook,” or “by fair means or foul.” In vernacular languages there is a saying that if you cannot remove ghee (clarified butter) from a vessel, with a straight finger, then you must *bend* your finger to remove it. And often the unfair and unethical means are justified saying, “the end justifies the means.”

The phrase “the end justifies the means,” is attributed to the Florentine statesmen and political thinker, Niccolo Machiavelli, and he is said to have advocated this doctrine in his book “The Prince.” It is a controversial phrase, being continually debated and discussed, as it seems to suggest that for achieving a good end one can go to any extent, and even use violence, if necessary. But ends cannot justify the means, as there are certain fundamental principles such as “right,” “good,” “absolute justice,” etc., and we cannot justify violating them just because we have a good goal in mind. Gandhiji emphasized that “ends” cannot justify the “means.” Robin Hood, a heroic outlaw in English folklore, said to rob from the rich and give

to the poor, may be regarded as an example of the “end” does not justify the “means.” Can we justify the beating of children to “correct” them, so that they grow up to be upright individuals? Euthanasia or “Mercy-killing” is often justified by claiming that it is done to relieve suffering. We justify vivisection and animal experiments, saying that they are for the benefit of humanity. Prof. C. S. Lewis argues that it is not right that one species should suffer for the happiness or comfort of another. If human beings claim their right to torment animals, just because they are higher than animals, by that very superiority they should be better than the beasts and abstain from inflicting pain. If we must torture them in order to improve human life or relieve human pain, it is our grave responsibility to live a life of such superior order as to justify the sacrifice of those animals. If we use the medicines which are directly made from animal extracts or take advantage of techniques, which are evolved as a result of torturing or killing animals, we are party to it and are giving an indirect consent to the killing of animals. Hence, Buddha says, “One should neither slay nor *cause to slay*.”

The philosopher Immanuel Kant said that it is immoral to use another person merely as a means to an end, and that people must under all circumstances, be treated as *ends in themselves*. This means we should not use other individuals as means to benefit ourselves or others. It also means that a human being is *intrinsically* valuable, and his value does not depend upon whether he enjoys life or makes other people’s life better. Thus, if every human being is an end in himself, or every human life is intrinsically meaningful and worthwhile, then suicide or euthanasia cannot be justified. If we extend this idea to the animal kingdom, then animals too must be treated as ends in themselves, and then vivisection and poaching (killing for money or for mere sport) can never be justified.

But this does not imply that we never use people as means to our ends. In fact, human existence depends upon our using others, and others using us, and which we call interdependence. For instance, we are indebted to many people, even for our morning cup of tea

and bread. Since there are plumbers, electricians and servants, we save time and energy. In our turn, we must contribute by utilizing the time saved for the good of others.

The general tendency is to claim that the end or the goal justifies the means, and that moral considerations cannot apply to the means except in relation to the ends. Gandhiji, on the other hand, states that the only thing we have completely within our control is the “means,” and not the ends. Hence, it is means, rather than the ends, that provide the standard of morality. Different means will lead to different ends. For instance, violence and non-violence are morally different in quality and essence, and they must necessarily achieve different results. Thus, if the independence of a country is acquired by violence, then the country thus created will be based on violence, and it will be pacific if the means are non-violent. If one seeks peace, justice and harmony, then one must employ means that are peaceful, just and harmonious to achieve those ends. Aldous Huxley wrote in his book, *Ends and Means*, that consequences of the use of violence towards any end, however admirable, is and must be—more violence. Thus, the means which people adopt to achieve an ideal society of liberty, peace, justice and brotherly love, must themselves reflect, to a certain extent, the ideals they are trying to realize. He writes, “The end cannot justify the means, for the simple and obvious reason that the means employed determine the nature of the ends produced.” One of the Aphorisms on Karma says that “the effect is wrapped up in and is not succedent to the cause.” Hence, no matter how good the effect or result may appear to be outwardly, or from the utilitarian point of view, it cannot and would not be something *intrinsically* good, when improper means are used. For Huxley, “Good is that which makes for unity; Evil is that which makes for separateness.”

Yet, good and evil are *relative* terms. It is difficult to compartmentalize and classify a wholly good and a wholly bad act. We need to take into account the motive, the means, the inner state of the person. It is true that there are *universal* ethics and morals that

guide us as to right and wrong or good and bad conduct. They are the *categorical imperatives*. Also, there are actions that are forbidden by the scriptures. Then, there are actions that are recommended to be performed, such as acts of *Dana* (charity), *Tapas* (mortification) and *Yajna* (sacrifice). But a close observation reveals that acts of charity, asceticism and sacrifice are not always wholly good. There is false asceticism, like piercing of cheeks or standing on one leg. There are useless sacrifices which H.P.B. describes as a crime of folly. She gives the example of Christian missionaries who sacrificed their lives in South Sea Islands to spread Christianity, trying to give philosophy to people (irresponsible cannibals and savages) who were not yet ripe for any truth and were killed in turn. H.P.B. points out that one of the fundamental rules of Theosophy is, justice to oneself. The guiding principles are: One can sacrifice himself only if by the sacrifice of one person many are going to be benefitted. When one gives out large sums of money to earn merit (*punya*) or with the intention of gaining name and fame, or makes a charity to wrong persons at the wrong time, it can hardly be regarded as a *wholly* good action. Take another example, a person hypnotizes another to cure him, but in the process interferes with his free will. There are stories which suggest that if our speaking the truth is going to cost a person his life, it may perhaps be wise to keep silent or even tell a falsehood.

Looked at from the spiritual perspective, good action is that which is pleasing to the “god” within. Human suffering and adversities of life must be put in a wider perspective. Pain gives us an opportunity to build our character—to eliminate defects and incorporate virtues. We love to hear stories of people who have been transformed by their misfortunes. It is important to recognize and appreciate the transforming power of pain and adversities in judging good and bad, means or ends. We need to meditate upon this profound statement from H.P.B., “it takes a very wise man to do good works without the danger of doing incalculable harm.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT SATYAKAMA—SON OF JABALA

THE STORY of Satyakama, the truth-seeker, appears in *Chhandogya* Upanishad. Satyakama is a young man eager to take the vow of a *brahmacharya* (celibacy), and go out in search of Reality. He knew that the first question that any guru would ask would be about his *gotra* and parentage. Hence, before he went in search of a teacher, he had enquired of his mother, “What is my *gotra* or lineage?” The mother had answered that she did not know his *gotra*, because as a young and wandering housemaid, serving here and there, she had begotten him. However, she told her son that he could tell his *guru* that he was Satyakama Jabala, as her own name was Jabala. The would-be-*guru* was very pleased to hear the truth from Satyakama, and accepted him as his disciple. The story goes that Satyakama was put in charge of four hundred lean, weak, and poorly fed cows, by his *Guru*. He was asked to take the whole lot to the forest, and not return till they had become a herd of a thousand! As he lived in the forest looking after the cows, his heart yearned after truth. The friendly leader of the herd, an aged bull, told him, “All these four corners of the earth are one aspect of the Brahman.” At night, when the herd slept, as he lit his camp-fire and the flame danced, it talked to him. The stars and the moon, too, told him that light and darkness were part of Brahman. But as days passed, he heard the *Brahman* in the songs of the birds, felt the great presence in the cycle of seasons, and in the birth, growth and decay of life around him. His mind slowly realized Brahman in touch, hearing, speech, sight and taste, in the beating of the heart, in waking and in dream. Then one day the leader of the herd told him, “We number over a thousand now. Take us to the *ashram*.”

On reaching the *ashram*, when the boy met his teacher, he was extremely glad to meet his dutiful disciple, and gazing at the brilliant face of young Satyakama, he said, “You look like one who has known Brahman. How is it that some agency other than human has

taught you this knowledge? The young disciple respectfully said, “I have heard that from teachers like you alone can real knowledge be had. So, I beseech you to favour me by completing the knowledge that I might have had by your grace through communion with nature.” The guru realized that the disciple was ready for receiving spiritual knowledge. Satyakama had already learnt much, so with the help of the *guru* he acquired full knowledge of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality.

(Taken and abridged from, *Stories from Upanishads: In Story and Dialogue*, by R. R. Diwakar, published by Hind Kitabs Limited.)

* * * * *

The sage or *guru* in the story wanted to know the *gotra* because in those days certain knowledge could be transmitted only to a person belonging to Brahmin caste. The Sanskrit term “Gotra” was initially used by the Vedic people for the identification of the lineages. According to the original Hindu Vedic system, *Gotra* has always been only a Brahmin lineage that descends from seven or eight *Rishis* associated with the *Saptarishis* or the seven stars of the *Great Bear constellation*. Thus, for instance, Bhrgu, the great *Rishi*, and one of the seven *Prajapatis*, is the founder of the Race of *Bhargavas*, in which Parasurama is born (*S.D.*, II, 32 fn.). In the earlier days, before the ancient teachings materialized, marriage was a sacred institution and religious contract. Family life was understood and conducted so as to provide a proper environment for egos of the same nature as the family. The ancients tried to develop very pure family lines such that over many centuries that family line would have the power to repel the evil or mediocre Egos that did not come up to the standard of that family stream. There were pure family lines of true Brahmins, with genuine love for knowledge and high moral values. They aspired to produce saviours and regenerators of humanity, writes Mr. Judge. In earlier days, because of pure family lines, knowing the *gotra* or caste it was possible to discern the inner nature of the person. In those days there was direct relation between

outer physical characteristic and inner psychic and moral nature. Today, there is *varnasankara*, the castes are mixed up, in the sense that man’s physical body is of one type (say, very healthy and good), his psychic nature is of another type and again moral nature is of yet another type. So caste or *gotra* does not have much relevance in our present times.

Satyakama the Truth-seeker is a neophyte on a spiritual quest. “The first lesson in practical occultism which the neophyte has to learn is that he is indissolubly linked with the whole nature, that he is Microcosmos—an exact replica of the Macrocosmos. His Eternal Self is the Supreme Spirit of the Universe, and every power of that Supreme is possessed by him....The second lesson is to perceive that the powers in great Nature are his helpers; Sages or *Rishis*, Gods or *Devas*, Nature Spirits or *Devatas* are ready to help,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. (*Living the Life*, pp. 65-66)

The Oriental Department papers were started by Mr. Judge in January 1891, and the serial continued to print Vedic hymns, verses from the *Upanishads* and mystical treatises, until March 1897. We give below some of the allegorical interpretations of the story of Satyakama, that appeared in the Oriental Department Paper (March-April, 1897).

In this paper we are reminded that to Satyakama are entrusted four hundred cattle, lean and ill-favoured, which he is to guard and watch over, until they become a thousand. It will be remembered that, in the story of Raikva of the Chariot, a thousand cattle also formed the acceptable gift; and that, in the legend of Nachiketas, lean and ill-favoured kine were the insufficient offering, lacking the virtue to win the worlds of the gods. It will become clear at once that the lean and ill-favoured cattle are the type and symbol of the powers and knowledge of unregenerate man, which must grow, and increase, and gain their perfect force and number, before the man is ready to become regenerate.

The paper proceeds to give an understanding of various teachers of Satyakama, represented symbolically. One is reminded of the

lines in *Light on the Path*: “Inquire of the earth, the air, and the water, of the secrets they hold for you. The development of your inner senses will enable you to do this.” Thus, if we turn to the teachers of Satyakama, instructors *other than human*, the first one is the “leader of the herd,” representing the intellect, which gives the picture of the universe as made up of four planes, each of which is imagined in the likeness of the visible plane we know, bound by space and time. So long as we are limited to the view of the intellect, even of the intellect perfected, we shall not be able to dissociate from the spiritual worlds these shadows of Space and Time, which so thoroughly enthrall us here.

He is then told that the Fire will teach him the next step. Then sitting close to the fire, facing it, intent on the fire alone, he awaits its teaching. The Fire is the symbol of that world—call it what you will, astral or psychic—which lies immediately within this world of ours; or, to speak more truly, it is the world which we begin to realize, when the grossest and crudest illusions of matter begin to burst before us and melt away.

Thus, arises a new understanding of the Universe; it is no longer grasped as four spaces or planes; it is understood as four limitless, infinite worlds, spoken of as the earth, mid-world, heaven and the great deep. At this point, the illusion of space begins to fade, and we enter deeper into realities. Again the Fire, taking us through this stage of understanding, brings us to the threshold of the next: The swan teaches him the next step. The swan descends to him from the upper air; the new life of the white-winged Self of the ether comes to him from the serene world above, and carries on the teaching.

One more lesson remained to be learned: that these radiances blossoming forth into the infinite, from the everlasting Will are the powers, not of another, but of the Self; that the Universe is the Self, awful in its divinity. This lesson is taught by the bird of the ocean; the winged dweller in the great deep, who is, indeed, no other than that Self, who we truly are. Nothing is, but the Self.

Learning this thus, Satyakama returns to the dwelling of his mortal teacher. And the teacher addresses him: Thou shinest, beloved, like one who knows the Eternal! The mind recognizes, and joyfully admits, the light of the soul; and completes the work of learning, by keeping the newly gained powers in perfect balance, coordinated with outward life.

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STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

THE TREE OF LIFE—I

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

THE FIFTEENTH Discourse is one of the most mysterious of the eighteen discourses of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and even perhaps the most mysterious one from the practical point of view, for in it we are asked to cut down the very tree of life, the sacred and eternal tree of life. The last series of discourses of the *Gita* especially emphasizes the practical ethics which are necessary for treading the path of discipleship, the path which leads to the Masters of Wisdom, so that these discourses particularly apply, and are of benefit to all would-be disciples. In the second series of discourses, *i.e.*, discourses 7 to 12, Krishna outlined the constitution of both the universe and of man; he does the same in this last series, but he repeats the teaching on a higher spiral, giving us the metaphysical and deep points of the subject. It is, however, in the Eighth discourse, that for the first time, Krishna mentions the existence of a supreme abode, the highest place that man can reach, and which is attained only by those beings, who have become immortal. In the Fourteenth discourse, which corresponds to the Eighth, Krishna again states that there are those immortal ones, the Great Lodge of Masters, and that they are not disturbed or affected when the universe dissolves into its essence, or when once more the Universe goes into manifestation. It is this particular point that is stressed and again made clear in the Fifteenth discourse.

Krishna explains to us the constitution of the macrocosm and the microcosm, of the universe and of man, and in particular shows us the identity and unity which exists between the two. This is done by means of a very simple image, that of the tree of life. The tree of life, says H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine*, is an esoteric symbol; this tree of life is known as the *Ashwattha* tree, and it represents and symbolizes the whole of the manifested universe, the whole of

manifested and conditioned existence. The symbol of a tree has been used before to represent other great universal truths. But in this discourse that symbol is applied to the manifestation of the universe, and not to the ever-living Human Banyan, to the manifestation of life, and not to the Parentless Beings who have transcended the manifestation of any universe. The Tree of Life has to be distinguished from the Tree of Knowledge which symbolizes Absolute Wisdom and the Possessors of Absolute Wisdom. The Immortal Ones, these great Beings who have transcended the universe are not in this *Ashwattha* Tree, as they are above and beyond the tree of life. They are not any more affected or bound down by the cyclic or periodical expression of that tree of life.

Since the tree symbolizes the whole of manifested existence, all of its various parts represent the different and varied forces and powers which exist both in the universe and in man, but we do not propose to go into the metaphysical and detailed analysis of all these various parts. It is enough for us to gather the general idea of how this particular symbol can be applied to the Heavenly Man, to Krishna Himself, and also to ordinary mortals, such as ourselves. Applied to Krishna, we immediately must state that Krishna is not in the tree, that Krishna in relationship to the tree can be called the Rootless Root and the Causeless Cause which has produced this tree of life. The roots which are above, in this tree, which are in the regions of heaven itself, is the Higher Nature of Krishna, this nature has been designated as *Daiviprakriti*, his Divine, illusive Nature, that aspect of Himself which energises and sustains the whole of the Universe. This *Daiviprakriti*, these Invisible Roots, sustain all parts of the tree that we are able to see, because they are objective. The branches and the roots which ramify in the region of mankind represent the lower nature of Krishna, *Mulaprakriti*, or the material aspect of all beings. But we need to clearly grasp the point that both natures, *Daiviprakriti*, the Divine and Higher Nature of Krishna, as well as, *Mulaprakriti*, the very substance and lower nature of Krishna, are rooted in Krishna himself. Thus, this whole tree

emanates from Krishna, and that explains why it is and how it is possible that each divine fragment in this Universe has within itself the divine potentialities of going through a complete cycle of evolution and growth, and thereby not only overcoming matter, but also transcending the higher nature of Krishna, and reaching Krishna himself, going to the very essence of the whole universe. We must keep this analogy in mind.

If we turn to man, we see that this symbol contains within it both natures in man. The heavenly invisible roots in the tree are man's higher nature, or *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* principles, the real man, and it is that individual which is the invisible root of all our various personalities on earth. From those invisible roots spring forth the branches and the roots below, which symbolise the personality in man, the lower quaternary, the four lower and material principles. This two-fold application of the same symbol, first the universal and then the particular, shows also the relationship existing between Krishna and ourselves. *Daiviprakriti*, the Divine Illusive Nature of Krishna corresponds in a human being to *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, the Higher Self. Likewise, *Mulaprakriti*, the material aspect of the Universe, corresponds to our own personal nature, to the lower principles of our own constitution. What is Krishna Himself in us? A Master of Wisdom writes:

It is that Eternal Life Principle which resides but in *Atma*, the highest principle, and which man, the individual, this *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, must assimilate in order to become truly a self-conscious immortal man, to become a universally immortal man.

This should not really confuse us if we keep in mind the basic principles. Let us ask ourselves what is the difference, in terms of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, between (a) any ordinary mortal, (b) an Adept, who has gone through the whole path of renunciation and gained for himself access to this immortal and supreme abode, and (c) the liberated soul who has trodden the path of liberation, not the path of renunciation, who has found his own freedom, but not real eternal

immortality? It is clear that all three possess *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, but that there must be a difference in the condition of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*. In ordinary mortals like us, *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* are latent or dormant, and we are practically entirely, under the dominance and influence of the material side of things, that is, of *Mulaprakriti*. The liberated being, who has trodden the path of liberation and become a *Nirvanee* has taken refuge, as was explained in an earlier discourse, in that very nature, the higher nature of Krishna, that we called *Daiviprakriti*. He has overcome matter, which still remains for us to be done, but he has centred *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* in that *Daiviprakriti* nature. But the Adept has gone one step further. Not only has he overcome that material nature of the universe, but he has perfected *Daiviprakriti*, the higher nature, and has thereby reached beyond the higher nature, and has united himself to Krishna. For what is this Divine Eternal Principle, residing in *Atma*, if not Krishna Himself? It is of such a person, then, that really can be said what Krishna expresses in the fifth verse of this discourse:

When one hath hewn down with the strong axe of dispassion this *Ashwattha* tree with its deeply-imbedded roots, then that place is to be sought after from which those who there take refuge never more return to rebirth, for it is the Primeval Spirit from which floweth the never-ending stream of conditioned existence.

It is to the *Adi-Purusha*, the Primeval Man that he goes. This corresponds to the other phrase of *The Secret Doctrine*, namely, the *Adi-Buddhi*, or the Divine Wisdom. H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine* explains this very statement of the *Gita*. She says in one place, "this is the tree of life, the *Ashwattha* tree; only after the cutting of which the self of life and death, man can be emancipated." And in another place, "the roots represent the Supreme Being or First Cause, the Logos, but one has to go beyond these roots to unite oneself with Krishna," and this immediately helps us to explain the extraordinary verses 4 and 5, in the Ninth discourse to which this Fifteenth corresponds. In these verses, Krishna said: "All this Universe is

pervaded by me in my invisible form; all things exist in me, but I do not exist in them.”

In this invisible aspect, as *Daiviprakriti*, Krishna is in the whole of this manifested tree, but in his real nature, as Krishna Himself, he is beyond the tree of life. Yet all human beings of that Universe, or any universe, can attain to Krishna by assimilating the very essence of Krishna, which they will find in the highest principle. That this supreme bliss that we thus reach when we go beyond the tree of life, is not the bliss of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, such as we find them today in ourselves, is further illuminated by Krishna in verse 6: “Neither the sun nor the moon nor the fire enlighteneth that place; from it there is no return; it is my supreme abode.”

The sun, the moon and the fire are simply symbols which represent the three higher principles of man’s nature—*Atma*, *Buddhi* and *Manas*. *Atma* is like unto the sun which illuminates the whole world. *Buddhi*, the vehicle of *Atma*, pours the radiance and light from *Atma* and is like unto the moon. And fire is the symbol for *Manas*. Neither *Atma*, nor *Buddhi*, nor *Manas* illuminate that place, but something which is higher still than *Atma*, *Buddhi* and *Manas*. Using that same phraseology Krishna says in verse 12: “Know that the brilliance of the sun which illuminateth the whole world, and the light which is in the moon and in fire, are the splendour of myself.”

Atma-Buddhi-Manas again are the light or splendour or the glory of Krishna, but not Krishna himself. They are the shining robes behind which Krishna hides Himself—they are his own Higher Nature or *Daiviprakriti*, and He goes on explaining the various aspects of this *Daiviprakriti* which is to be found within the manifested tree of life. In verses 7 to 9 He describes that aspect of *Daiviprakriti*, that portion, or ray of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* which comes down into incarnation, which enters the body and presides over the mind and the senses, and that aspect of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* Krishna calls the Lord, *Ishwara* in the body.

(To be concluded)

THE STATUES OF EASTER ISLAND

EASTER ISLAND is called *Rapa Nui*, in Polynesian. It is believed that the Polynesian people, who settled on Easter Island a thousand years ago, are its original inhabitants. Easter Island is a Chilean island in the southern Pacific Ocean, 2000 miles from South America, famous for its stone head statues called *Moai*, having disproportionately large head compared to body length, and that is why they are commonly called “Easter Island Heads.” The name “Easter Island” was given by the island’s first recorded European visitor, Dutch explorer, Jacob Roggeveen, who encountered it on Easter Sunday in 1722, while searching for David’s island.

Easter Island, with its enigmatic statues has long intrigued explorers and scientists. When was this island first inhabited? What did the gigantic stone statues represent? How were these statues moved? These questions fascinated archaeology professors Carl Lipo of California State University of Long Beach, and Terry Hunt of the University of Hawaii, who after 10 years of research published their investigations of Easter Island in the book, *The Statues That Walked*. Based on this followed the cover story by author Hannah Bloch in *National Geographic* magazine (July 2012), on Easter Island, which states that the statues range in height from four to 33 feet, and weigh more than 80 tons. The article gives varied views as to who created these statues and how they were transported. Thor Heyerdahl, the Norwegian ethnographer and adventurer, whose Pacific expeditions helped ignite the world’s curiosity about Easter Island, thought the statues had been created by pre-Inca from Peru, not by Polynesians. Erich von Daniken, the best-selling Swiss author of *Chariots of the Gods*, was sure the *moai* (statues) were built by stranded extra-terrestrials. Modern science—linguistic, archaeological, and genetic evidence—has proved the *moai* builders were Polynesians, but know not how they moved their creations. “The statues walked,” Easter Islanders say. In Polynesian oral tradition, these statues, carved centuries ago from volcanic tuff, were

animated by *mana*, a spiritual force transmitted by powerful ancestors.

According to the archaeologists Lipo and Hunt, the statues were carved with stone tools, mostly in single quarry, and then transported without draft animals or wheels to massive stone platforms, up to eleven miles away. In their experiments, these archaeologists showed that as few as 18 people, with three strong ropes and a bit of practice, could easily move a replica of a statue, 10 feet in height and weighing five tons, a few hundred yards. No one knows for sure when the last statue was carved, as these statues cannot be dated directly, argue these archaeologists.

Theosophy teaches that Easter Island is a remnant of the Lemurian continent that was buried under the seas. In H.P.B.'s day, more than one scientist had announced himself as convinced by the evidence that Easter Island with its colossal statues represented the peak of a submerged continent, which the *Secret Doctrine* confirms. However, there have also been scientific studies which presented conflicting theories. But these theories are hopelessly inadequate to account for the presence of the numerous portrait statues of gigantic size, on this land strip twelve miles long by four miles wide. H.P.B. describes these statues as “speaking witnesses to a submerged continent with a civilized mankind on it.”

On Easter Island were found large cut stones, some as much as six feet long, fitted together without cement to form huge platforms. The walls of some of these platforms are nearly 30 feet high, and from 200 to 300 feet long, by about 30 feet wide. Large stone pedestals were erected on the land side of the platforms to support great images carved into an approximation of the human trunk and with distinctively carved faces, surmounted by a head-dress—a flat cap with a piece attached to cover the back of the head—proving that the originals were no stone-age savages. These statues, H.P.B. tells us, are the work of the gigantic Lemurians, still 20 to 25 feet high when their continent was destroyed. Easter Island belonged to the earliest civilization of the Third Race. Thus:

We find Lemurians in their sixth sub-race building their first rock-cities out of stone and lava. One of such great

cities of primitive structure was built entirely of lava, some thirty miles west from where Easter Island now stretches its narrow piece of sterile ground, and was entirely destroyed by a series of volcanic eruptions. The oldest remains of Cyclopean buildings were all the handiwork of the Lemurians of the last sub-races; and an occultist shows, therefore, no wonder on learning that the stone relics found on...Easter Island...are “very much like the walls of the Temple of Pachacamac or the Ruins of Tia-Huanuco in Peru”...and that they are in the CYCLOPEAN STYLE. (*S.D.*, II, 317)

The three volcanic peaks found on Easter Island, one of them rising to a height of over 1700 feet, are mute witnesses to the way Lemuria perished—for it was first nearly destroyed by combustion and then submerged—over four million years ago. Easter Island was submerged with the rest of the continent, but

a volcanic and sudden uplifting of the Ocean floor, raised the small relic of the Archaic ages untouched, with its volcano and statues, during the Champlain epoch of northern polar submersion, as a standing witness to the existence of Lemuria. (*S.D.*, II, 328)

Some of the Atlanteans settled on the re-elevated island remnant of Lemuria, only to perish in one day by its volcanic fires and lava.

H.P.B. tells us that a handful of Polynesian savages belonging to the earliest surviving sub-race of the Atlanteans, were found on Easter Island when it was discovered in the eighteenth century. According to their own tradition their ancestors had come from one of the Austral Islands far to the west. They could tell nothing of how the archaeological wonders were produced. The only ancient implement discovered on the island is said to be a kind of stone chisel, but doubt has rightly been expressed as to the possibility of such large and numerous works having been executed with such a tool.

The average height of the statues, most of which were found thrown from their pedestals, is 12 feet to 20 feet. Some are 36 feet in height. One 66 feet high was found in a quarry but had never

been moved. One statue 8 feet high and weighing 4 tons, was brought to the British Museum. Anyone who had seen it there, dominating the entrance verandah, would concede the aptness of H.P.B.'s description of the originals of these "most astounding and eloquent memorials of the primeval giants," as depicting men "of the brood of mighty sorcerers." The statues, she writes, display "the features of the type and character attributed to the Fourth Race giants. They seem of one cast though different in features—that of a *distinctly sensual type*, such as the Atlanteans... are represented to have in the esoteric Hindu books." (*S.D.*, II, 224)

It has been argued in the past, by someone presenting a conflicting theory, that "oceanographers have sounded these seas and find no trace of a submerged land mass." The counter argument would be that surely the volcanic movement by which Easter Island was thrust again above the surface of the sea need not have involved the equal raising of the surrounding continental mass! The presence of the sweet potato, which is native to America, in the Polynesian Islands, is a puzzle which can easily be solved by the Theosophical teachings. *The Secret Doctrine* teaches that at one time the Indian peninsula and South America were connected by a belt of islands and continents, so that a traveller furnished with a canoe could have "walked over from Siam, crossed the Polynesian Islands and truded into any part of the continent of South America."

H.P.B. writes: "Identical glyphs, numbers and esoteric symbols are found in Egypt, Peru, Mexico, Easter Island, India, Chaldea and Central Asia" (*S.D.*, I, 323). The Cross is found on the Easter Island statues.

H.P.B. remarks that our modern geologists now admit the evident existence of submerged continent, but it is important that they also accept that during early geological periods, there were on these continents, "men and civilized nations, not Palæolithic savages only; who, under the guidance of their *divine* Rulers, built large cities, cultivated arts and sciences, and knew astronomy, architecture and mathematics to perfection." (*S.D.*, II, 316-17)

"MAN, KNOW THYSELF"

THE CAPTION of the article is an ancient aphorism, attributed to Greek philosophers. It is said that the phrase was prominently inscribed on the portal of the temple of Apollo at Delphi. It did not originate from the Greeks but came to them from the far older Egyptian civilization, which was already in the last phase of its decline when the sun of the Greek civilization and culture was just rising.

Historical research shows that the temple at ancient Thebes (modern Luxor) in Egypt had two parts—the external and the internal. Beginners who aspired for knowledge were admitted to the external temple, at the entrance of which, it is said, were inscribed the words, "the body is the house of God;" that into the internal temple were allowed persons who had proven their worthiness and fitness to acquire higher knowledge and insights, and in that temple were inscribed many proverbs, one of them was, "Man, know thyself, and you will know the Gods." (*The Living Face of Ancient Egypt*, by Hodda and Staughton)

Plato employs the maxim in his dialogues. In *Charmides*, for instance, it is argued that self-knowledge is the very essence of knowledge, and that the maxim, "Know thyself," was the piece of advice the god of the temple at Delphi gave to his worshippers. In the original myth of *Prometheus Bound*, when Prometheus rails against his fate of being bound to the cliff-side by Zeus, he is cautioned by Oceanus that he ought to know better than to speak ill of the one who decided his fate, and advised him, "Know thyself." The famous saying, "Man know thyself; then thou shalt know the universe and God," is attributed to Pythagoras, the Sage of Samos. In *Phaedrus* Socrates says that people make themselves appear ridiculous when they are trying to know obscure things before they know themselves. When asked to explain rationally, mythology and other far flung topics, Socrates is credited to have replied: "But I have no time for them at all; and the reason for this, my friend, is this: I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know

myself; so it seems to me ridiculous, when I do not know that, to investigate irrelevant things.”

This is precisely the teaching of the *Upanishads*, which declare that Self-knowledge, or *Atma Vidya*, is the ultimate in knowledge leading to perfection of man, and that, therefore, the wise look within themselves, seeking union with the true Self. The culmination of perfection of man pursuing Self-knowledge is beautifully described in the *Mundaka Upanishad* (3-2-5):

Attaining to Him [*Atman*, the Self], Seers glad with fullness of knowledge, perfected in the Self, all passions cast out from them, tranquil, these, the Wise, come to the all-pervading from every side, and, uniting themselves with Him, enter utterly the All.

All the mysteries of the universe are to be found in man himself because he is a perfect microcosmic copy of the great macrocosm. Theosophy teaches that the universe in the threefold aspects of Spirit, Soul and Matter, is the macrocosmic prototype, on the ideal model of which, man, in his threefold aspect of Spirit, Mind-Soul and body is evolved. Therefore, in man is contained all the mysteries of nature, and man himself is the master-key which alone can unlock the ultimate mystery of the universe. This is not understood, and the general tendency is to look outward.

“The Self-Being pierced opening outwards; hence one looks outward, not within himself,” teaches the *Kathopanishad*. The Spirit emanates the soul, and the soul evolves from itself the senses and the organs and the mind and descends into them to experience the world. Hence, looking outward through the senses, we, the Souls, look for happiness in bodily life, in the objects of sense outside of us. But happiness ever eludes us. Modern science seeks to unravel the mysteries of nature looking outward, fancying that truth is to be found in the “objective reality,” but truth ever eludes the scientist. All are learning the lesson that absolute bliss and absolute Truth are to be found within Man himself. Scientists are vainly looking for many missing links in the chain of their theories which forever elude

them, because they are looking outside instead of looking within themselves, where alone are to be found those links which complete the circle of their “theory of everything,”—“the all-encompassing coherent theoretical framework that fully explains and links together all physical aspects of the universe.” Ancient Upanishadic wisdom gives the clue where to look: “A wise man looked towards the self with reverted sight, seeking deathlessness.”

In all the Upanishadic teachings that are extant, the transcendental metaphysics of cosmogony alone is accessible, for reasons stated in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, xxvi *et. seq.*, and I, 269). Priceless treasure though the Upanishads are, in their present shortened form alone they do not give us a complete picture of the relation of man to the universe, and how the two are interblended at every point and at every stage of cosmic evolution. The missing portions are to be found only in the archaic Occult Doctrine, now given out in broad outlines as Theosophy.

It expounds a threefold evolutionary scheme of the universe, which gives us a comprehensive philosophical rationale of how man, in his threefold classification of Spirit, Mind and Body is a perfect copy of, and inalienably interwoven with, the Universal Soul (or the “Heavenly Man”) in the same order of threefold classification.

Man is essentially Spirit, one with the Universal Spirit. Thus, the Real Man ever was and ever will be. Spirit, in order to arrive at complete self-conscious realization of itself as the omnipresent and omnipotent infinite power, differentiates itself to evolve from its own essence, as its working instruments, two basic *Upadhis*—physical, on the one hand, and the intellectual or *Manasic*, on the other, and becomes embodied. The physical form of man is the master-piece and culmination of the stream of physical evolution, as the instrument for the Mind-Soul to descend into and become incarnate for the purpose of coming in touch with the world for gaining experience of life in all its phases and aspects. Mind, the Eternal Ray of the Universal Mind, is the reincarnating Ego, the Real Man, who, while in the body, links the Spirit above and the

animal nature below, reaping experiences from each of the innumerable cycles of birth and death in the world, accumulating the essential experiences from each, to finally arrive at complete self-conscious realization of its oneness with the macrocosmos—attains all-encompassing conscious Divinity.

Man as Spirit has evolved, and transmigrated through all the lower kingdoms of Nature, from mineral to plant and animal, according to the plan in the Universal Mind, and on the basis of the Ideal forms in the spiritual world of the Archetypes; then evolved ethereal model of the human form on the Ideal pattern of the Heavenly Man, physical nature building the gross body on the model of the Astral form so evolved, as his tabernacle in which to dwell.

Thus, the human body contains the whole mystery of physical Nature. Nature itself testifies to this fact in the serial development of the human embryo in the womb—through the stages of mineral, plant, animal, and finally the human form. The embryonic development is a repetition in a compressed time scale of nine months of the physical evolution of the human race on the cosmic time scale of three hundred million years.

Thus, in man, the Microcosm, is hoarded up the types of all the kingdoms of nature. All the missing links of modern evolutionists of the school of Darwin are to be found in man himself—in his Astral Body, the model of the physical. All the bio-genetic mysteries which perplex scientists, such as, the very rare atavistic appearance of birth of babies with animal anatomical features, as also, absence of fossil records of the missing links, and so on. Says *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 290):

As En-Soph is “One, notwithstanding the innumerable forms which are in him” (*Zohar*, i., 21a), so is man, on Earth the microcosm of the macrocosm. “As soon as man appeared, everything was complete...for everything is comprised in man. He unites in himself all forms (*Ibid.*, iii, 48 a).” “The mystery of the earthly man is after the mystery of the Heavenly Man.” (*ii.* 76 a)

The human form, the marvel of marvels, is the tabernacle of the Divine Man, the *Manas*, the Son of the divine Spirit, *Atma-Buddhi*. *Manas*, in its lower aspect, when incarnated, is the terrestrial mortal man or Lower Ego, who is the maker of Karma, who is himself the product of his own Karma. The Higher *Manas*, the immortal Divine Ego, brooding over the mortal man in its successive reincarnations, threads upon itself the essential experiences from each of them, like pearls upon a string, assimilating itself through them into *Atma-Buddhi*, to finally merge wholly into it as complete Self-Conscious Divinity—one with the All and entering into All, as the Upanishads say.

It must be remembered that the human form is not evolved from the animal kingdom, as modern evolutionists think, but is an involved principle from a higher plane—Lunar *Pitris*—brought over into this from previous planetary evolution; and Mind, or *Manas*, is not the product of the brain, as neurologists think, but is the direct emanation from the Cosmic Ideation, represented by Solar *Pitris*. “*Mind* is the latent or active potentiality of *Cosmic Ideation*, the essence of every form, the basis of every law, the potency of every principle in the universe” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 3*, p. 17). If Man will know himself, he will become the knower of All, and enter into All.

How could man epitomize Cosmos if he did not touch it at every point and involve it in every principle? If man’s being is woven in the web of destiny, his potencies and possibilities take hold of divinity as the woof and pattern of his boundless life. Why, then, should he grow weary or disheartened? Alas! why should he be degraded, this heir of all things! (*ibid.*)

HERE is advice given by many Adepts: every day and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake—think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain, or astral man, but that you are THAT, and “THAT” is the Supreme Soul.

—W. Q. JUDGE

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: In the *Voice of the Silence*, the disciple is asked to control his senses. It says: “When he has ceased to hear the many, he may discern the ONE—the inner sound which kills the outer.” Also, “Before the Soul can hear, the image (man) has to become as deaf to roarings as to whispers, to cries of bellowing elephants as to the silvery buzzing of the golden fire-fly.” What is the difference between the two?

Answer: In order to hear the inner sound, the disciple has to begin by controlling his senses. In the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna shows Arjuna the method of overcoming desire. “In the first place, restrain thy sense.” If we neglect the senses and begin by controlling mind and heart, we gain nothing, because the foe remains undisturbed in the senses. It is by means of the outward senses and their inner counterparts that a great turmoil is set up first in the heart, and “the restless heart snatches away the mind from its steady place.” In other words, we are asked to *begin* with the senses, but not stop there. What happens when we are addicted to eating pizzas? In spite of our great determination, in the beginning, the sight of pizza or the smell of pizza being cooked, is enough to shake our determination. A person who has a weakness for pizzas may avoid going near the place where it is cooked, sold, stored, etc. We restrain the senses by not allowing the eyes to rest too long on tempting sights, or ears to rest on tempting sounds, and so on. Like a tortoise withdraws its feet and head within the shell at the approaching danger, the advice is to draw in all the senses and restrain them from running in their accustomed directions.

In *Light on the Path*, the eyes are called the “windows” of the soul, and the ears, its “gateways” or doors, and through them come

the knowledge of the confusion of the world. The disciple is told that “Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears. Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness.” One has to cease to hear the many. It does not apply only to the useless din of the world but all sensations, pleasant and unpleasant. Hence he is asked to become as deaf to the roarings as to whispers. The “cries of bellowing elephants” may be taken to refer to harsh criticism, condemnation and unpleasant things that one hears from others and which tend to depress or disturb the person inwardly; while the “silvery buzzing of the golden fire-fly” is like accolade, praise, approval of others which is pleasant to one’s ears and which is likely to make one proud or complacent. *Light on the Path* says that the faculty of intuition can be developed only by one who can play the lord over men, over facts, over all things, save his own divinity. For this purpose, he has to cease to hear the “many” voices and suggestions of the outside world, *i.e.*, interpret them in the light of his intuition. In *Letters That Have Helped Me* Mr. Judge advises that we should not be “overshadowed” by any man however great, and that means, while showing reverence for that person, we should examine thoughtfully all that comes to us from such persons, or books, and try to see where it may be true. If we are unable to do that we should lay it aside as the “fruit not ripe for us yet.” We must not surrender our intuitions to any being.

On the other hand, we have to learn to pay heed to the higher, divine aspect in us, which speaks to us as Voice of Conscience. Without practising attention during daily life, we cannot become aware of the Inner Voice; without becoming aware of the Inner Voice, we tend to become immersed in the personality, and get carried away by our feelings and desires. For this reason, it is essential to devote some time to study, quiet thought and meditation, thus turning inward.

It is very difficult for an ordinary person to cultivate detachment and equanimity or higher indifference. We crave sensation. If all sensations that come through our senses are blocked, it would be difficult for us to live. In *Anugita* we are told that a person surviving

only on the pleasures obtained from mental operations and not connected with the objects of the senses, is like a person entering the house without a door, and he will meet with death because the life-winds will not receive their fuel, in terms of sense data, just like a fire is extinguished in the absence of fuel. We find this being explained in *Light on the Path*. Blindness represents obliteration of only one sense, and to the mind it means an idea of annihilation. But even when one cannot see, there is the comfort of sounds coming through the ears. When even comfort of sounds is absent the soul hungers passionately for some sensation, and even a painful sensation is welcome. There is certain amount of comfort derived from the data brought by the senses, and when we endeavour to become less and less dependent on them, we are able to appreciate pain and pleasure as being one sensation.

There is no use trying to keep sensations away. We may succeed in controlling the external senses. But what about the sensations which are aroused by the mind or which reach through astral senses? Therefore, it is important to learn to encounter sensations and yet remain unmoved. There is no merit in a cloistered virtue. It is only when one reaches that stage when he is no longer receptive of the sounds that affect the personal life that one is ready to hear the voice of his Master—the inner Self. To such a person, “laughter no longer lightens the heart and anger may no longer enrage it, tender words bring it no balm. For that within, to which the ears are as an outer gateway, is an unshaken place of peace in itself which no person can disturb.” He then knows the difference between the voice of *Dugpa* and voice of the Master.

Question: What is the “silver thread” referred to in the *Voice of the Silence*? We read: On p. 3, “If thy Soul struggles to break the silver thread that binds her to the Master (Higher Self); and on p. 4, “When waxing stronger, thy Soul glides forth from the secure retreat....extends her silver thread and rushes onward...” What is meant by “breaking” and “extending” the silver thread?

Answer: Silver thread, as indicated, is that consciousness which

binds or links the lower self with the Higher. It seems to refer to *Antahkarna* or *Antaskarna*, the bridge or link between the higher and the lower (or incarnated) mind. On p. 55 fn. of the *Voice of the Silence*, *Antaskarna* has been defined as the Path of communication or communion between the personality and the higher *Manas* or human Soul. At death it is destroyed, as a Path or medium of communication, and its remains survive in the form of *Kamarupa*—the ‘shell.’” In other words, after death, thoughts, feelings and desires which are lower, worldly and personal in nature, impressed on *Antaskarna*, would form the body of desire or *kamarupa*. But on referring to the *Theosophical Glossary* we find that there is a constructive side to *Antaskarna*, which is stated thus: “It serves as a medium of communication between the two [the divine *Ego* and the personal Soul of man], and conveys from the lower to the Higher *Ego* all those personal impressions and thoughts of men which can, by their nature, be assimilated and stored by the undying Entity, and be thus made immortal with it, these being the only elements of the evanescent Personality that survive death and time.”

We are asked to merge the personal self with the impersonal or higher Self, by *destroying* the “path” (*Antaskarna*) between them (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 55). It would mean the killing out of lower desires, including desire for sentient existence. As a result, there would remain no material from which *Kamarupa* can form after death. Thus, when the lower, personal mind is completely purified and devoid of any personal or worldly thoughts, desires or feelings, so that the personal is sacrificed to the impersonal SELF, then, there is no necessity for any more guidance from the higher, divine nature, and hence the bridge is destroyed or the “silver thread” is broken. On the other hand, when the lower mind repeatedly ignores the guidance of the Higher Self, one gradually stops hearing the voice of conscience. Then, after several life times, after being given chance after chance by nature, to turn the corner, if a person deliberately chooses evil and continues to do so, finally, there comes a point when there is not a single good or noble thought, feeling or

action, that is worthy of being part of the Higher Ego. Then the path of communication between the lower mind, which is the child, is broken from the divine parent, resulting in a lost soul. When the lower mind breaks its connection with the divine Self, it is like a stem of a tree asking to be separated from the roots which nourish it. When it is disconnected, it perishes.

When a string or thread is stretched too much it tends to break. Extending the silver thread is only a manner of speaking. If we visualize a child holding a hand of the parent and walking on the road, and if the child is attracted by something on the other side of the road, then it may pull the parent in that direction. If the parent does not try to pull back the child, then it may even succeed in breaking his hand free from the grip of the parent and run across, and run the risk of meeting with an accident. Likewise, when we assert our personal will, disregarding the divine will, the silver thread is stretched. When mind becomes *Kama*-tending instead of *Buddhi*-tending, it pulls itself away from the divine parent. If it persists, then the silver thread may even break. When the lower mind extends the silver thread which binds it to the divine parent, it is sinking more and more into self-identifying attachment to personality.

We stretch the silver thread when we are identified with certain pain or pleasure. 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 lose their sense of equilibrium with grief or with sudden good news.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

One of the most well-researched, controversial and yet little understood area in medicine is the “phantom phenomena” which occurs when a part of the human body, like an arm or a leg, has been amputated for some reason. In 90 per cent of such cases, the patient, after amputation of the limb, soon begins to feel a non-existent “phantom” limb, where actually none exists any longer. The person also feels sensations like itching, tingling and pain. This experience is so vivid that the one with amputated limb reaches out to scratch or rub a part of themselves which is not there. In 1797, Horatio Nelson, who was wounded during a battle and had most of his right hand amputated experienced so persistently the presence of phantom arm that he believed it to be “the direct evidence for the existence of the soul.”

Almost all parts of our anatomy are subject to the phantom phenomenon to varying degrees. Thus, people with damaged inner ear mechanism believe that they still hear sounds from it. About 25 per cent of women report feeling sensation from the excised breast(s), after breast removal operation. Likewise, in some cases even after complete root canal procedure, where the pulp and nerves carrying pain signals are removed and sealed, the pain in the infected tooth refuses to go away. In the phantom eye syndrome, when one or both eyes are totally removed, a process called enucleation or evisceration, about one-third of patients report visual hallucinations from the removed eye. They report seeing shapes, colours and cartoon-like images. On the other hand, in cases where there is severe visual loss, without removal of the eye, there are visual hallucinations called Charles Bonnet syndrome, which include full blown detailed images of people and dreamlike scenery.

One thing that cures several types of phantom limb pain is the use of prosthesis. The contemporary neurologist Oliver Sacks writes about a patient who said that his prosthetic limb helped with the pain in his phantom. He reported that on removal of the prosthetic

limb the pain increases, but “goes away when I strap the prosthesis on and walk. I still feel the leg then, vividly, but it is a good phantom, different—it animates the prosthesis, and allows me to walk.”

There are only tentative neurological explanations for phantom phenomena, though some believe that phantom limbs may be the mind’s way of making up for what has gone. Horatio Nelson is said to have remarked, “If an arm could survive amputation, why should an entire person not live on after death?” May be a disembodied soul needs another physical whole-body prosthetic, writes Mukul Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, September 3, 2017)

Theosophy teaches that our physical body is built on a design body called the astral body. There is already the astral model of the child, perfect in shape, on which the physical molecules arrange themselves, before the child is born. The astral body of the child in the womb is connected with the mother’s imagination. If the mother vividly imagines that her child would be born legless, then the strong imagination of the mother would act on the astral leg so as to cut off or shrivel it up. As a result, the molecules having no model of leg to work on, make no physical leg. But when a person feels the presence of a limb, which the surgeon has cut off, or perceives the fingers which were amputated, it is because their astral counterparts (leg or fingers, as the case may be) have not been interfered with. This is because a knife or acid cannot injure the astral model. Thus, it is not surprising that a man whose physical arm or leg has been cut off still feels pain, because the astral arm or leg is still present. The astral body has a complete system of nerves and arteries of its own. Corresponding to the physical eye, there is astral eye or astral centre for seeing, and so also, for other senses. The *real centres of perception* are in the astral body. The physical sense organ would be useless if the corresponding astral sense organs are damaged.

Working with U.S. combat veterans, Vilayanur Ramachandran, director of Centre for Brain and Cognition at the University of California, conducted experiments to better understand why these

feelings of pain arise and how they might be eliminated. He seeks to explain it on the basis of “mirror” neurons in the brain.

There is the possibility of affecting the astral body through imagination and ideas. In *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.B. mentions that when a person witnessed deep wounds being inflicted by one soldier on the body of another soldier, he was so dreadfully frightened that when he reached home, there broke out on his body the same wounds. The fact that the astral limbs and hence the phantom limbs could be affected by imagination, might explain how pain in the phantom limb could be cured by the sight of a soothing massage performed on another person.

What changes us always makes for compelling story-telling, writes Nona Walia. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, renowned Lebanese-American scholar, in his book, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, coined the term “black swan” which tells us how a single moment, even if it seems random at that time, has the power to change our entire lives. The underlying idea of the “black swan” theory is that as human beings we tend to find simplistic explanations to events that may seem random, without realizing their extreme impact. Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Prize winner, says that some of us do come across such life-altering moments, which persuade us to re-examine our priorities and change our path. But more often than not, our lives—our goals, dreams and ambitions—are changed gradually, till we reach a stage where there is complete clarity about who we want to be and what we want to do.

Satyarthi says that such a moment came to him when he was a six-year-old boy. He saw a little boy, outside the school, polishing shoes with his father. When he asked his teacher as to why this boy was not in the classroom, the reply was, “It has always been like this.” That boy’s father replied that he was destined to polish shoes. This event sowed the seeds, which determined the course of Satyarthi’s life. He was troubled by poor children working in shops,

markets and railway stations. He and his friends raised money for poor children and launched a drive to open libraries for them. He says, “I found out that there is tremendous comfort in the power of compassion.” Much later, he was revolted by the collective apathy around him towards the plight of these poor children, and felt the urge to do something concrete for them, leading him to abandon his cushioned existence and become a “child rights activist.”

Emphasizing the power of empathy, he writes, “Our futures are determined by the choices we make. Children are the essence of our civilisation. If we do not treat them well, then it is a rotten world we are leaving behind. In my own small way, I have spent close to forty years trying to stem the rot.” (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, September 24, 2017)

“If some pathetic story of suffering has moved you, act on the emotion while your cheeks are still wet with tears,” writes Mr. Judge. We are our brothers’ keepers. Albert Schweitzer, the great humanitarian who served people as a doctor in equatorial Africa, says: “Open your eyes and seek another human being in need of a little time, a little friendliness, a little company, a little work. It may be a lonely, an embittered, a sick or an awkward person for whom you can do something, to whom you can mean something. Perhaps it will be an old person or a child. Or else a good cause that needs voluntary workers. Do not lose heart, even if you must wait a bit before finding the right thing, even if you must make several attempts.”

When someone asked Robert Crosbie, “Why is it that Theosophists are so passive to political and social conditions?” He replied that so long as we do not take care of the *cause* and only poultice the boil on the body, it is useless. It is easy to see that the boil would burst and after a few days a new boil will appear in another part of the body. So we need to identify the cause, the item in our diet, which produces the boil. Thus:

It is apparent to anybody that the cause of all human troubles is selfishness and ignorance....If every man were

to have this [true] knowledge, he would see that true happiness for all can be obtained only when each human being uses all his powers for the good of others. Under such a way of thinking, no man would be allowed to suffer for one moment, because there would be many willing hands to help on every side. The greatest need, then, is to have a right and true philosophy of life. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 77)

We live in times where we are flooded with choices in everything, from food, iPhones, to holiday destinations. Often decision-making can be stressful and even time consuming, as often we take a long time even in deciding something like, what we shall wear to work the next day. We are more worried about choosing the *best*, and not just choosing the *right*. American journalist Tom Vanderbilt has given tips in *Nautilus* about making choices, based on the psychology notes for his 2016 book “*You May Also Like: Taste in an Age of Endless Choice*.” For instance, we can begin by not relying too much on the “wisdom of the crowds,” or online reviews. The problem in following the crowds or online reviews is that those who have given early reviews, with either strong like or dislike, influence the subsequent reviewers with their extreme views. Experiments by Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers have shown that “the presence of a positive review can inflate the number of subsequent positive reviews.” On the other hand, when one makes a choice of visiting Shimla, by going against the popular view, on returning from the place, one wants everyone else to go there too, to vindicate one’s judgement. It is called “purchase bias,” and many reviews are steeped in it. We are cautioned to not get overly influenced by extremely good or bad reviews.

Apart from online reviews, when one tries to follow peers’ recommendations, research shows that people crave exclusivity and therefore they are annoyed when you order the same dishes, wear

identical outfits, or buy the same make of car. Your best bet is to listen to others but go with your gut. In other words, depending wholly on others' reviews also means buying into their biases. (*Sunday Times of India*, September 17, 2017)

We tend to rely too much on the opinion of the majority, not only in buying things, but also in all the other fields of life, which includes religion, political and scientific views, education, career, etc. Emerson emphasized *self-reliance* and he says, "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." Dr. Fromm points out that we accept ready-made goals and pursue a career that has approval of the society. Modern man thinks he knows what he wants, while he actually wants what he *is supposed to want*. Mr. Crosbie puts it thus:

From our birth we are surrounded by those who suggest certain ideas to us as true, and we follow these suggested ideas. There is very little *original* thought anywhere....Whatever system of thought is presented to us, that we adopt. We follow the suggestion given, with no attempt to reach the basis of that which is suggested. The foundation upon which the suggestion rests is taken for granted, even in the most important things in life....This power of suggestion must still be used....But when the true is suggested to us, there is always a means presented by which we may see and verify it. That means is not anyone's authority or endorsement, but in the fact that we can perceive it and test it for ourselves. *The final authority is the man himself.* (*Universal Theosophy*, pp.108-11)

In the light of this we see that we are free, but we have used that freedom to choose those things which have approval of the majority around us. Why does this happen? We are afraid to choose and be different because we are afraid of being isolated. Also, at times, we are too lazy to do our own thinking.