

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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TRUE FAITH—SOME REFLECTIONS

WHAT is faith? In Sanskrit it is called *Shraddha*. Is it belief in something or someone? If so, can there be any one absolutely without faith? The ordinary man has faith in his survival. Everyone has faith in the laws which are already discovered and by means of which he can carry on his life. Faith is inherent in every human being. It is due to lack of faith that knowledge of things divine eludes modern man. True religion must seek to replace blind belief by reasoned faith, and then by intuitive faith. Blind faith is based on human authority or hero-worship. Credulity and unquestioned cynicism are but two sides of the same coin. Both these are forms of mental laziness which avoid critical thinking. Questioning is the middle path between gullibility and cynicism, and that is the steep path of an honest skeptic. There lies more faith in an honest doubt than in thousand creeds of the world. Healthy skepticism or honest doubt leads one to an ongoing quest for truth.

“Faith fixed on *anything* will bring results, and men are blinded to real and true faith by the results of even false faith,” writes Mr. Crosbie. The power of faith in itself is limitless, because it proceeds from the very Highest. But most of the time we place our faith on *externalities*—gods, men, dogmas, systems of thought, and thus, limit the power of Spirit, which cannot expand beyond the limitations of our ideal. There are innumerable examples of faith-cures, where the person was cured as a result of intense faith in the

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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healer or the doctor. Today, increasing number of educated middle-class people are rushing to the *tantriks* or *Babas* for getting a job, a bank loan, and wishing for a quick and miraculous solution to many of their problems, without exerting themselves. Once such a person is able to bring about a cure, or help to reach the desired goal through his powers, their faith in him is established, and they do not hesitate to follow him blindly. Mr. Crosbie explains narrow faith as against the true faith, thus:

An outside God, or an outside devil, an outside Law, an outside atonement for sins, the idea of sin being other than a denial of our own spiritual nature (the unpardonable sin), are all external faiths of the nature of *tamas*, or ignorance. Ignorance always leads to superstition. Superstition leads to false belief, and false belief to false faith. . . . We have to place our faith upon that which is not external, but *internal*. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 355)

In the *Book of Confidences*, the householder speaks to the Sage and laments that he despairs nothing more than his loss of faith in human nature. Even when he reposed faith in family members he only experienced disappointment, ingratitude and betrayal of trust. The Sage replies that it is only the foolish man who places his faith and trust in *persons*. “Human nature is not to *be* trusted; this the Wise of all the ages know.” Reposing faith in persons is the beginning, and to gain truth, one must renounce his old false faiths. The Sage advises the householder that he should not place his faith even in the Sage himself because he too, has a human nature.

The Sage then makes him see that there is That in every human being which can be trusted—which stands behind his human nature, which is the Witness, the Spectator, the Knower, the Judge. In *That* all faith resides and comes to rest. It is the source of exhaustless and eternal Power, the Power to take the better course. When we place faith in “That” which underlies the human nature, we may take heart that “however much my friend may betray me, I can have faith that someday, somewhere, he will repair the evil done to

me and to all beings, however long ago. *That* is impartial; *That* expects nothing; *That* cannot be added to nor taken from; It ever is, the Source of Faith.” He should not close his eyes to human pitfalls, but learn from his own nature to deal with other human natures as he would find them, and when his faith was firmly established, he could be sure that the betrayals of all the world cannot affect his supreme faith.

If we are aiming at *integral development*, aiming to be not just good but *spiritually perfect* individuals, then who shall we choose as our ideal? We become of the nature of the ideal on which our faith is fixed. The power of our spirit is limitless, but by choosing an ideal with limitations, we unconsciously limit the power of the spirit to expand beyond the limitations of the ideal. There is a further danger in taking any *living person* as ideal. As Mr. Crosbie says, it is not the best thing to rely upon any *living person*, to the extent of *idealizing* him; for if such a person is even seemingly swept away in darkness—such as lapse in discipline, or is accused and slandered even falsely—then it would dishearten us. Many spiritual leaders have lost some of their followers because of accusation of their involvement—justly or unjustly—in a sex-scandal; or accusation of moneymaking or corruption. Hence, both Mr. Judge and Mr. Crosbie advised fellow Theosophists, not to put them on any pedestal or to think highly of them. We are asked to accept only the Masters as our Ideals.

We should learn to have faith in that which lies behind ordinary human nature, because that alone can give us hope in the darkness of *Kaliyuga*. In our day to day dealings with human beings, when we encounter meanness, selfishness and indifference of human nature, it is but natural to feel that people would never improve. But H.P.B. cautions: “Selfishness, indifference, and brutality can never be the normal state of the race—to believe so would be to despair of humanity—and that no Theosophist can do.”

Prof. C. S. Lewis gives several examples to show that often faith based on reason begins to sway due to emotions and

imagination. For instance, a boy that is learning to swim knows through reason that an unsupported human body does not necessarily sink in water, and in fact, he has seen many people float and swim. And yet, when his instructor takes away his hand and leaves him unsupported, he may not be able to continue believing it, so that fear gets the better of him and he goes down. Thus, faith is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing mood. Thus, for instance, having decided to live the life according to spiritual principles, there should be no turning back. The opinions of the people around—in family, society or office—should not influence our basic decision.

We all profess to have full faith in God, and yet how often do we witness a pious person announcing that he no longer believed in God, whom he worshipped every single day, if that God failed to save him from a certain calamity! Likewise, our supposed unshakable faith in the justice of Karma is set at naught when we resort to all kinds of ceremonies and rituals to avert the calamity. Our faith turns out to be not as strong as we believed it to be. In his book, *A Grief Observed*, Prof. C. S. Lewis says, “You never know how much you really believe in anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you.” For instance, it is easy to say that you believe the rope to be very strong as long as you are going to use it to tie a box. But suppose you had to hang by that rope over a precipice, then would you not try to find out how much you really trusted the rope? Only a real risk tests the reality of a belief, and through pain we come out of mere *verbal thinking* and *notional belief*.

“Faith,” says *Light on the Path*, “is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. For it is a covenant or engagement between man’s divine part and his lesser self.” A covenant is a pact or agreement. The covenant between man’s lower and higher nature is analogous to the agreement between a child and his parents. It is based on trust. A child knows that even though he is scolded, reprimanded by his parents, or denied certain

pleasures, it is all for his good. Likewise, the man of *true* faith who knows that the universe is governed by a just and impartial Law is able to maintain his faith in the divine nature, even as he passes through painful experiences.

If we have faith in Karma, that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, we would not complain, we would not become bitter as a result of pain or adversity, and there would be no place for self-pity. Anxiety shows our lack of faith in the law of Karma. We are required to do the best that the circumstances demand and leave the results to the law. Neither our entreaties nor our anxieties can move the Karmic balance by even a hair’s breadth. True faith results in freedom from anxiety. We are always calculating and working to ensure our safety and security. But Jesus seems to advise from another angle:

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?...Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. (*The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Ch. VI)

When our prayer seems to be answered, more often than not, it is due to strong faith *or* due to intensity of thought and desire. For instance, Mr. Judge mentions that in India, when help is needed for some orphanages, they pray to some patron god and help comes. He explains that what happens is that strong and constant faith carries the thoughts of the prayer into receptive minds and they are then moved to action, and help is received.

True faith must have survived great ordeals and trials; it is born of the tests we passed successfully. We can strengthen our faith by learning to rely more and more on the Self within, and on the Law of Karma. It is also important that we try to see in whatever comes to us in life a lesson to be learned, and try to understand the occult meaning of every experience we go through.

The Twelfth Chapter of the *Gita* is entitled, “Devotion by means of Faith.” The faith spoken of by Krishna is that “which is founded on self-knowledge, or knowledge of the Self as being All, and in All. Reliance upon that Supreme Self, and an identification of one’s Self with It, presents an unchanging and unchangeable basis from which the Truth in regard to Man and all Nature may be perceived.” True faith is founded on right knowledge, and True Devotion springs from true faith. *Atma-nivedana* or complete surrender of the self is the highest form of devotion, which is misunderstood to imply surrender of responsibilities, but it means surrendering personal will to the divine will. We find this idea expressed in the Bible, when it says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you.” Shri Krishna alludes to such highest devotion and faith when he says in the Ninth Chapter of the *Gita*, “But for those who, thinking of me as identical with all, constantly worship me, I bear the burden of the responsibility of their happiness.” There are several stories in the lives of saints where help seems to come, in the most unimaginable manner, because of intense faith and devotion of the devotee. There is the story of a Gujarati saint-poet Narsi Mehta, who was extremely poor. When his daughter had to be married and he had no means to meet the expenses, his relatives humiliated him. At the last moment Shri Krishna saved his honour by providing timely help in the form of presents and gold. The legend goes that Krishna Himself came in disguise as a wealthy merchant and honoured a *hundi* (similar to a present-day cheque/draft) issued by Narsi Mehta.

Let us learn to generate within ourselves an unshakable faith in the nearness of the Masters and carry on the Work in this century. Says Mr. Crosbie: “We have to gain, each for himself, the unshakable faith that ‘the Master’s hand *is* over all’ sincere Theosophists, the humblest as the most progressed.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 401)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE HALL OF MIRRORS

THERE WAS ONCE, a much coveted prize locked up within a lonely castle. It was the only one of its kind on earth, and many were the contestants for its possession. The only qualifications for entering the inner chamber of the castle were extreme Purity and Beauty. One had to be extremely handsome before one could enter within its inner precincts. Among those who coveted the prize was a prince well known for his beauty and prowess. One day he rode up to the gates of the castle and demanded admission. The gates were opened and he entered a hall—the Hall of Mirrors. All around him were mirrors that threw back his own reflection. The prince looked and stood aghast. For the face that looked at him was a very ugly one, not at all like what he had believed to be his own beautiful visage. “What!” he cried. “This is a deliberate insult. I want no more of this.” And he turned back in the direction from which he came, greatly upset and angry.

Another prince who was known for his valour and beauty came riding by. He too entered the Hall of Mirrors. Again what the mirrors reflected was ugliness. Said he with great indignation, “The world has acclaimed me the most handsome. The world has bestowed upon me prizes beyond measure. I will not return empty-handed.” And he smote the mirrors with all his might. He struck at the door that led within, with his sword and armour. Every blow he dealt, he got back one in return. He could not force the door open, and he returned home much bruised and dejected.

A third came riding and demanded admission. The door of the Hall of Mirrors stood open, and he entered. To his great surprise the face that the mirrors reflected was only half beautiful. The other half was very much distorted and ugly. “How is this?” he cried. He washed his face afresh, he changed his headgear and dress, and he tried every means in his power to make himself handsome. But the reflection still remained as it was, half-beautiful, half ugly. “This

is ridiculous,” said he. “Maybe there is nothing to it. Maybe the prize is not of such great consequence after all.” He too returned the way he came, greatly annoyed and scandalized.

A fourth one came, full of eagerness and hope. The doors were opened and he entered. In the Hall of Mirrors (the mirrors that were held up before him, as it were, by unknown hands) he saw handsome face, but with a trace of ugliness around it. The door of the inner chamber stood barred, for only extreme Purity and Beauty could open it. “I am sorry,” said he to himself, “I did not know I was still so ugly.” He came out of the castle, wandered, searching for that Purity which alone could bring him the Prize he coveted.

“I will try again,” said he, and plunged back into the secret realms of Search and Strife. He learnt that what makes one beautiful is not so much the external appearance as an inner cleanliness that erases all ugliness—ugliness which is not always apparent, but becomes visible when one enters the contest and covets the Prize. He wandered far and wide until the meaning of Beauty became clear. He found that it is also Harmony and Unity. Its roots lay in Truth and its ultimate end in Perfection. He learnt that it is not enough to *know* Beauty; one should *realize* Beauty. One should destroy its shadows and keep its light. The erasing of the ugliness within oneself requires greater pains than the venturing forth into unknown lands.

The Hall of Mirrors again reflected the heart of the warrior. This time it shone in its pristine purity. The warrior pushed the sacred door open and passed within.

Truth, Beauty and Goodness are the three aspects of One Reality or *Parabramam*. The qualifications for spiritual success are inward beauty and purity. It is inward purity which leads to inward beauty—beauty of character. A penetrating gaze of a spiritual teacher is not deceived by external beauty or pretence, but is able to see the actual inner state of the aspirant. In Bulwer Lytton’s, *A*

Strange Story, a character called Margrave could fool every one by his very polite and beautiful exterior, but when the adept looked at his aura he knew him to be a depraved soul.

One of the duties of a spiritual aspirant is “to purify himself inwardly and morally.” The teachings of Zoroastrian religion emphasize *purity* of thoughts, words and deeds. Physical and Mental purity are inseparable, and they are intimately related to the quality of *Prana*. The Pranic currents circulating in the astral double, affect the body and ultimately streams forth as our magnetism. “Man makes his magnetism with his mind,” says an Occult Aphorism. When we think pure, wholesome and noble thoughts, and try to live morally pure life, then we begin to purify our *prana* and affect the field of magnetism within our radius. “The human mind is compared to a mirror....The mirror would reflect the light, but the dust of false knowledge, the dirt of passions, the ashes of moral death, are allowed to cover the mirror,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia, and adds that it is only study and application of right philosophy that can enable a person to clean the mirror.

A physical mirror shows us our physical beauty or ugliness, but people, fellow-students and society around us can act as “mirrors” to show forth our psychic and moral beauty or ugliness. When criticized for being proud or stingy, we can always do some soul-searching. If the criticism applies, we must take steps to improve. Likewise, when in self-examination we see our ugliness, viciousness and falsehood, we must have courage born of intellectual honesty to face them. We should have confidence and courage to say that out of this ugliness, one day, beauty will be created. It is extremely important to become aware of our moral ugliness, and determine to overcome it, instead of making allowances and excuses for the same. Says the *Voice of the Silence* to the disciple climbing the ladder of spiritual progress, “Woe, then, to thee Disciple, if there is one single vice thou hast not left behind; for then the ladder will give way and overthrow thee.”

LEARNING FROM THEOSOPHY

H. P. BLAVATSKY was the messenger from the White Lodge of Adepts, who brought for humanity the message of Theosophy which is both scientific and religious. She passed away on May 8th, 1891. Perhaps the best way we can pay our homage to her is by reminding ourselves of the place she occupied in the Theosophical world and theosophical life of every student, and by sincerely trying to apply the teachings of theosophy. “As the babe to the mother, as harvest to the earth, so are all those bound to her who enjoy the fruit of her life. May we try, then to understand these occult connections brought about by the workings of Karma, and bring them to bear upon our diurnal, as well as our theosophical life. Madame Blavatsky is for us the next higher link in that great [guruparampara] chain, of which no link can be passed over or missed,” writes Mr. Judge.

Theosophy as a synthesis of religion, philosophy and science, is comprehensive, wide and deep, and brings its message of help and inspiration to all people, young or old, poor or rich, physically, morally, intellectually and spiritually, with its keynote of the brotherhood of man. It raises us all to the level of learners with our eyes fixed on those great Masters of Wisdom who from behind the veil of matter instruct and guide and inspire, and lead us out of the encircling gloom of matter into the light of Their world of Spirit. To reach Them it is necessary for us to remember that all of us are learners as well as teachers, learning from those who know more, and teaching to those who happen to know a little less than ourselves at the present moment in any particular field of knowledge. The best of Theosophists is but a pupil-teacher, and therefore what he says must be regarded as coming from one student to another, from one learner to other co-learners. Elders there are, Teachers there are, but they have remained from the early days of H.P.B. down to the present moment mostly unknown, unrecognized by the great majority. We are inquirers, seekers of the Wisdom, and the quest is

successful only in proportion as we follow the ancient method of learning things, not by the power of mind or by the power of works, but by the power of life. From that point of view Theosophy is deeper, wider and loftier than any Theosophical programme drawn up in any age, in any clime of the world.

The inquirer has to turn into the student, and the student into the Theosophist who embodies the Wisdom in his life, makes that Wisdom part and parcel of his daily existence, and manifests it in thought, word and action, not only in his connection with any particular Lodge or Theosophical work, but year in and year out, month by month, week by week, day by day, hour by hour. Therefore the great task of students of Theosophy is to so mould their lives that they become different from the ordinary men and women of the world. Little use for us is that Wisdom if not embodied in our lives, so that it illuminates our heads, purifies our hearts, elevates our lower natures, and makes greater and more helpful the service of our hands. Unless it brings an inner equipoise in life, a harmony within, Theosophy has not gone very deep with us, it is but a surface influence, and we are only “marking time.”

Our great aim and task ought to be the transforming of ourselves, the altering of our own constitution by the gaining of a new point of view, the obtaining of a new attitude towards life. We must not ascribe to Theosophy the ordinary position of a formal creed, for Theosophy is not something which ought to be believed in; it is something which ought to be *known*. Theosophy is not a matter of intellectual recognition; it is fundamentally a matter of spiritual realization, and spiritual realization demands effort; it means endeavour to make ourselves Theosophists so that the power of Theosophy manifests itself in our lives. This is very different from the ideal that sometimes we put before ourselves, of doing some good work in one place or some Theosophical service in another. Higher altruism has little to do with service that does not connect itself with life; it demands daily expression in the environment in which we find ourselves. Adjusting that environment by the power

that comes from Theosophy to our hands, illuminating everything by the knowledge that comes through Theosophy to our minds, purifying everything by the spirit of Theosophy that comes to our hearts, that should be the outstanding thought; as students of Theosophy, by pursuing a definite plan of life, we should change ourselves from the dead men and women that we are to the *living* men and women that we ought to be—that is our task. How are we going to achieve it?

First, by a programme of life, which is laid down by the illumination that comes from knowledge. Knowledge first; for ignorance is the root cause of all evils, all crimes, and the elimination of ignorance from our own lives by the power of Knowledge is our first great task; for, if we do not *know*, we cannot purify ourselves. We must know our strong points and our weaknesses, our place in evolution, the capacities which we have and the faculties which we are going to possess. The study of man's own nature, his evolution from the past to the future and his present place in it—all these are subjects for investigation, and the study of Theosophy, therefore, occupies a prominent position in our programme. We cannot serve others by remaining ignorant; we can help them only by our knowledge, and the right kind of service we are able to give to the world in different spheres and through different grades of activity comes to us from the knowledge that we possess.

It is no use to teach the world just what might be called the “jargon” of Theosophy; our teachings ought to be applied. Rounds, cycles, planetary chains, are indeed subjects for study, but not of propaganda. Their study, as also the study of our own spiritual, intellectual and physical pedigree, is necessary for understanding the problems of the world of today and for offering solutions. We shall not be able to help ordinary humanity, or understand the great artists, religionists or mystics, unless we have the *key* which the knowledge of Theosophy brings us. Therefore it is essential that the knowledge shall become part and parcel of our very

consciousness, for not only the gathering of knowledge but its assimilation is essential, so that Wisdom of the Soul shall illumine the mind.

We shall not be able to appreciate or absorb the great body of truth which has come to us as Theosophy unless we attend to our own mind and heart. To really understand Theosophy we need a controlled and purified mind. Meditation and study are the two wings on which the bird of spiritual life can ascend into the heavenly regions. The ethics of Theosophy are even more important than are its intellectual principles. Some may say: “It is not necessary for me to be pure in heart,” but we shall not be able to realize Theosophy unless we have not only a well-filled head, but also a pure heart, and therefore the ethics of Theosophy should be practiced daily. We work in a quaint way sometimes with our psychic tendencies.

There is a lower way in which we arouse and excite our psychic nature, but there is a higher and nobler way in which psychic *culture* is obtained. The lower way deals with what are called the ordinary psychic powers—to see colours, to hear sounds, to travel in the astral world, to be clairvoyant or clairaudient, to be “invisible helpers,” but that is the way which no great teacher of *Atma Vidya* has ever advocated in the past or the present. The Path is indicated in *The Voice of the Silence*, in *Light on the Path*, in the ancient books, the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the Upanishads. The Path is everywhere the same. Just as you cannot get love out of hate, so you cannot get spirituality out of psychism; you cannot get saintly life out of an impure nature. Now the purity of the spiritual life as lived by a Theosophist is more far-reaching and profound than the purity of the ordinary religious man of the world. There should be Purity in all forms, not only cleanliness of body but also of speech, not only cleanliness of mind but also of feelings, and the control of senses and the sense-organs. Purity at every turn is the fundamental basis of life, for it is purity which enables us to live the life of brotherhood. We ought to understand the relationship

between purity and brotherhood.

Over and over again in all spiritual movements the battle has been fought around the idea of purity. There can be no compromise between that which is impure and that which is pure. And we must not think that, because we condemn impurity, therefore we must cease helping our brothers who are impure; we must make the distinction between the criminal and his crime, between the sinner and his sin. By all means condemn the sin, by all means condemn the crime, but the criminal and the sinner are our brothers; their sin and their shame are our sin and our shame. How are we going to help them? First, by recognizing that sin and crime *are* sin and crime. Let us not try to explain them away; let us not try to make compromises with them. We cannot make wrong right, either by explanation or interpretation. The way in which we should give help is by living our lives purely; then, because we are pure, and embody in ourselves certain qualities of purity, all the members of the human race whom we contact share our purity.

The recognition of the brotherhood of humanity requires that no distinction be made as to race, creed, caste, sex or colour, but the spiritual Brotherhood will come about by men and women living the purity of the spiritual world, which is higher and altogether different from the purity of the ordinary men and women of the world. He who is pure will recognize what is impure and must help him or her who manifests impurity, according to his or her stage of evolution. If we want to establish universal brotherhood we cannot place outside that brotherhood the sinners and criminals of the world. If a person is impure we will not remove his impurity by simply saying, “He is impure,” nor can we do it by preaching to him, but we can remove his impurity if we keep alive in ourselves all the ideals of purity. Purity as a high ideal, to be embodied and thus recognized in the minds, hearts and activities of our brothers—is an inspiration. There is no other way but that of LIFE for producing spiritual results. Without that work no Theosophical body can live.

To turn to our work and activity in the world: Spiritual service

of the race is related, not to set programmes, but to life itself, the life which says, “I am going to perform my *Dharma*, I am going to express my innate spiritual nature in the place in which Karma has placed me.” The fulfilment of congenital duties, the duties with which we are born—that is what we must adhere to. Let us sanctify and spiritualize that which is our environment.

Let us not try to impose what we have gained from the teachings of Theosophy upon others. Let us try to measure the strength of the people with whom we come in contact. Let us remember that they too are unfolding gods and try to help them to take the next step in advance, which is to enable them to live spiritually. But we must remember that what may mean spiritual life for some people is not the spiritual life for others. Discrimination in rendering Theosophical service is a *sine qua non*. We may go to religious congregations, political parties, philosophical societies, etc., and speak the eloquent word or render helpful service, but if we live *Theosophy*—that is the real kind of help. And whether we be politicians, religionists, artists, economists, or anything else, living our principles day by day, so that our life speaks rather than our lips, we shall find that life is more eloquent than words and produces farther reaching results. What is needed is the power of inspiration that comes from life, and therefore we must light the flame of Spirit in our own hearts. How shall we light it? Where is the source from which we shall ignite the flame? Those who are the great Masters of Wisdom—from that great source we get our opportunity of lighting our own light in our own hearts. To follow Them in the process of living, to copy Their great example in our own small petty lives—that is what is needed.

Make the Masters *real*. They are living human beings embodying wisdom, embodying compassion, pillars of light! Miraculous might be called Their Luminosity that They cast no shadows of ignorance or evil. Do not try to meet those great spiritual entities in the physical world, do not try to see Them in the astral world, do not try to contact Them by the power of the lower mind. Think of

Them, but by the power of Life, which flows from Their Lotus Feet. Try to embody that power, to match that force. If we take one step towards Them, They will take one towards us, for They love us who belong to this orphan humanity. We should try to be Their messengers—*by life*, and if our life cannot speak, then our words will not avail. The god within must speak the language of Life. It is that inner god that the Masters teach; it is to that inner god that Their blessings come—neither to the body, nor to the mind. That inner god manifests the power not to *rule* others, but to *help* others. Wisdom of the Masters enables us to understand all and therefore to love all.

We need to make the Masters real in our everyday existence by the power of universal Love. The great inspiration that we need is to work with the power of the god within, the Inner Ruler; that ought to energize all our labours, even the very smallest actions—the signing of a letter, the keeping of the accounts, the work behind the counter of the shop, at the desk in the office, at home, at the club; for the Inner Ruler can manifest himself everywhere and at all times. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: “Of teachers there are many; the MASTER-SOUL is one, Alaya, the Universal Soul.” But the book regrets: “Alas, alas, that all men should possess Alaya, be one with the Great Soul, and that possessing it, Alaya should so little avail them!” To be full of Alaya’s power is to be incarnated. To manifest that power in action day by day so that everything becomes sacred—that is the great task which lies before us. This is the Path for the Theosophist; all other paths lead us astray. The Path of the Inner Ruler, fearless, self-reliant, is the Path of the Masters of Theosophy, difficult to tread, hard to climb, but the easier roads of ritualistic prayer, of worship of personalities, of other-dependence lead to misery. Learn the Law of Manu—“Self-dependence alone is Bliss.”

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

THE IMMORTAL I—II

TO THINK of ourselves as spiritual beings, does not imply that we are going to lose sight of the lower, which must be controlled and purified. Having derived encouragement, fearlessness and understanding from the Source of our Spiritual Divine Self, we will come out and fight the lower nature, and then we shall be able to overthrow the enemy. There is no spiritual life possible at any stage of our evolution unless we have admitted to ourselves that there is the immortal part of our being, and unless we begin to look upon our lower nature in terms of the Higher. For instance, if we are fighting a weakness in our own nature, irritability, say, then we want to get rid of it. The very fact that we want to get rid of that weakness, shows there must be the opposite quality. We could not recognize irritability unless there was something at the core of our being that could show forth patience. Instead of emphasizing that there is the weakness, why not begin to dwell on the opposite virtue? Begin to think in terms of patience and meditate, and try to practice it in our own life; instead of emphasizing the weakness, think and consider the higher. If we are centered in the higher and trying to use this personal nature only as a mirror, we are showing forth ego-hood—the real “I” as against the personal “I.” And it is necessary to show forth ego-hood in order that we may show forth Krishna here in this body.

Today, all orthodox religions, dogmatic church creeds and doctrines emphasize the fact that we are miserable and mortal beings, and give us a picture of God and Deity as the power very much beyond ourselves and separate from anything connected with our human nature. And it is this idea of a God that we cannot reach, cannot manifest in our own natures, that has given us the wrong conception of our imperfections. We are only looking upon ourselves as human and weak beings. We even think that we are *originally* sinful, and hence rely on outside things to try to make a

bridge between our own nature and God, and that bridge comes to us in the form of priesthood. We need a medium to communicate with God, with the Immortal Life, not realizing that the God is not separate from us, but is to be found in our own heart.

When we do know that there is this “I” in us, we have no use for priests. We are self-responsible, self-dependent. We have found in us the Ruler, the Inner Ruler, whose bidding we want to do and to whom we want to devote ourselves, and we are going to try to follow the dictates of that Self, and not the outward conventions and notions that exist in the world. But it becomes necessary to know what is the law and discipline which alone will enable us to hear the Voice of that Self, for as one of the children of the Theosophy School said, “I know the Higher Self knows everything, but I cannot get him to tell me somehow.” Theosophy, the Science of the Self, tells us that this Immortal Life is a triple being. It shows Itself in three different ways, or manifestations, and expresses three different aspects or vehicles. We find that our own Self has power, has compassion and knowledge—Knowledge which becomes Wisdom, because knowledge helped by compassion is Wisdom. All great Spiritual Teachers, then, show forth these three great qualities, Power, Compassion and Knowledge. They are all-willful, all-powerful, all-compassionate, and absolutely knowing, wise.

But all of Them do not show these three characteristics to the same degree. One or the other of the three may be expressed in one particular Divine Incarnation. All three must exist, and this we can work out for ourselves by looking at these three qualities, and by seeing that one without the other two, or two without the third would really not help us in any practical way. The three must exist and show forth, but we may show forth one aspect more than the other two, and this we see if we look at the lives of the great Spiritual Teachers, the Great Saviours. Since we are studying a book of India, let us take three examples in Indian History. We can see that Krishna manifests and expresses power more than the other two aspects of the One Self. Buddha on the other hand shows forth

greater compassion than power or knowledge, and the great Sankaracharya shows forth knowledge more than power or compassion. Thus, the three must manifest in every great Teacher, but there are various degrees of expression or manifestation, since they are aspects or qualities of the One Self. Since the One Self is omnipresent, the three aspects show forth in all the kingdoms, but only in the human kingdom do they show forth in self-consciousness.

Unfortunately in us these three powers at the present stage of evolution are still being used from the lower point of view. All of our activities, whether good or bad or indifferent, and of course, if spiritual, are possible, because the Higher Self has those three powers. If we have the power to will, it is because the Self in us has power. If we are able to feel, it is because of the faculty of compassion of the Higher Being in us, and if we are able to think it is because of the knowledge inherent in the Self. We will, we feel, and we think. Those three powers are really representatives in the personal man of the Individual, Spiritual Self. These three powers of Arjuna as a human being are simply the characteristic representatives of Krishna Himself, but when we use them from the lower point of view, we are using them in terms of separateness. The Higher Self uses those three powers—power, compassion, and knowledge—in terms of unity, the unity of all Nature, and of all mankind and therefore expresses altruism. What do we do? We only partially realize the unity existing between ourselves and all beings. We realize the unity existing between ourselves and a certain limited portion of Nature.

If you come to consider the average man, you see he realises a greater unity. He realises himself united with his tribe and family, but there the idea of unity stops. It is limited in his own understanding by that horizon traced by the separation of his tribe from other tribes and the rest of Nature. Then we come to the patriot, and we know that the man who loves his country, limits his own idea of unity, and he says “my country, separate from other

countries, and nations,” and the politician does the same thing in reference to his own political party. So it is with the religious man—the church-goer separates himself in the unity of his church, making a division between that church and the whole of mankind as great temple. Then we have ourselves, who are in the position of Arjuna, in a lower sense. We know ourselves united with our family, friends, relatives, but we stop there, and we do not perceive those friends, relatives, family, as simply a limited portion of Nature, and that our unity must include the whole of nature.

The Spiritual man recognizes that the whole of the Universe is One, indivisible, that he cannot separate it, and therefore being in that Universe he is going to evaluate in terms of the greater unity, not in terms of division and separation. When we think that we can go against nature, against the unity, which is reality of the whole universe, we simply go against the Law of Harmony and Universal Brotherhood. But Nature is trying to teach us—and that is the purpose of evolution—that Nature cannot be divided and separated, that we cannot appropriate one part of Nature and unite ourselves to that part and portion, and leave aside the rest, but we must take the whole of Nature, we must represent the whole of Nature. When we do good only in a restricted area, simply because we are united to and related to portion of the Universe, we are not doing good from the spiritual point of view, but in fact we are being selfish. However great the personal horizon may be, the personal, selfish man makes a division when he does good. How can we have the impersonal conception of good, how can we show forth or manifest the expression of Universal Brotherhood unless we constantly dwell upon the great fact that the Self is in all beings, that it is eternal, changeless, that the weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth it not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind drieth it not away; for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible, and is not to be dried away; it is eternal, universal, permanent, immovable; it is invisible, inconceivable and unalterable; therefore, knowing it to be thus, thou shouldst not grieve. That is the very first idea that Krishna

presents to Arjuna, that is the key-note of these discourses, as it is of the whole of the *Gita*. Krishna goes on to say, having called Arjuna’s attention to the fact that he *is* Krishna himself, the Immortal I, that Arjuna must perform his own duty, *swadharma*—the duty of the Self. Our duty as Spiritual Beings is to represent Krishna in this world, it is to perform the duty of Krishna, and that is why we must have the universal conception, otherwise we will immediately go into separateness, and therefore into selfishness. If unity is a fact, then we are equally united to that other aspect of the One Life which is the ever-dying man, our own personality, and therefore, having realized within ourselves our own identity with the Universal Self, we must again go into the outer world, and realise outwardly that same harmony, peace and brotherliness that we have already realised within, and how to do that in terms of the Spirit is our subject next time. Sir Edwin Arnold has rendered so beautifully in the *Song Celestial*, the key-note that Krishna strikes in the very first part of the discourse, thus:

“Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;
Never was time was not: End and Beginning are dreams:
Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit for
ever;
Death has not touched it at all, dead though the house of it
seems!”

(*Concluded*)

TO LAUGH often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and to endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know, even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

MAGIC—SCIENCE OR SUPERSTITION?

I

WHAT is Magic? Magic, *Magia*, means in its spiritual, secret sense, the “Great Life” or divine life *in spirit*. The word magician is derived from *Magh* or Sanskrit *Maha*, which means great. Thus, a magician is a man well versed in the secret or esoteric knowledge. Magic is the most ancient and venerable system of true wisdom and has been on earth as long as man himself. Science and our so-called “enlightened” civilization has always derided magic and regarded it as a mere superstition. Normally, by magic is meant the popular superstitious belief in sorcery, witchcraft and ghosts, in general. Magic is derided and rejected because magic is understood to be a form of jugglery, of conjuring, that glimmers and bewilders the spectators and seems to transcend the operation of Law.

The Chicago Tribune for August 8, 1890, carried an article that narrated the rope trick witnessed by two Yale graduates on their visit to India. A street fakir tossed the ball of gray twine up into the air, holding its loose end in his teeth. The ball unrolled until the other end was out of sight. Then a small boy climbed the twine, but vanished at the height of 30 or 40 feet in the air. The artist made the sketch and the photographer took the snapshots of the event. However, when the photos were developed, they showed no twine, no boy, only the fakir sitting on the ground. The reporter concluded, “Mr. Fakir had simply hypnotized the entire crowd, but couldn’t hypnotize the camera.” This item was picked up by the newspapers of America and Britain, and was translated into almost every European language. Peter Lamont, in his “Rise of the Indian Rope Trick,” comments that Wilkie’s article appeared at the right moment to feed the needs and prejudices of modern Western culture. To justify the colonial rule, the British had convinced themselves that Indians were superstitious savages. “The prime symbol of Indian benightedness was the fakir, whose childish tricks—as the British imagined—frightened his ignorant

countrymen but could never fool a Westerner.”

H.P.B. was asked by an American subscriber to *Lucifer* to comment upon this curious report in the *Chicago Tribune*, which had the heading “It is only Hypnotism.” H.P.B. observes that such phenomena, produced by Indian jugglers, are as old as the hills and are well known to every Occultist. She explains that the man who performed the phenomenon was not a fakir but a public juggler and a “producer of illusions.” However, she asserts that the two gentlemen [the Yale graduates who witnessed it] would never be able to repeat such *juggling phenomena* because these “jugglers” are not sleight of hand conjurers. She writes:

“It is *only* Hypnotism,” you say. Then those who say so, do not know the difference between hypnotism, which, at best, is only a *purely physiological manifestation* even in the hands of the most powerful and learned experimenters, and real mesmerism, let alone *mahamaya* or even the *guptamaya* of ancient and modern India. We defy all, and everyone, from Charcot and Richet down to all the second rate hypnotizers...to produce that with which...[the two Yale graduates] credit their “juggler.” ... We say *yes*; it is *glamour*, fascination, psychology, call it what you will, but it is not “hypnotism.” ... [It is] collective and instantaneous *fascination* produced on hundreds by one passing gaze of the “juggler,” even though the gaze did “take in every man” “from sole to crown.” (*Lucifer*, September 1890)

H.P.B. observes that, “if such phenomenal powers of fascination, as throwing glamour over audiences often numbering several hundreds and even thousands, are once proven to exist in simple professional jugglers, who can deny the same powers, only twenty times as strong, in trained adepts in Occultism?”

In the article “Ancient Magic in Modern Science” H.P.B. asks, “what is in a name? Because a wolf is scientifically defined as an animal of the *genus canis*, does it make of him a dog? Men of science may prefer to call the magic...*hysterical hypnosis*, but that does not make it the less magic.” What is known as Magic is the

result of the knowledge imparted by Divine Instructors to the early humanity, which became innate knowledge, which enabled them to exhibit magical powers. It was the fearful misuse of magic by the Atlanteans that led their race to utter destruction.

It is precisely because “Magic” was understood to be no better than jugglery and belief in supernatural phenomena that in *The Indian Tribune* of March 1879, there appeared a letter, by a member of the Theosophical Society, who also was a member of *Arya Samaj*, stating that if the Theosophical Society consists of people who believe in magic then “*Arya Samaj* is not in common with them in this respect....Only as far as Vedic learning and Vedic philosophy is concerned, their objects may be said to be similar.” In her reply, contained in the article, “Magic,” H.P.B. assures him that “Our Society believes in *no* miracle, divine, diabolical or human, nor in anything which eludes the grasp of either philosophical and logical induction, or the syllogistic method of deduction....We do study that ‘Science of Sciences,’ extolled by the Eclectics and Platonists of the Alexandrian Schools, and *practised* by the theurgists and the mystics of every age.”

As she goes on to explain further, we are able to appreciate that far from being mere jugglery or supernaturalism, true magic is true wisdom or esoteric knowledge. She explains that “‘Magic’ *is brought in every line of the sacred books of the Aryans*. Magic is indispensable for the comprehension of any of the six great schools of Aryan philosophy.” And, it is precisely to understand them and thus enable ourselves to bring to light the *hidden meaning* of the *Vedas*, and the later Brahmanical literature, that we study Magic. If we neglect the study of true magic, in the sense of true knowledge, then like a westerner, we would end up accepting and preferring Prof. Max Muller’s interpretation of the *Vedas*, who is of the opinion that except for *Rig Veda*, none of the other three sacred books deserve the name of *Veda*, “especially *Atharva Veda* which is absurd magical nonsense, composed of sacrificial formulas, charms and incantations.” In the reading of the *Vedas*, there is a need to read

between the lines and within the words. What is available to us are only “the disclosed *Vedas*,” and we have to strive to get above the disclosed word. The undisclosed *Vedas* are hidden or contained in that which is apparent to the outer senses. For instance, H.P.B. points out that a Pandit interpreted “Agni” mentioned in the *Veda* to mean coarse, visible fire which melts the ghee in the sacrificial ceremony. She writes that if he had studied “magic,” he would know something about divine fire or light, “whose external body is flame.” The enlightened Parsi worships not gross flame but the divine spirit within, of which it is the visible type. Vedic Agni is in fact *Isvara* and nothing else.

The word “magic” and “magician” are derived from “Mage” or “Magi,” the learned adepts of Persia and Media. *The Theosophical Glossary* explains the word “Maga” as “the priests of the Sun, mentioned in the *Vishnu Purana*. They are the later Magi of Chaldea and Iran.” The Magians were priests of the fire-god; we find them among the Assyrians and Babylonians, as also, among Persian fire-worshippers. The three magi, or the three kings, who visited baby Jesus, bringing with them the gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh, were fire-worshippers and astrologers, for they saw his star. (*Isis*, I, xxxiv)

H.P.B. mentions that magic gradually fell into disrepute because of the ignorance of the true meaning of magic, and partly because of the policy of Christian theologians. As indicated in *Isis Unveiled* (II, 22-23), the seemingly miraculous manifestations were according to the Church by God’s direct intervention or, by “good angels,” and hence such miracles could only be performed by her chosen priests, ministers and saints. If anyone else performed the miracle of healing the sick, raising the dead or divination by lots or prophesy, etc., he was considered to be the performer of miracles with the help of Devil, and branded as witch or sorcerer and burnt alive. Thus, for instance, Simon Magus has been known to the New Testament readers as “Simon, the sorcerer.” Simon and his pupil Menander had attained highest powers, which according to

the Christians could be obtained only through “the help of the Devil.” But when they speak of the same powers exhibited by Jesus and his apostles in terms of miracles, they are said to be those coming *from* and *through* God by divine intervention!

Magic, as a science is the knowledge of the hidden aspects of man and nature, by which omniscience and omnipotence of the spirit can be acquired while in the body, and by which one is able to have control over nature’s forces. When this knowledge is used for beneficent purposes, it is White Magic, but when misused, it becomes sorcery or Black Magic.

The ancients began their search on the plane of homogeneity, coming down to objective plane; they proceed from the universals to the particulars, which is the right approach to Life and its phenomena on various planes. Modern science begins its investigation in the material world. They start with the particulars and without going to the universals try to find out hidden forces, and that is why they have not been able to solve the mysteries of nature and of Life.

There is an invisible side to both man and nature. Unfortunately, science has limited its scope by relying exclusively on physical senses, laboratory experiments, observations, analysis and reasoning. While these are excellent tools for investigation of the physical world, they are inadequate for investigation of the psychic world, and are absolutely useless for getting even a glimpse of the spiritual world. Not surprisingly, our world is rife with so-called “*miracles*.” Miracle is defined as something supernatural or outside of the laws of nature. It is defined as operation of forces antagonistic to “the well-ascertained laws of nature.” These are imperfect definitions as they assume that we know *all* the laws of nature. How can science claim to know *all* the laws when its investigations are restricted to the physical world? Moreover, with its ever-shifting “working hypotheses,” science is not infallible.

(To be continued)

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: Why is it that feelings of envy, malice and revenge are considered to be especially obstructive to spiritual progress?

Answer: It can be seen that in all the three conditions—envy, revenge and malice—there is marked sense of separateness and self-centredness. Envy is a powerful emotion and is worse than jealousy as there is a feeling that if “I cannot have (a thing or a person) then no one else should have it.” The feeling of envy has a potential of an evil-eye. An evil eye is destructive power of thought. In the article, “Culture of Concentration” Mr. Judge explains how the astral body is made coherent through purity and concentration. Envy makes it cloudy instead of being pure and clean. This in turn may lead to attracting to the aura of the aspirant, all classes of malevolent elemental beings, which precipitate upon him and awaken all kinds of latent passions.

In the article, “Men, Karmic Agents,” Mr. Judge explains the special and technical sense in which the word “karmic agent” is used. He mentions that there are people who are concentrators of the forces, who become instrumental in sudden and quick precipitation of Karma. There are ordinary people, who have brought from their past lives, the power of concentrating Karma, and they continually bring to other people good or bad *sudden* effects, which would have otherwise spread over many days or years, surfacing in small events of life rather than in one big event. Mr. Judge mentions that this should also explain the power of the evil eye. Such a person may admire a car and the car meets with an accident. Their presence brings about quickening and precipitation

of Karma of others who come in contact with them. The character of Iago in *Othello* is a classic example of envious person with an evil eye, which brought about quickening of Othello's Karma, who then killed his wife for the supposed treachery.

Regarding a revengeful person, Buddha says that his mind is tied up in knots with the intention of retaliation. Here again, there is intention to bring harm. Malice, too, is intention to harm. It is ill-will, the direct opposite of goodwill. The antidote to envy is *Mudita* or sympathetic joy. A Master says, "What makes 'A' happy must fill with joy the heart of 'B.'" The antidote to malice is goodwill, and for the feeling of revenge it is forgiveness and charity.

It is important that we are careful so as not to harbour feelings of revenge or malice towards *anyone, high or low*. We may perhaps be careful when it concerns people who are higher in social rank or in spirituality. However, we may easily harbour these feeling towards those who may be on the lower scale, especially, morally. Thus, we feel perfectly justified in entertaining the feeling of malice and revenge towards criminals or rapists, especially, if they have hurt us or our family members. However, there are shining examples of ordinary people, who have forgiven the worst of offences. Gladys Staines, whose priest husband and two sons were murdered by youths in Orissa, said that she had forgiven the murderers because forgiving brings healing, and liberates both the forgiver and the forgiven. Another shining example of forgiveness was witnessed when there was terrorist attack in Mumbai. Among many that were injured was the American national, a professional meditation teacher and a successful marathon runner, who lost her 13-year old daughter and was herself badly injured. Even as she walked with the help of a walker, she hoped that Ajmal Kasab would not be sentenced to death, *because victims of the attacks would find some solace when a terrorist like Kasab transforms*. Perhaps he was misguided. Jesus on the cross forgave the misguided souls and so also, she forgave him and prayed for him every day!

Question: In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 274), we are told that the

Universe is worked and *guided* from *within outwards*. This is a Universal Law which is applicable to man and the whole Universe. We see that every external motion, act, gesture, whether voluntary or mechanical, organic or mental, is produced and preceded by internal feeling or emotion, will or volition, and thought or mind. Can we have an example for each of these terms?

Answer: H.P.B. seems to suggest that the Universe is worked and *guided* from *within outwards*. On the principle of "As above, so below," we find the same law working in man himself. In man we see that every action, motion or gesture is produced by or preceded by thought, feeling or will. *Voluntary* action or motion such as raising the hand or walking to the library is the result of thought, desire and will. It is easy to imagine that the mass of vital matter which constitutes our blood, tissues, nerves, flesh, etc., was, few years ago, in the simple state of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen or sodium atoms. We see the transition from inanimate (from the point of view of science) to becoming sensitive. Carry it further and we find that atoms and cells in certain portions of our body are not only sensitive but are *extremely* sensitive, and immediately respond to our will. We *will* to speak, and the atoms forming our vocal cords adjust and we are able to throw out sound. This is possible, because every time we use our "will," we make an impression on the atoms of various parts of our body. After repeated impressions, this matter comes to the stage of acting of its own will.

The *involuntary* actions such as, digestion, blood circulation, etc., are result of Will. Under *mechanical* actions we may consider habitual and instinctual actions. Our body is made up of "lives." Memory in the "lives" when *innate* is called instinct. Instinct functions through readymade nerve connections, which ensure that such-and-such a response will occur in a certain situation. In a *habit* these nerve connections are established through exercise, when "lives" in the body are repeatedly given certain kind of impressions, day after day. Similarly, we can train the "lives" of the body to perform certain tasks—for instance, typing, knitting,

playing musical instruments, etc. The “lives” in the fingertips retain the memory, are habituated, so that after repeated attempts we are able to perform the task of typing mechanically and effortlessly. The original impulse came from thought and will.

Our body is a thing of habit, which mechanically repeats the impulse given to it and brings back the temptation. The original impulse comes from thoughts. You put ice-cream on the tongue and the mind says, “I like it and I want more of it.” Such repeated thoughts or impulses give rise to temptation to eat ice-cream as soon as we see it—the mouth waters and the hand reaches out to take a second helping. The same is true of repeated impression of anger, hatred, dislike, fear, etc. For instance, there is automatic angry or violent reaction to insult. These impressions are deep-rooted and therefore, it is not easy for a person who is deeply steeped in evil to undergo sudden transformation and become equally powerful for good.

For *organic* action based on inward impulse we can think of evolution which is the act of unfolding, from within, without, as the evolution of a flower from a bud, or an animal from the egg. Both the *seed* and the *speck* of protoplasm must have the latent potentialities in them for the reproduction and gradual development, the unfolding of the thousand and one forms or phases of evolution, through which they must pass before the flower or the animal is fully developed. Hence, the future plan, if not a DESIGN, *must be there*, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 653)

We might say perception is *mental* action. Senses bring data to the mind, but only when mind interprets the data it becomes perception. Our thinking, and consequently our perception, is coloured by feelings, or by thoughts and ideas previously held. Thinking about one thing or another is due to feelings. When thought is concentrated on a particular object or subject, it is an act of will. In psychosomatic disease our thoughts and feelings first affect the astral body and then the physical body.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Scientists claim to have found the reason behind the problem of oversleeping. According to the legend, Kumbhakarna—the mythological character from *Ramayana*—along with his brothers, Ravana and Vibhisana, performed a major *yagna* (sacrifice) and penance for Lord Brahma. When the time came for asking a boon (blessing) from Brahma, Kumbhakarna’s tongue is said to have been tied by goddess Saraswati. So instead of asking for “*Indraasana*” (seat of Indra), he asked for “*Nidraasana*” (bed for sleeping). But his brother Ravana asked Brahma to undo this boon as it was in reality a curse. So Kumbhakarna slept for six months, and was awake for six months, when he ate everything in the vicinity, including humans, and eventually he would be fatigued and go back to sleep. In the latest issue of the “Indian Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism,” doctors say that Kumbhakarna might have suffered from hypothalamic obesity, which is caused due to abnormality in the region of the brain called hypothalamus, which controls appetite. Dr. Om J. Lakhani, co-author of the study is of the view that such condition could have been caused due to brain tumour or head injury. They had come across a patient who, like Kumbhakarna would sleep all day, and wake up only to demand food, which if denied would lead to frustration in the patient. However, on removal of the brain tumor which caused this abnormality, the patient recovered significantly, writes Durgesh Nandan Jha. (*Sunday Times of India*, March 15, 2015)

We can get the true meaning of the scriptures, and of the myths and legends, only if we interpret the symbols. H.P.B. explains that Vibhisana, one of the seven immortals, is the personification of *Sattva-guna*, or quality of light and truth. Ravana is taken to represent *Rajas* the quality of passions and desires, as he engages himself in desire-prompted actions. Likewise, Kumbhakarna represents *Tamas*, the quality of sloth and indifference, characterized by overeating and oversleeping.

A simple explanation offered for the need to sleep is that when the body becomes tired and depleted of vitality we fall asleep. But Theosophy offers just the opposite explanation. It says that we are more full of life energy when we fall asleep, than in the morning. As, this life energy exists around us like an ocean, and when we are awake the life waves rush into the body with greater intensity every hour. Our power to resist is limited, and so we fall asleep. Children are unable to resist the current and hence they fall asleep quickly, and sleep longer. In sleep, equilibrium is reached, because during sleep we *absorb* life energy instead of resisting. While sleeping, the life waves adjust themselves to the molecules of the body; and when the equilibrium is complete we again wake up. Thus, during sleep, life energy is absorbed or assimilated by the healthy organs of our body and equilibrium is reached. The physical organs are rested and recharged. “If this periodical adjustment did not occur, the life current would destroy us. Any derangement of the body that tends to inhibit this adjustment is a cause of sleeplessness, and perhaps death,” writes Mr. Judge.

Explaining the necessity for sleep, H.P.B. writes: “It is said by Occultism to be the periodical and regulated exhaustion of the nervous centres, and especially of the sensory ganglia of the brain, which refuse to act any longer on this plane, and, if they would not become unfit for work, are compelled to recuperate their strength on another plane or *Upadhi*.” In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 537-38) we are explained how the recuperation of our physical senses and the nervous centres and sensory ganglia takes place during sleep, on another plane. A different quality of *prana* coming from the *Sushumna* ray of the Sun, reaching the sleeping man through Moon, seems to help in recuperating the strength of brain centres and sensory ganglia. It appears that if during waking hours a person is able to draw this quality of *prana*, then he would need less hours of sleep, as is the case of spiritually advanced people.

Generally, as International Women’s Day approaches, social media engages in male-bashing—some of it is friendly and teasing, and rest vicious and damaging. Pulling down men is not the way to women’s upliftment, observes Vinita Dawra Nangia. The author received a message from a woman, saying, “Women no longer cook like their mothers. They drink like their fathers.” She observes that instead of perpetuating strong sexist divide, we must realize that both men and women are equal and complementary to each other. Instead of trying to adopt masculine traits, women should try to be more confidently feminine. It is only when we appreciate the criticality of both masculine and feminine strength, and help nurture the feminine in the society, that we become equal and complete as human beings.

Women’s movement should aim at fighting oppression of women from every quarter. Women should be looking for freedom from dogmas, deep-rooted sexist attitudes, chauvinistic beliefs, and not freedom from men or the masculine. Is it even possible to do away with men and the masculine? “In every woman, there is a man, just as in every man, there is a woman. How can the two be torn asunder without harming the very fabric of life?” asks Vinita Nangia. Male and female are inseparable and equal as can be seen in the *ardhanareshwara* form of Shiva, symbolizing the meeting of masculine and feminine energy, wherein the Lord casts of half of himself to accommodate the female form of Parvati.

The answer to centuries of female oppression is not to prove that women are superior to men. Men in the kitchen and women in the boardroom is not the solution. “The purpose is to realize that we are two equal parts of a complete, ecstatic whole, where one cannot exist without the other....So we need to...consider—what is the future of relationships, of the male-female dynamics?” writes Vinita Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, March 8, 2015)

In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge writes that there is no sex at the level of Spirit. There, all men are women and all women are men, two coalesced into one. But in psychic

consciousness there are still distinctions. Each human being prepares to move over from a male body to the female body, and *vice versa* in some subsequent life for gaining experience. All of us must have lived in the past incarnations many times in male, as well as, in female bodies by now. There are lessons to be learnt in both male and female bodies, and through masculine and feminine natures.

Matter is symbolized by woman and the powers of Matter or *Shaktis* are personified by women. Just as Spirit and Matter are but two aspects of One Reality, so are man and woman. “When man, the Soul unites with Wisdom the woman, he attains Enlightenment. If without her he cannot rise, without him she is an impotent abstraction,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. For a long time now, men have assumed the position of superiority and women that of inferiority, and the way out is not by woman asserting her independence or trying in her turn to exploit men, but by trying to awaken in men the sense of duty towards women. Both men and women must recognize their duties and their interdependence.

“The more perfect the sympathy—in its best sense, of sharing another’s life and penetrating it with filaments of love—the more clearly the truth is apprehended...*that masquerading under very different appearances, the soul of man and the soul of woman are the same.*” It is through the love between the two sexes that life teaches the lessons of sympathy and unity, writes Charles Johnston. (*The Path*, February 1888)

Steven Weinberg, the American theoretical physicist and Nobel laureate in physics has been quoted as saying, “With or without religion, good people can behave well and bad people can do evil; but for good people to do evil—that takes religion.” In a recent interview he talked about the tension that existed between religious belief and science. He was asked that many people believe that much of modern science already exists in ancient texts or teachings

of their respective religions and that many scientific and technological achievements of modern times like aircraft, nuclear-bombs, plastic surgery, etc., were discovered 3,000 to 10,000 years ago. Is that possible? His reply was that it was nonsensical to suppose that modern scientific and technological knowledge was already in the hands of people thousands of years ago. Although much had been lost, there were still enough ancient texts available to show that early philosophers in Greece, Babylon or India not only had no idea about such things, but had no opportunity to learn about them either. Moreover, he comments that the problem with our ancients was that they thought knowledge could be obtained by pure reason and observation, not by experimentation.

In 1900, some Greek divers discovered the remains of ancient Roman era shipwreck, off the coast of Antikythera, a small island near Crete. Among the salvaged items the archaeologists found a small shoebox-sized metallic object, with numerous dials and numbered scales with complex train of gears on the inside, and it was dated 150 to 100 BCE. Later investigation in 1950 revealed that the device incorporated a mechanism called a differential turn table, which came into use in Europe only 1,500 years later. Commenting on it later, an American historian of science remarked that “it was like finding a jet plane inside the tomb of King Tutankhamen.” Later, the device was called Antikythera mechanism, and was found to be a mechanical analogue computer. It could calculate the position of the Sun and Moon along with their phases, the location of at least five planets, and solar and lunar eclipse dates. Later, in the year 2006, the study of the mechanism of this device showed that its astronomy was “exactly right.” It is not as if we would find stuff like genetic engineering and nuclear armaments mentioned in Indian religious texts, “but scientific hubris can be dangerous too,” writes Mukul Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, March 29, 2015)

“There is nothing new under the sun,” said the wise Solomon. H.P.B remarks that many modern, distinguished scientists and

scholars have derived honour and credit by merely dressing up the ideas of those old philosophers. And yet many of them have been contemptuous of the ancients, describing their knowledge as “the untenable conceptions of an uncultivated past” (*H.P.B. Series No. 14*). In the article, “The Babel of Modern Thought” H.P.B. remarks that Modern philosophers and thinkers are but “modern popularisers of very ancient ideas.” H.P.B. quotes Ragon, who says, “Humanity only *seems* to progress in achieving one discovery after the other, whereas in truth it only finds that which it had lost. Most of our modern inventions for which we claim such glory, are, after all, things people were acquainted with three and four thousand years back. Lost to us through wars, floods and fire, their very existence became obliterated from the memory of man. And now modern thinkers begin to *rediscover* them once more.” Several instances are given to prove that the ancients anticipated modern knowledge in numerous ways. For instance, the work of Sir Isaac Newton, the greatest among the scientists, reflects the ideas put forward by old philosophers like Anaxagoras, Democritus, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Lucretius, Plutarch, etc. *Isis Unveiled* mentions that Gunpowder which has long been thought an invention of Bacon and Schwartz, was known to and used by the Chinese for levelling hills and blasting rocks, centuries before our era. (I, 241)

A Master of Wisdom says that every new discovery takes science one step forward, but experiment is not the only method of obtaining knowledge. The “ancients,” the Adepts, were the only true scientists, who did not rely on reason and observation, but used intuitive perception to penetrate beyond material realm. In the article, “Is Theosophy a Religion?” H.P.B. writes that Theosophy does not admit of impassable gulf between science and religion, and seeks to reconcile them. Truth is one, even if sought for or pursued at two different ends. Religion divested of superstition and dogmatism, and science divested of Materialism should find a common meeting ground.