

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 76, No. 6

April 17, 2006

JAINISM—A WAY OF LIFE

Better than a man who conquers in battles a thousand times
a thousand men is he who conquers himself. He indeed is the
mightiest of warriors.

—*The Dhammapada*

MAHAVIRA means mightiest of warriors; one in possession of *Virya* or Spiritual energy, described as “the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH out of the mire of lies terrestrial.” Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, is considered to be the twenty-fourth *Tirthankara*. The first *Tirthankara* was Adinath or Rishabha, the twenty-second was Nemi or Neminath and the twenty-third was Parsvanath. *Tirthankara* is one who leads you to God. “Tirtha,” in Sanskrit, means, among many things, a road or a passage and *Tirtha-kara* is to create a passage (through life). Just as when a ship sails, it leaves behind a shiny track on the water, so also the great ones when they move leave behind a sacred track. Some authors suggest that *Tirthankaras* are “bridgemakers” in a figurative sense, *i.e.*, they are those by the practice of whose teachings we can cross the ocean of mundane life and reach spiritual perfection. “*Tirthankaras* are Jaina saints and chiefs, of which there are twenty four. It is claimed that one of them was the spiritual Guru of Gautama Buddha” (*The Theosophical Glossary*). H.P.B. explains who these *Tirthankaras* are, when she refers to the “Thirty-

five Buddhas of Confession.” She points out that these personages, though called “Buddhas” in Northern Buddhist religion, may just as well be called Rishis or Avatars and are universal. They are *historical* sages. “They are chosen from among some ninety-seven Buddhas in one group, and fifty-three in another, mostly imaginary personages, who are really the personifications of the powers of the first-named.” Gautama Buddha is the twenty-seventh of the last group (of fifty-three Buddhas). H.P.B. explains further that these thirty-five Buddhas represent once living men, great Adepts and Saints in whom the “Sons of Wisdom” have incarnated, and who, therefore, can be called minor Avatars of the Celestial Beings. But of these, only eleven belong to the Fourth or Atlantean Race, while twenty four belong to the Fifth Race, from its beginning. They are identical with the *Tirthankaras* of the Jains. (*S.D.*, II, 423 and fn.)

Mahavira was a senior contemporary of the Buddha. Mahavira’s parents were not Brahmins but *sramana*, i.e., those who practised asceticism and were devotees of Parsvanath. The *sramanas* have been described as an order of recluses, who believed in the faith of Arhats (or Arihanta). His parents fixed his name as “Vardhaman” or the “prosperous one,” because with his birth there was increase in wealth, fame and merit of the family. He was known by the name *Nirgrantha* Nataputra by the Buddhists. *Nirgrantha* meant, literally and figuratively, outwardly unclothed and inwardly unfettered. It signifies supreme detachment and hence *Nirgrantha* means one without any ties—external or internal. He was called Nataputra because he was the scion of *Nata*, *Naya*, or *Jnata* clan of Kshatriyas, just as Buddha was called Sakyamuni or Sakyaputra because he belonged to the Sakya clan.

The philosophy given by Mahavira (and by the earlier Tirthankaras) is called Jainism. Jaina means a follower of Jina, which is a generic term applied to those who have conquered their mortality by destroying their ignorance and passion. The *Tirthankaras* are also known as Jinas. Jaina philosophy is studied

in three parts: Epistemology or Theory of Knowledge, Metaphysics and Ethics.

Broadly, there are two kinds of knowledge: *aparoksha* (immediate or direct) and *paroksha* (mediate or indirect). The ordinary knowledge covers our experiences through sense organs (*mati*) and that which we obtain through scriptures (*sruta*).

The Absolute or immediate knowledge is of three kinds. When a person has partially destroyed the passions causing bondage, he is able to have knowledge of things too minute or too distant to be apprehended through the senses. It is called *Avadhijnana* (limited knowledge). When the soul has overcome jealousy, hatred, etc., it can have direct access to past and present thoughts of others. This knowledge is called *manah paryaya* (entering a mind). The third is the highest knowledge called Omniscience or Absolute Knowledge or *Kevala Jnana*. The first two types of knowledge are possessed by saints and great beings, but *Kevala Jnana* is possessed only by the liberated souls. (*An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, pp. 77-79)

A very important teaching arising out of the theory of knowledge is the Jaina theory of Judgement. Every object has innumerable aspects or characters. For instance, a gold jug is a substance in so far as it is a collection of gold atoms, but looked at from the point of view of the space within, it is not a substance. Then again it is made by some Mr. A and not by Mr. B or C. It is of the shape of jug and not pot or tray, etc. A person who is omniscient can have direct knowledge of all these various aspects of an object at one go, but not so an ordinary being, and hence the understanding of an ordinary human being is partial, and therefore valid only from a particular point of view. This is called *nayavada*—there being seven points of view or *nayas*. The *nayavada* serves as a unique instrument of analysis. It points out that in daily life our judgements regarding objects are conditional because they are true only from a certain standpoint and as regards certain aspects considered. From this arises the theory of *Syadvada*. We must realize that an

individual can never present complete knowledge of an object because of limited understanding, imperfection of speech, etc. Therefore, the Jaina logic insists that every judgement (*naya*) should be qualified by the word (*syat*), i.e., “somehow” or “in a way,” to emphasize its conditional or relative character.

The Ethics of Jainism point out that the Soul is inherently perfect with infinite potentiality. Infinite knowledge, power, bliss and faith can be attained by all souls, but there are certain obstacles which prevent the soul from achieving this. The body that we are born into is not a chance acquisition. Our past karma determines the family in which we are born as well as the nature of the body. The Jainas mention eight basic types of karma, further subdivided into 148 sub-types. For instance, *gotra karma* is the karma that determines the family into which one is born, *ayu-karma* determines the length of life, and so on. Similarly we are told of the karma that clouds knowledge (*jnanavarniya*), that clouds faith (*darsanavarniya*), that produces delusion (*mohaniya*), that produces emotions of pleasure and pain (*vedaniya*). The passions that cause bondage are anger, pride, greed and delusion, and are termed as *kasyas* or sticky substances, because the bondage of the soul to matter is the result of its bondage to bad dispositions or passions. One can obliterate past Karma in two ways: (1) by creating fresh good karma by acting with the highest motive of benefiting others, and (2) by complete acceptance of karmic consequences. (*An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, pp.104-06).

Having seen that it is craving or passion that binds the soul, the cure lies in realizing that everything springs from Ignorance. The important aspect of Jaina philosophy is *Ratnatraya* or *Tri-ratna* or Three Gems, i.e., Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct. Right knowledge includes various ethical precepts and knowledge of merit and demerit. Faith is not blind faith. The Initial faith is a reasoned faith based on some preliminary acquaintance with the teachings. This faith works like an incentive to study further. As one studies further and perfects in knowledge, his faith becomes

progressively perfect.

Right conduct arises from the application of right knowledge. It consists in practising the *panchasila* or five precepts, which are exactly the same as the *panchasila* of the Buddhists. They are: *ahimsa*, not taking any life even by mistake or through unmindfulness; *satya*, speaking in such a way as is true, good and pleasing; *asteya*, not taking anything that has not been given; *brahmacharya*, celibacy and abstaining from all forms of self-indulgence—in mind, speech and body; and *aparigraha* abandoning attachment for all sense-objects or limiting one's possessions.

First there is the vow of *ahimsa* or non-injury to life. Non-violence is not just in act but also at the level of thoughts and speech. It is said that virtue does not consist just in abstaining from doing wrong; it consists in not even *desiring* to do wrong. Further, violence may be committed, commissioned or consented to. As for non-killing bodily, it is based on the Jaina view of potential equality of all souls. The other consideration for non-injury is the principle of reciprocity, i.e., we must not do unto others something that we would not have them do unto us.

However, certain amount of injury, by householders and worldly men, is inevitable. There is (1) *Accidental injury* in the course of digging, pounding, cooking, etc. (2) *Occupational injury*: When the soldier fights, the farmer tills the land, policeman kills to protect other lives. (3) *Intentional injury*: When killing animals with the full intention of killing them, as in hunting or butchery (*A Cultural History of India*, p. 106). A Jaina monk practises non-violence up to the hilt by breathing through a piece of cloth tied over his mouth and nose to avoid killing even tiny, floating organisms in the air. An ordinary man would find it impossible to live up to such an ideal and hence he is advised to begin with the partial observance of non-injury by abstaining from injuring moving beings that are endowed with at least two senses (faculties). The Jainas believe that mobile living substances have bodies of different degrees of

perfection and variously possess two, three, four or five senses. Souls or living substances like worms have two senses, *viz.*, touch and taste; those like ants have three senses, those of touch, taste and smell; while higher beings like beasts, birds and men have five senses. The most important thing for the householders is to abstain from *intentional* injury. It is not the act, but the mental attitude, which is more important. (*An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, pp. 93 and 109)

These various precepts termed *anuvrata* or lesser vows for a layman become *mahavrata* or great vows for a Jaina monk, who has to observe them thoroughly and rigorously.

The entire spiritual career of the soul is divided into 14 stages called *gunasthan* or “levels of merit” which determine where exactly the person stands in his inner development. We can see that in Jaina philosophy the whole system of ascetic morality is worked out most minutely. “The soul marches from bondage and gross ignorance to final liberation and omniscience, gradually overpowering at different stages wrong beliefs, unrighteousness, negligence, passions...” In the first four stages the soul is struggling to get rid of wrong beliefs, which are overcome in the fifth stage and the person then begins to practise righteous conduct—divided into eleven steps (*pratima*). These eleven steps include observance of the five precepts as well as practice of self-contemplation three times a day with a view to obtaining mental equipoise; observance of weekly fasts; abstaining from taking green vegetables as also taking food after sunset; ceasing to take interest in worldly matters, and so on. When he reaches the eleventh stage, he is fully prepared to follow the severe course of ascetic life. In the sixth stage he is already a monk but still liable to lapses and negligence. “In all stages up to the eleventh, regress may take place, and the soul may even fall back to the first stage. When he reaches the twelfth, however, the passions, etc., are destroyed, and he begins meditation.” When all Karma is destroyed, the soul attains its fullest spiritual status. (*A Cultural History of India*, pp. 106-08)

Jainas do not lay emphasis on sacrifices, rituals, ceremonies, but stress prayer and meditation on higher beings. There is no place in Jainism for God as creator and distributor of rewards and punishments. Instead, Jainas pay homage to and worship liberated souls, the *Tirthankaras*, considering them as the highest spiritual ideals to which every soul can aspire. By meditating on the pure qualities of these great beings, each one can purify his own mind and heart, overcome the obstructing karma, work out his own salvation and therefore become a liberated soul. There is no mercy, grace, or favour bestowed upon anyone.

According to Jainism, “dying is as much an art as living.” A layman is expected to live a disciplined life, but also to die bravely a detached death. There are elaborate rules regarding voluntary death or (*sallekhana*) and it is to be distinguished from suicide which is looked upon by Jainas as cowardly sin. In case of old age, illness, famine and calamity, against which there is no remedy, a pious Jaina quietly lets go of the body. (*A Cultural History of India*, p. 107)

THE reason you have had help is that in other lives you gave it to others. In every effort you made to lighten another mind and open it to Truth, you were helped yourself. Those pearls you found for another and gave to him, you really retained for yourself in the act of benevolence. For when one lives thus to help others, he is thereby putting in practice the rule to try and “kill out all sense of separateness,” and thus gets little by little in possession of the true light.

—W. Q. JUDGE

H.P.B. AND THE MAHATMAS

WHITE Lotus Day commemorates the great event of the passing out of our physical world of a noble Soul, whose devotion and sacrifice have enabled us to become what we now are.

In her will, no monument was asked for; instead, she asked her friends and students, if they wished to remember her, to gather together on her anniversary day and simply read from her two favourite books, the *Bhagavad-Gita* and *The Light of Asia*, the one embodying the wisdom of Sri Krishna, and the other that of the Great Enlightened One. Her students, out of devotion and gratitude to her, have added to these two readings a third one, from *The Voice of the Silence*, embodying the Golden Precepts learned by her at the feet of the Great Gurus.

Why is the day called White Lotus Day? The lotus is a symbol and conveys certain great ideas. It enshrines mighty truths which mortal men aspiring to immortality should learn. Great in purity, it springs from the mud and mire of the earth, passes through the water, and resting on its surface bares its heart to the sun. In its centre lie the seeds. These, perfect replicas of the whole lotus plants of the future, make possible the re-embodiment of a plant after it withers and dies. White lotuses were used as a decoration at H.P.B.'s first anniversary meeting, and since then the white lotus has become the symbol of that great being whom the world knew as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky; her students, as H.P.B.; and who was known "otherwise" to the Great Mahatmas, as one of them wrote.

Did she teach anything "new"? No one ever teaches anything new. Krishna spoke of how mankind gradually lost the "mighty art" "in the course of time." He taught the same eternal doctrine to Arjuna (*Nara*—man)—"because thou art my devotee and my friend." We, H.P.B.'s students, also, must become her devotees and her friends in order to benefit by the great ideas she put forward. These ideas belong to the ageless divine Wisdom, the *Bodhi-Dharma* or the Wisdom-Religion, the *Brahma-Vidya* or the Esoteric

Science. They were not invented by the ancient Sages any more than by H.P.B. They are as old as thinking man.

What teachings were specially emphasized by her for our modern era? First, the existence today, even in our present Kali Yuga, of a great body of Teachers: Mahatmas, Sages, Rishis, Munis, Dhyanis. They are living, divine Men. In India and elsewhere there prevail today false ideas of gurus and chelas. The great idea has been perverted. The Gracious Ones have been forgotten and many false claimants are followed to the detriment of the followers. The idea of the Great Chain of Gurus (*Guruparampara*) has been distorted when not forgotten. It now needs serious reconsideration. True Gurus cannot be found in the world of *moha* and the *mayavic* fascinations of worldly life. They are to be found only in the realm of *Sat*, of Truth, where They live unseen by the world. The true Guru will not cure illnesses, solve difficulties and perform miracles. If that were possible, then Sri Krishna would have said to Arjuna, "I shall do the fighting for you!" But he did not. He began instead by teaching the ancient philosophy, and he closed his discourse with the injunction: "Act as seemeth best unto thee." That is the mark of a true Guru—he does not interfere with the free will of the disciple.

H.P.B. did not stop with the giving out of this teaching about the Great Gurus. She showed us that living Masters not only exist today but that *there is a way to reach them*. They are to be known by the study of their Wisdom. "Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility," says Sri Krishna; and "the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee." *We* have to serve, search, enquire and be humble. Only when these prerequisites are built into our character may we hope to gain recognition from the Masters. Masters need companions. Their teachings and the practice of these teachings will lead us across the ocean of *Samsara*. Spiritual Knowledge will then spring up spontaneously in us.

The *Sangha* of these Great Teachers is not far, but is near at

hand. It can be reached through self-study. “Man, know thyself!” ever said the ancients. It is much more than the physical body, much more than the personal man, that we have to know in order to seek the Way. Shall we follow the eightfold Way of the Buddha, the steps that Shankara taught, the 18 chapters of the *Gita*, the beatitudes of Jesus, and the Golden Precepts of *The Voice of the Silence*, which says, “Look inward: thou art Buddha”? Or, shall we take the way of wealth, money, friends, family—and then death and rebirth, to begin the weary round again? This is the great challenge always facing us.

The nature of the true Gurus has to be understood. No true Guru ever claimed that position. Anyone who makes such a claim, or accepts it, is a false guru. The true Gurus are hidden, “difficult to meet.”

All of H.P.B.’s teachings revolve round the central idea about how to gain intimacy with the Great Ones, and through Them, with the Great Self. “Of teachers there are many; the MASTER-SOUL is one, Alaya, the Universal Soul. Live in that MASTER as ITS ray in thee. Live in thy fellows as they live in It.” A ray of the Great Self is in us; that ray can lead us to the Source, and help us to gain conscious union with the Self. Distinctions of race, creed, caste, etc., prevent us from living in our fellows “as they live in It.” Does not Sri Krishna say in the Tenth Chapter of the *Gita*: “I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings”; and in the Thirteenth Chapter: “The spirit in the body is called *Maheshwara*, the Great Lord, the spectator, the admonisher, the sustainer, the enjoyer, and also the *Paramatma*, the highest soul”? This brings us out of our narrow circle into the sphere of true Brotherhood, where castes, races, sexes and religions exist not, where man is Man, the Thinker. This is the first step if intimacy with the true Gurus is desired; otherwise, let us be honest enough to admit that we are ready neither to know them nor to tread the way of the spiritual life. In spite of our present limitations we can all reach that stage. This is the encouraging message H.P.B. brought. If Upali, the barber, could

become a disciple of the Great Buddha and walk the eightfold path, then why not we?

We must go forward step by humble step. If we see a fault or weakness in our character, then it has to be crushed out beyond reanimation, and then only can we go forward. Procrastination can spell ruin. What will give us the enthusiasm and courage to press forward? The memory of the fact that the Great Sages, the Rishis, the Masters exist. If there are gods in human form, it is these Great Ones. As the poet-saint of India, Kabir, has put it, the Guru is greater than *Ishwara*, because he shows us the way to *Ishwara*, the divine Spirit in us. It is necessary to have knowledge which will bring some glimpse of the *Guruparampara*, not one link of which can be disregarded or treated with disrespect. All men are our teachers. The whole of Nature teaches us. The vegetable, mineral and elemental kingdoms of Nature, too, can teach us great mysteries—if we have humility.

Students of Theosophy owe what they know and what they are to the Buddha-like and Christ-like heart of H.P.B. Her teachings provide the nourishment which all of us need, and without which “neither sacrifice nor wisdom comes our way,” as the Buddha taught. The Great Teachers are Lords of *Yagna*. They embody sacrifice in their personalities. “Awake, arise, seek the Great Ones, and learn,” sing the Upanishads. And having learnt, we have to pass on the great truths.

HE who sees all beings in his own self, and his own self in all beings, loses fear.

—*Isa Upanishad*

COMPLEX NATURE OF MAN

THE COMPLEX nature of man is an accepted fact today. Thanks to science and medical men, we know that man, the crown-piece of evolution, is the most complex creature that nature has evolved and that despite incessant research, study and investigation to unveil his true nature, we hardly know him. His body alone is a subject of study by numerous medical specialists. Add to this study factors such as intellect, ideas, emotions, ideations, aspirations, drives, desires and passions, aversions and attachments, and we have a mystery most difficult to understand. We might live with an individual for years and hardly know him. Let alone that, we do not even know our own selves completely. Honest and introspective people would admit that there have been incidents in their lives that totally surprised them with startling revelations about their own nature.

To know man, we can start with what is visible and perceptible to us—his body. Body by itself is capable of very little. During sleep, the body of a most dynamic and active man, one most intelligent and vivacious, as well as that of a dull and uninteresting person, are all reduced to automatons—mere machines—capable of unattended operations within their limited domain. At death, something vital seems to escape from the body—making a dead body an object of morbid fear and abhorrence among living beings. One thing is certain that man is not his physical body—however healthy, beautiful and efficient it may be. Body is simply an instrument, a vehicle which is being used by the real man within. It is merely one part of man's personality. *Persona* means mask—like those worn by actors who performed different roles so that the mask carried the makeup of the role they played. Unfortunately, wearing this mask, *i.e.*, the personality of this life, not only do we not recognize other human beings as separate from their masks, but we have even forgotten who *we* really are!

Our dream state during sleep gives a vital hint about the real

man within. During sleep, while body assumes various positions and postures which the real man would not permit during waking hours, the latter, the invisible man within, is working on a different plane, with experiences of dream state and then of deep sleep state. Dream life is so real that sometimes we wake up totally shaken up by a nightmare. And then, our relief is great that it was only a dream. But none the less, we experienced it. The sadness, happiness, despair, desperation, anger, fright are all vividly experienced by us in dreams—all the while our physical body slept. We were working on the inner plane, using another and subtle body and separate set of senses on that plane which had its own sense of time and space. This is the invisible body of a man called the astral body or the design body or the double.

This invisible body is a kind of blueprint or a model for the construction of our physical body. Theosophy tells us that it is made up of matter which is essentially electro-magnetic in nature. It is flexible, plastic, elastic, extensible beyond the bodily limits, impressionable like the photographic plate—receiving, retaining and throwing off impressions of all the happenings in and around the person. It is this model within the mother's womb that forms the basis for the developing foetus. It changes very little during the lifetime of a person and hence maintains the same general appearance from maturity till death. It is in this invisible body of the man that the real senses are located. In this body reside the secrets of many psychic powers. But this body is not the real man. The real man uses this body when working on non-physical planes such as the dream plane. At death, an aspect of this astral body still remains with the physical body—not letting it crumble into a heap of matter immediately. Another aspect of the astral body vivified by the raging passions and desires of the departed man forms his ghost or *bhuta*.

We are living in an ocean of LIFE (energy) or *Jiva* that surrounds and interpenetrates us. When we live, we absorb and resist this Life energy by turns. When it works through the body of a living

being, it is called breath or *prana*—because breath is necessary for continuance of life in the human body. It circulates through our astral body—just as blood circulates through our physical body. It vitalizes, rejuvenates and sustains healthy, youthful organs of our body with the help of what are called “preservers” and it kills us with the help of “destroyers” when the term of natural life ends. The “preservers” and “destroyers” are the minutest conceivable lives that compose our body. At death, it is breath or *prana* that leaves the body. *Prana* is that aspect of the One Life which sustains and permeates the physical body. When that aspect is withdrawn, the body disintegrates.

In death, it is not just the breath which has gone from the body. Something more important is now missing. The *real* man within has discarded the worn-out body and departed—the man, who thinks, feels and reasons. The man, who feels his identity throughout all the changes of life—from childhood to old age, as being himself and no other. It is this thinking principle called *Manas* which makes him a distinct individual. He thinks and chooses. He introspects. He rationalizes and discriminates. *Manas* or the Thinker uses the human brain as an instrument to reason from premises to conclusions. Animals act from automatic and so-called instinctual impulses, whereas the man can reason. He learns through experiences and grows, preserving the memory of all the experiences of a lifetime—it is called a storehouse of thought. It is the knower, the perceiver, the thinker who carries the results and values of all the different lives lived on earth or elsewhere.

At this stage of our development, our desires are having dominance. Desires are essential ingredients of existence. If there was no desire to breathe, to eat and drink, to live, we would perish. Desire or *Kama* is present both in man and in animals. Desires are not merely impulses from the body. Man incarnates again and again on earth because he desires existence in body. But our desires are twofold—lower and higher. The lower desires are those which are self-centred and selfish—not necessarily bad. But higher desires

have their roots in the spiritual and immortal nature of man.

But Soul *per se* can have no existence apart from the Spirit. The power to think, to choose, to act, comes from the immortal Spirit—the very *Atman* in man. *Atman* itself is not a human principle. It is an aspect of the very source, the ONE REALITY. Its radiance reaches the thinker through *Buddhi*—a discriminative principle. *Atman* is like electricity. It requires a channel to work through. *Buddhi* provides that channel. *Buddhi* is the accumulated experience and wisdom of past incarnations, which provides a channel for the power to flow through to *Manas*. Electricity can light up a bulb, move the fan, produce heat, move a motor car or even put a person to death in an electric chair. It is the same power put to different uses. *Buddhi* is the power of perception. It is also perfected perceptions acquired by use of that power. We are the perceivers—we are constantly exercising the power of perception.

All this may sound abstract and difficult to understand. But all of us have felt its presence, experienced its powerful and benevolent influence in our lives. It whispers to us as the Voice of Conscience—guiding us to do what is right. It is the source of flashes of intuition which makes us see the truth, which solves the most complex problem in an instant during the rare moments of our receptivity—like when we go to sleep after a prolonged and exhausting struggle with a troublesome problem. Poets and philosophers, artists and scientists have produced their marvellous work when the higher nature has shed a bright ray on the man below. Every noble impulse has its root in man’s higher nature. The more we attune ourselves to it, the more powerful its influence shall grow, and before long the animal man will have transformed himself into divine man. It is up to the incarnated *Manas*—mind working through this brain and body—to consciously turn within for help and guidance.

Manas per se is not immortal. It has to acquire immortality by uniting itself with Spirit. *Manas* entangled in the worldly desires *can* aspire to immortality because of the presence of the God within. Whenever *Manas* is able to unite, even for a brief moment, with its

Divine Parent, it receives an intuitive flash, displaying the mark of a genius. And for enlightened personages like Buddha and Shankara, this union is permanent. As they say, what a man has done, other men can do. We too can attain to enlightenment, not solely on personal strength, but by holding onto the finger offered by the Great Lord within—what H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine* calls *Monad*—“a plank of salvation” for the personalities to hold on to. At the end of each incarnation, it is the aroma of experiences of life, those which were in tune with our divine nature—universal, impersonal, compassionate—that gets added to the Spiritual Ego or *Buddhi-Manas* and thereby becomes immortal—enabling the radiance of *Atman* to shine through.

Monad has passed through millions of transformations in matter, evolving better and better forms. It has garnered experiences in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms to finally reach the human stage. Impulse to evolution comes from the Monad. When the human stage was reached, there was man in body but not in mind. He was like an animal but with a brain of deeper and higher capacity. *Manas* that was lying latent was lighted up or activated by those beings who had already undergone evolution on other systems. This was a turning point in man’s life. With activation of *Manas*, a wide gulf now separates man from animal, as now man can take his evolution into his own hands. He has free will, so that he can choose to accelerate or retard his progress. He can choose to become like an animal or raise himself to the level of Gods. Man is now sevenfold: Physical Body; Astral Body or Design Body; Desire nature or *Kama* or Animal Soul; Life or *Prana*; *Manas* or Human Soul; *Buddhi* or Spiritual Soul; *Atma* or Spirit.

Man has to realize that he is not his body, emotions, desires or ideas that are changing all the time and that the body is a sacred instrument for the real man to work through.

SUFISM—MOHAMMEDAN MYSTICISM

II

THE TEACHER occupies a special place in Sufism and there is a very close bond between teacher and disciple. But as there are many false teachers, the disciple has to be careful and make sure of the genuineness of the teacher. The genuine teacher gives instructions and then leaves the disciple on his own. The teachings are not the same for every aspirant but vary according to the nature and constitution of the seeker. The Sufi teacher is called by various names such as *Arif* (sage), *Murshid* (guide), *Pir* (Elder) or *Sheikh* (chief). The disciple must have complete trust in the ability of the teacher or Guide. Complete faith, obedience, submission of the will, respect, confidence, and secrecy on the part of the disciple is very essential. The function of the teacher is to remove the veils which hide the truth from the aspirant. The disciple must begin with humility, must slowly understand the point of view of the teacher.

Once the teaching begins, the aspirant must not hope for any miraculous transformation. The teacher brings about gradual transformation in the disciple—like the seed growing into a plant and then bearing flowers, fruits and so on—by prescribing various meditations. The teaching is given bit-by-bit, because if one is suddenly taken from a dark room into sunlight, he would be dazzled and not see anything at all (*Sufi Mysticism* by Krishna Bahdur). Especially is this true as regards experiencing Truth, Reality or God. There are twin terms, “Shining and Concealment,” as regards perception of God. This is well illustrated by the famous, allegorical romance of *Layla-Majnun*. The tribe of Majnun (“the madman”) interceded with the people of Layla so that Majnun could be allowed to be illuminated with the “sight of Layla’s beauty.” Layla’s tribe replied that there was no harm, but Majnun had no power to behold Layla’s beauty. The story goes that acceding to the request, they

brought him near Layla's tent and only lifted a corner of the tent. Majnun could glance only at the fold of Layla's skirt and yet fell senseless. Idries Shah remarks:

Illumination cannot be sustained by someone who is not ready for it. At the best it will throw him into an ecstatic state in which he is paralyzed, as it were, and unable to consummate the contact. This is why, although dervish poets speak of being "mad for love," they emphasize that this madness is the result of preview, not of genuine experience. It is recognized that genuine experience must take an active, mutual, meaningful form, not a form of useless intoxication. (*The Sufis*, p. 313)

One of the things that the teacher strives to do is to remove the disciple's habit of thinking according to a fixed pattern. One must fill up the grooves and not have a one-track mind. The disciple should not be in a hurry to jump to conclusions regarding cause and effect. This is illustrated by one of the stories of Mulla Nasruddin. Once the Mulla was passing by when a man fell off the roof. The man was not hurt, but Nasruddin was hospitalized. The Mulla said that what you can infer from this is that it is not certainty that if a man falls from the roof he will break his neck. "He fell and I broke my neck."

The journey of the disciple is through various states and at every point he is tested by the Guide. The inward journey of the aspirant involving various psychological challenges and transformations is beautifully depicted in a classic of Sufism and Persian literature, called the "Parliament of the Birds," by Fariduddin Attar. The birds, who represent humanity, are asked by their leader hoopoe, the Sufi, to go on a quest to find their mysterious King called Simurgh. Each bird is initially excited and then begins to make excuses, and hoopoe tells them that a spiritual aspirant should not be self-seeking but do what is right. The aspirant cannot make progress if he is complacent. The motive with which the discipline is undertaken is all-important. *Light on the Path* says:

Seek out the way....Is it the way you desire or is it that there is dim perspective in your vision of great heights to be scaled by yourself, of a great future for you to encompass? Be warned. The way is to be sought for its own sake, not with regard to your feet that shall tread it. (pp. 4 and 17)

The birds are told that they would have to cross seven valleys; this reminds one of seven gates, or "seven strongholds held by cruel crafty Powers—passions incarnate," mentioned in *The Voice of the Silence*. In crossing the first valley, called the Valley of Quest, the disciple has to renounce all desires. Then, he has to cross the Valley of Love, where he would experience deep longing for the Beloved that has to be overcome. In the Valley of Detachment, the disciple has to overcome desires and dependence and transcend the love for outward physical form, etc.

One teacher remarks that Attar refers not only to the ecstatic who does not take his mysticism further than rapture. He also means the ecstatic's parallel, the person who feels frequent and incomplete love, and who, although deeply affected by it, is not regenerated and altered by it to such an extent that his very being undergoes a change. (*The Sufis*, p. 122)

Then he goes to the Valley of Unification where he learns to see Unity in diversity. Then comes the Valley of Astonishment where he becomes aware of the deeper knowledge. He then comes to the final Valley or the Valley of Death. Here he understands the paradox and the mystery, of how, even when the drop merges with the ocean, the drop remains the drop and is not annihilated.

Finally one has to shift from learning to wisdom. A true Sufi is not interested in book knowledge. Bullhe Shah, a Sufi of Punjab, was sent to school as a boy, and while the other boys mastered the entire alphabet, Bullhe was stuck with the first letter of the alphabet, Alif. The teacher tried to teach him other letters, but to no purpose. He was tutored by private tutors, but again to no avail. Finally, seeing his father's unhappiness, he ran away from home to the

forest. It is said that in the forest he saw Alif (One Reality) manifested in everything—trees, hills, rocks, birds, beasts. He then came back to his teacher, bowed low and said, “I have learnt the lesson you were good enough to teach me,” and asked his permission to write it on the wall. The teacher recognized the boy but granted him permission to write on the wall. Bullhe Shah wrote the letter “Alif” on the wall and it, of itself, divided into two. Alif represents the ONE, and as the Pythagoreans say, the One becomes Two, then Three and then Four and Seven and so on, giving rise to manifestation. When the teacher humbly accepted Bullhe Shah as teacher, Bullhe sang:

Leave your learning aside.
Fill not your room with tomes.
You burden the mind with learning.
Cease; for it has no use.
In pursuing the false, lose not the true.
One Alif is all you need to know.

(*Sufi Mysticism*, pp. 145-46)

As Hazrat Inayat Khan, a Sufi teacher, points out, a mystic is not a dreamer but a balanced person—as wise in worldly, as in spiritual matters. For a mystic, God is all and all is God—the source and goal of all. God is not an abstraction for a mystic, but a Reality. At the same time, he knows that for others God is a concept and that they have not comprehended God fully. He may even sing with peasants in a procession and before a stone idol, for he has no desire to show them that his belief and realization are greater than the realization of others. (*The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, Vol. X, pp. 14-15)

The Sufi does not worship anything but God, the Unique, and he holds that the existence and the place of God are not inferred by argument. That knowledge is the result of the Certitude (*Yakina*). There is the Science of Certainty, when truth is revealed through special states by experience and not by cerebration. God is with

the Sufis, as with Theosophy, Unspeakable, the beginningless and endless Reality. It is beautifully expressed by a Sufi mystic, Hasan of Basra:

“From where does that light come?” I asked a child
who was walking with a candle held in his hand.
The child blew it out at once. “Tell me where the
light has gone” he said, “then I will tell you where it came
from.” (*Sufi Mysticism*, p. 69)

There is the doctrine of essence, which is of great importance when applied to the relation between personality and the Self. Thus, there is the essence of a thing that is the inner essence (*dhat*) and the Truth of a thing (*hakikat*). Truth is the inner meaning or objective reality. People normally perceive outward use of a thing. We know a lamp to give light and heat, and that it can be used for decoration. But other functions of its true reality are imperceptible for the ordinary man. (*The Sufis*, p. 308)

An object *as we see it* is not identical with the object *as it is in itself*. So, Kant said that there is something like a “thing-in-itself.” Absolute knowledge is the knowledge of the thing-in-itself.

Dervish thinking is based on the concept of essence. They say: “He who knows his essential self, knows his God.” Knowledge of essential self is the first step. A Dervish has to learn to appreciate various stages and conditions of the essence and its progressive refinement. A theoretician may say, “I will think this out,” but a Dervish says, “I will prepare myself to *perceive* this.” In understanding the human spirit (essence), *i.e.*, in acquiring self-knowledge there are certain hindrances or veils: (1) Desires (2) Separation (being self-centred) (3) Hypocrisy (4) Desire for Praise and Love (5) Illusions of almost divine importance (6) Parsimony (7) Greed (8) Irresponsibility (9) Inconstancy (10) Negligence—Slothfulness. (*The Sufis*, pp. 309-10)

(*To be concluded*)

DUTY—THE ROYAL TALISMAN

EVER since the birth of orthodoxy, of exoteric religion and of black magic, thousands upon thousands of years ago, two predominant vices have held sway over the minds of men—Doubt and Hypocrisy. In pure Occultism, White Magic or Divine Wisdom, these two are known as unpardonable sins. The first anthropomorphists who worshipped form and matter were the creators of these two vices, which invariably go together.

Doubt is ever rooted in the doubt of and about one's own Higher Self and Inner God. Hypocrisy is related to the lower personal self. The self of matter is like a woman with many paramours—innumerable expressions of hypocrisy—who ever doubts the very existence of virgin chastity or marital fidelity.

Hypocrisy is the human psychological aspect of the metaphysical *Maya*; the great Buddha taught that life has coverings which give to our existence and problems false meanings and so veil the Light of *Nirvana* that its very existence is doubted.

Hypocrisy is pardonable in the ordinary man whose upbringing—social, religious and educational—keeps him in crass ignorance about the God within him. Anthropomorphism and Atheism, *i.e.*, religious orthodoxy and scientific orthodoxy, blind him; however different these two orthodoxies, they produce the same result—doubt in regard to the Divinity which abides, albeit in a slumbering state, in the heart of every man.

Unpardonable becomes hypocrisy when a person accepts the rational philosophy of Theosophy and its very primary teaching, the existence of a living God within the consciousness of man. No student deliberately commits the sin of hypocrisy; for no student deliberately doubts the existence of his own Inner Ego and Higher Self. But is there anyone among us who is absolutely free from doubt and hypocrisy and who does not, *unconsciously to himself*, commit these sins?

But, while all aspirants slip into these sins, the earnest rectify

their mistakes with the aid of self-examination and study. But there are others whose Karma blinds them and whose defects are not unadulterated vices but are the defects of their quality and virtues. One of the most pitiable instances of such a sinful aspirant is the Selfish Devotee. The very taint of his motive is hidden from him; fancying himself a devoted servant of the Cause, ever ready to extend a helping hand, he, unconsciously to himself, enveloped in egotism, self-righteousness and false piety, falls—never suspecting that he is developing into an Uriah Heep while believing himself to be on the highway to Adeptship.

Turn to Mr. Judge and note what he has to say about doubt:

Some too have doubt and darkness, the doubt mostly as to themselves. This should not be harboured, for it is a wile of the lower man striving to keep you back among the mediocre of the race....

Doubt is not to be solely guarded against when applied to Masters (whom I know you doubt not). It is most to be guarded and repelled in relation to oneself....We are not to try to be chelas or to do any one thing in this incarnation, but only to know and to be just as much as we can, and the possibility is not measured....

All doubts come from the lower nature, and *never* in any case from the higher nature.

This doubt in regard to one's own Divinity does not always take the familiar forms—of despair, of nonchalance, and so on. Very often it is subtle in manifestation, producing subtle forms of hypocrisy.

In this Kali-Yuga many are the lures which draw the aspirant to Adeptship away from the Path of Purity. One of the most powerful lures is that of running away from one's Karma in the belief that there is a Call for self-sacrifice in behalf of the Cause of Masters and Human Brotherhood.

The teaching reiterated by W. Q. Judge is very often overlooked, that "Duty persistently followed is the highest Yoga." He calls it

“the royal talisman.” He writes:

Perhaps I see in you—I hope I mistake not—a pure desire to seek Knowledge for its own sake, and that all others may be benefited. So I would point out to you the only royal road, the one vehicle. Do all those acts, physical, mental, moral, for the reason that they must be done, instantly resigning all interest in them, offering them up upon the altar.

Doing that which must be done, but instantly resigning interest in what is done—duty without interest in the accruing results. This, be it noted, leads to knowledge—this, the method which must be ensouled by the pure motive—is of benefit to others. Mr. Judge further explains:

I do not say, nor have I said, that you ought to do something other than you do....It is one's duty to try and find one's own duty and not to get into the duty of another. And in this it is of the highest importance that we should detach our *minds* (as well as our tongues) from the duties and acts of others, whenever those are outside of our own. If you can find this fine line of action and inaction you will have made great progress....Often we do not know our duty, but that too is our own fault; it is a Karmic disability.

In another place he gives a very direct teaching on the subject which would-be occultists will do well to memorize, take to heart and practise from day to day:

It is not that you must rush madly or boldly out *to do, to do*. Do what you find to do. Desire ardently to do it, and even when you shall not have succeeded in carrying anything out but some small duties, some words of warning, your strong desire will strike like Vulcan upon other hearts in the world, and suddenly you will find that done which you had longed to be the doer of. Then rejoice that another had been so fortunate as to make such a meritorious Karma....

Remember it is the little things the work is done through....
The very first step towards being positive and Self-centred

is in the cheerful performance of duty. Try to take pleasure in doing what is your duty, and especially in the *little* duties of life. When doing any duty put your whole heart into it.

When the instructions contained in the above citations are neglected, then the Selfish Devotee is born. In a couplet of *The Voice of the Silence* this whole teaching is imparted, but it is the genius of W. Q. Judge who explains it in a way which the ardent practitioner of this era admiringly accepts and in silent gratitude applies. Here is H.P.B.'s rendition of that couplet:

The selfish devotee lives to no purpose. The man who does not go through his appointed work in life—has lived in vain.

Follow the wheel of life; follow the wheel of duty to race and kin, to friend and foe, and close thy mind to pleasures as to pain. Exhaust the law of Karmic retribution. Gain Siddhis for thy future birth.

To go through our appointed work, *i.e.*, our congenital duties, the duties which Karma has brought us, but without seeking pleasures or shunning pains which result from their performance. Thus not only is freedom from Karma achieved but also yogic powers are unfolded; or, to repeat and complete the above-quoted words of W. Q. Judge:

Duty persistently followed is the highest yoga, and is better than mantrams or any posture, or any other thing. If you can do no more than duty it will bring you to the goal.

Now, in this correct performance of duties are developed primarily Faith in the Inner Ruler and Veracity in outer life. The artlessness and ingenuousness of the child-state which has to be attained is reached through this veracity in the doing of duties; the doer thereof is the Soul in whom we have faith. Those who have faith in others before they have faith in their own Soul cannot but go wrong.

To avoid hypocrisy we should develop Faith in the God within, in the Inner Ruler immortal. And remembering him as continuously

as possible, we should work outwardly, confining ourselves to the field of duty. As we grow, that field will expand, for as H.P.B. has pointed out in *The Key to Theosophy*:

Duty is that which *is due* to Humanity, to our fellowmen, neighbours, family, and especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves. This is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, leaves us spiritually insolvent and moral bankrupts in our next incarnation. Theosophy is the quintessence of *duty*.

All of us are debtors to Nature and to humanity. But unless we find out the quality and the quantity of that debt we may turn speculators on the psychic plane, gamblers who gamble more and more in the mere hope of acquiring merit by which the debt incurred might be paid. Therefore the very straight warning of H.P.B. to all would-be chelas:

A man tied by his duty to one place has no right to desert it in order to fulfil another duty, let it be however much greater; for the first *duty* taught in Occultism is to do one's duty unflinchingly by *every duty*.

Light and darkness chase each other through the days and the nights. Real and false devotion also run a race in the life of every earnest aspirant. Devotee and Selfish Devotee by rotation, so to speak, play each his part in the Occult World as in the heart of the aspirant. It is for each individual to establish himself in the Life of Duty in such a way that the very desire to grow and to serve becomes automatic and his mind does not always turn to peer whether he is growing or serving.

WHEN we do not find peace of mind in ourselves it is useless to look for it elsewhere.

—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

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: Is it necessary to study metaphysics?

Answer: Ethics and metaphysics are said to be two wings of a bird. It helps us practise ethics if we understand the basis, or the reason why we ought to do what we are advised. For instance, it is a bit of metaphysics which tells us that if we find fault with others the “elementals”—units of life energy—pass on that fault from the condemned person to us and then before we are aware we begin to exhibit that very fault for which we condemned another. We are required to know what the elementals are, but once understood we have the basis that makes us cautious at every step. Every thought combines itself with an elemental and becomes an entity, which can be attracted by another person of consubstantial nature.

Study and knowledge of metaphysics is absolutely necessary for practical occultism. H.P.B. makes a distinction between an Occultist and a Theosophist. She writes:

It is easy to become a Theosophist. Any person of average intellectual capacities, and a leaning toward the metaphysical; of pure, unselfish life, who finds more joy in helping his neighbour than in receiving help himself; one who is ever ready to sacrifice his own pleasures for the sake of other people; and who loves Truth, Goodness and Wisdom for their own sake, not for the benefit they may confer—is a Theosophist. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

As can be seen, even in becoming a Theosophist, a certain amount of acquaintance with metaphysics is essential. But much

more so when one wants to become an occultist. To be a true occultist means to put oneself upon the “path which leads to the knowledge of what is good to do, as to the right discrimination of good from evil; a path which also leads a man to that power through which he can do the good he desires, often without even apparently lifting a finger.” Those of us who cannot master it in this incarnation have been asked to keep our mental luggage ready. However, emphasis on study of metaphysics does not mean that ethics is unimportant.

In *Light on the Path*, we are told that if there is a gulf between a bad man and a good man, then, there is a greater gulf between a good man and a spiritual man. Mr. Crosbie suggests:

Good motive without knowledge makes sorry work sometimes. All down the ages there is a record of good motive, but power and zeal misused, for want of knowledge. Theosophy is the path of knowledge. It was given out in order, among other things, that good motive and wisdom might go hand in hand. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 4)

In case we come by some “practical” information and we stumble upon its application, then we would only do more harm than good unless we are fully versed in its *rationale* and are well grounded in the ethics. Metaphysics helps us to develop intuition or the power to read between the lines.

In adopting a profession in life, a person readily undertakes the course of study necessary to his future vocation; so, too, in spiritual life. We can say that metaphysics is like a poem; it is sometimes difficult to get the meaning of a poem—its import is often not put in plain words, as in prose—but when we struggle to get the meaning, it aids in developing the intuitive faculty.

Study of metaphysics gives the depth and breadth of mind necessary for acquiring wisdom. Real goodness and virtue are born of an enlightened heart and a pure mind. Study helps us in achieving this. A Master intuitively knows whom to help and whom to keep

in mire and misery, which is his best teacher. *The Voice of the Silence* says:

The seeds of Wisdom cannot sprout and grow in airless space. To live and reap experience, the mind needs breadth and depth and points to draw it towards the Diamond Soul.

We must remember that this is not expected of an ordinary person, but of one who has decided to walk the path *earnestly*. As *Raja Yoga or Occultism* points out, “A Lay-Chela is a man of the world who affirms his desire to become wise in spiritual things.” A person who wants to become an athlete may be asked to do physical exercise for one hour every day or even run 200 metres every day. Similarly, one who desires to pursue the spiritual life in dead earnest, and aspires to walk the path of adeptship, may be required to undertake practices that may appear strenuous and troublesome. The impossibility of going any further without learning to grapple with metaphysics is well described in the following words:

For *outside* of metaphysics no occult philosophy, no esotericism is possible. It is like trying to explain the aspirations and affections, the love and hatred, the most private and sacred workings in the soul and mind of the living man, by an anatomical description of the chest and brain of his dead body. (*S.D.*, I, 169)

In the end, by pursuit of metaphysics combined with ethics, we are going to get the discrimination or *Viveka* as to good and bad, right and wrong, permanent and impermanent.

Lastly, we may say that certain things suggested in Theosophical discipline may not be clear to us at once. But we must never reject anything hastily.

Question: We understand that condemnation of others is morally degrading to the criticizer himself. But some of us are quite sensitive to others’ remarks about *us*—whether of praise or blame—

especially to snide criticism. How are we to face up to others' opinion?

Answer: An ability to consider a critic's opinion during discussion and exchange of ideas in matters other than ourselves is a duty and a trait of an intellectually honest person. This objectivity is difficult enough, indeed, for some when facing contradiction. But to swallow others' direct or indirect remarks about oneself is quite painful to some "sensitive" individuals. But is this sensitivity a positive trait in our character, if we cannot take a criticism even from a well-meaning friend? People say: "I cannot help being sensitive." Yet to be in control of oneself, if not of the situation, is our responsibility and moral obligation.

It is one of the tests of our moral stamina how we respond, not impulsively react, to others' behaviour. Even the greatest among men like Christ and Buddha had to face calumny, humiliating insults, and to wear even a crown of thorns. They left an example of the perfection of the virtue of "patience sweet that naught can ruffle." Agreed, we are neither saints nor saviours, but we are on the path toward the ideal before us. And the injunction is to keep our own peace at all times.

Granted that the real art of (academic) criticism if done in an objective manner is a skill, which not many possess. But even while considering objective issues, a derogatory fling at a person or persons deserves our gentle but firm correction. If the remark is directed at *us* we need not take offence and start a disputation or be resentful and sulk. Here is our moment of test. Can we keep our peace intact and not let others succeed in "hurting" us? This is an ethical question for a student-aspirant who considers life as a training ground for soul's development.

Also, has the criticism any fairness and truth in it? Then let us accept it as an eye-opener or a reminder of things that need correction. If we feel it is an unfair reproach, then we must examine it closely. This requires detachment (another virtue) and intellectual honesty. If the remark is not deserving or true, leave it alone and

brush it off from memory. For memory, especially of unpleasantness, is a great obstacle to soul progress. We must have enough sense of humour to take all things lightly in a sporting spirit and manfully. It is said, "Every fool can find fault that a great many wise men cannot remedy!" Why should others' uncharitable opinions concern us? We must strike a balance between being too self-opinionated and self-distrust. W. Q. Judge said that there is an ever-present inner censor and a silent witness, whose perfect judgment we must heed. If the conscience is clear, then others' opinion cannot hurt.

Are we, as student-aspirants and seekers of the higher life, willing to cultivate patience, forgiveness, indifference, detachment, and endurance, or do we succumb and thus get hurt through our own exaggerated self-importance? For it is this, our constant expectation or craving that others should always consider us favourably, which is the deeper cause of our so-called "sensitivity" or touchiness. It is easy to lose patience and fail to maintain sweet reasonableness. It needs cultivation of inner stamina to withstand at first small darts of abuse, to be able to face greater calumny at advanced stages of spiritual trials.

We have a living example of our teacher H.P.B., how she responded to slander and disgrace hurled at her! Someone has said, there was reproof on her lips but a smile in her eyes! Reproof, not because of personal calumny that would kill her noble reputation, but because she was an over-protective mother to the Theosophical Society, and was always defensive on its behalf. If we never crave for approval and applause, we will not be affected by criticism and condemnation. And it is this attitude that needs to be cultivated by a student who wants to tread the path of heroic virtues.

LET him who seeks, not cease seeking until he finds.

—*The Gospel According to St. Thomas*

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

A research team at the University of Michigan studied placebo-related brain chemistry in August 2005. A placebo is a blank sample used in place of the actual drug or medicine. The research group, led by neuroscientist Jon-Kar Zubieta, induced pain in the jaws of fourteen men by injecting a salt solution. Each was given a placebo—an injection said to be an experimental pain medication. Nine of the men said the pain subsided. PET scans showed differences in brain activity, as those who reported pain relief after taking the placebo showed increased activity in parts of the brain associated with modulating pain, writes David Epstein (*Discover*, January 2006). “If somebody believes something will work,” says Zubieta, “that positive expectation by itself, through different connections in the brain, activates mechanisms that suppress pain. We saw a linear relationship between how people reported pain and how their brains released opioids.” The research is being done to minimize the placebo effect and find out the actual effect of the drug in pain relief.

Faith—either on the part of the patient or the doctor—has always played a great role in healing. “With faith all things are possible,” says *Light on the Path*. All down the ages there have been innumerable examples of faith healing. H.P.B. writes:

Healing, to deserve the name, requires either faith in the patient, or robust health united with a strong will, in the operator. *With expectancy supplemented by faith, one can cure himself of almost any morbid condition.* The tomb of a saint; a holy relic; a talisman; a bit of paper or garment that has been handled by the supposed healer; a nostrum; a penance, or a ceremonial; the laying on of hands, or a few words impressively pronounced—either will do. It is a question of temperament, imagination, self-cure. In thousands of instances, the doctor, the priest, or the relic has had credit for healings that were solely and simply due to the patient’s unconscious will. The

woman with the bloody issue....who touched the robe of Jesus, was told that her “faith” had made her whole. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 216)

We are aware of three states of matter—solid, liquid and gas. What is the fourth state of matter? The answer is plasma, so named by an American chemist, Irving Langmuir, in 1928. Plasma is a gas in which atoms have been stripped of electrons, *i.e.*, ionized. In the late 1800s, an Englishman named Sir William Crookes spoke about the “fourth state” of matter and described the ionized gas. Walter Gekelman, researcher on plasma in the laboratory at UCLA, along with other scientists, is intrigued by the behaviour of plasma. Plasma has magnetic and electric fields that move around unpredictably, altering their environment. But as the environment changes, there is corresponding change in plasma and thus there is continuous play of action and reaction. It is usually hot, but it can also be cold. “Ninety nine percent of the universe is made of it. The Earth is surrounded by it. The aurora borealis is a lovely example of it. So is lightning. The sun is made of it,” writes Joel Achenbach (*National Geographic*, February 2006). It is believed that the core of the sun is plasma, denser than lead, which leads to fusion of atomic nuclei, releasing a huge amount of energy.

Plasma could be the key to new energy sources. It is already being used for multiple purposes. Thin beams of highly accelerated plasma are likely to be used in rockets; cold plasma is essential to many industrial operations. Mounir Laroussi, a physicist at old Dominion University, has developed a sort of pencil that shoots out a small stream of cold plasma. It can sterilize equipments that would be damaged by heat. It can be used to disinfect flesh wounds without damaging neighbouring cells and it is said to make the fibres in disposable diapers more absorbent.

The article, “What is Matter and What is Force?” (*The*

Theosophist, September, 1882), mentions Professor Crookes' discovery of "radiant matter," or "the fourth state of matter," by refining the gases to a condition so ethereal, as to reach a state of matter that could be described as "ultra-gaseous," exhibiting an entirely novel set of properties. Several great men of science admitted the existence of such matter. They accepted the possibility on the analogy that just as there are sound and light vibrations, to which our ears and eyes are insensible, so there could be matter beyond the gaseous state. The fourth state of matter was described as "the first flying molecules, [which] if left to obey the laws of kinetic force without mutual interference, *will cease to exhibit the properties characteristic of the gaseous state, and take on an entirely new set of properties.*"

A Master of Wisdom points out that the three states of matter—solid, liquid and gaseous—are but so many stages in an unbroken chain of physical continuity. Beyond the fourth state of matter, there are fifth, sixth and even *seventh* conditions of matter, as well as seven senses in man. It is not impossible that in time these higher states of matter and higher dimensions of space will be discovered and nature will be found to be septenary. The source of electricity lies beyond the fourth state of matter.

A Master of Wisdom observes that the nature of the sun and its various phenomena pertain to the sixth state of matter. Thus:

The astronomers may yet arrive at accepting the occult theory, *viz.*, that they have to look to the 6th state of matter, for divulging to them the true nature of their photospheres, chromospheres, appendages, prominences, projections and horns. (*The Theosophist*, September 1883)

How old is human occupation of the Americas? For a long time researchers considered that human settlement in America was not

more than 12,000 years old. However, the remains of a human settlement at Monte Verde, Chile, discovered in 1977, were judged at least 1,000 years older than the accepted figure of 12,000 years. Since then it has remained a controversial issue. A team of researchers, led by Sylvia Gonzales of Liverpool John Moores University in England, claimed human footprints discovered in Central Mexico to be at least 40,000 years old. The evidence came to light in 2003 while studying a formation of volcanic ash in the Valsequillo Basin, south of Puebla, where they spotted marks of small depressions, in an area of hardened ash that had long been quarried by locals. After spending two years studying the depressions and using several dating techniques, the marks were claimed to be ancient human footprints. Many scientists have challenged the conclusions and dating techniques. Some archaeologists and geologists visiting the site say that "the proposed footprint tracks cross several different layers of ash and in some cases form rectangular patterns. This suggests that the marks may not be footprints at all but rather modern quarry marks left when workers cut and extracted rectangular slabs of the concretelike ash....The site was too disturbed by modern human activity to yield conclusions," writes Michael W. Robbins (*Discover*, January 2005, reprinted in January 2006 issue of *Discover*). Gonzales aims to return to the site this year for further investigation.

A series of articles titled "A Land of Mystery" appeared in the early issues of the magazine, *The Theosophist*—the first one appearing in October 1879. In these articles, H.P.B. points out that the European conceit had led to almost complete ignorance of the wonders of pre-Columbian arts and architecture in both South and North America. Many of the stupendous structures that still exist—temples, palaces and cities of Peru and Mexico that rival Egyptian antiquities—are considered to be the work of far earlier races. H.P.B. assembled evidence to suggest an immense antiquity for such archaeological remains. H.P.B. also suggests a connection between the Aryans and the Americans in the far past.

In the same articles H.P.B. points out that it stands scientifically proved, beyond any doubt or cavil, that humans have lived in America at least 50,000 years ago. An Honorary Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Society cited the evidence in his lecture, as follows:

“Near New Orleans, in one part of the modern delta, in excavating for gas works, a series of beds, almost wholly made up of vegetable matter, were dug through. In the excavation, at a depth of 16 feet from the upper surface, and beneath four buried forests, one on the top of the other, the labourers discovered some charcoal and the skeleton of a man, the cranium of which was reported to be that of the type of the aboriginal Red Indian race. To this skeleton, Dr. Dowler ascribed an antiquity of some 50,000 years.” [H.P.B. comments:] The irrepressible cycle in the course of time brought down the descendants of the contemporaries of the late inhabitant of this skeleton, and intellectually as well as physically they have degenerated, as the present elephant has degenerated from his proud and monstrous forefather, the antediluvian *Sivatherium* whose fossil remains are still found in the Himalayas; or, as the lizard has from the plesiosaurus. (*H.P.B. Series No. 12*, p. 32)

“Certain excavations in America in mounds and in caves, have already yielded in isolated cases groups of skeletons of nine and twelve feet high. These belong to tribes of the early Fifth Race, now degenerated to an average size of between five and six feet,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 293)

PERSEVERANCE opens up treasures which bring perennial joy.

—M. K. GANDHI

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India under Regd.No.3899/57.
The Theosophical Movement Reg. No. MH/MR/South-166/2006-08

The United Lodge of Theosophists

DECLARATION

THE policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy, without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion.

The work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues. That work and that end is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF, a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.

It holds that the unassailable *Basis for Union* among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is “*similarity of aim, purpose and teaching*,” and therefore has neither Constitution, By-Laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that *basis*. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity.

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and

It welcomes to its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.

“*The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all.*”

Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its “Declaration,” I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine.

The foregoing is the form signed by Associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists. Inquiries are invited from all persons to whom this Movement may appeal. Cards for signature will be sent upon request, and every possible assistance furnished Associates in their studies and in efforts to form local Lodges. There are no fees of any kind, and no formalities to be complied with.

Edited and printed by D. Parajia (at Shantadurga Printers Pvt. Ltd.)
and published by her for Theosophy Co. (India) Pvt. Ltd., Theosophy Hall,
40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020.