

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
email: ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in ♦ Phone : 22039024
website: www.ultindia.org

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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REFLECTIONS ON KALI YUGA

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA refers to Brahma's Day and Night. At the approach of Brahma's Day all manifested objects come forth from the non-developed principle and at the approach of Brahma's night they are absorbed in the original principle. This refers to the great cycle, which includes all cycles of every kind. A Day of Brahma is made up of 1000 *Mahayugas*, and one *Mahayuga* is made up of four *Yugas*. The four *yugas* are: *Krita* or *Satya* (golden); *Treta* (silver); *Dvapara* (Bronze); and *Kali* (Iron). Hence, *Satya* or *Krita yuga* is the first, while *Kali yuga* is the last. *Kali Yuga* literally means Dark or Black Age. What determines different cycles? Occult philosophy teaches that at the first moment of the solidification of our earth, “the mass of matter involved attained a certain and definite rate of vibration, which will hold through all variations in any part of it until its hour for dissolution comes.” We are also told that “cycles are the clock of Karma.” Cycles are not different from Law and Karma, but only the way of marking the time of cause and effect, of action and reaction. Karma is like the mainspring that makes all the wheels go around. There are many small and big wheels inside the clock. Cycles are like the hands that point the hour on the face, as they travel round it. Thus, we may say that the sequence and the length of the *Yugas* are determined by the Karma of the people experiencing them.

According to the philosophy of Theosophy, having completed

our evolution in four Root Races, the humanity of our earth is now in the Fifth Root Race or Aryan Race. Every Root Race consists of seven sub-races. A sub-race is made up of family races, and a family race is made up of ethnological races. At present, we are in the Fifth Root Race and fifth sub-race. In the article “The Kali Yuga” by Mr. Judge, we read that the course of evolution for every race is divided into four *yugas*. These *yugas* do not affect the entire mankind at one and the same time. For instance, the fourth subrace of the Fourth Root Race or Atlantean Race was in *Kali Yuga* when destroyed. Each race, as well as subrace, goes through all the four *yugas* from the Golden to the Black. For the Aryan Race, Kali Yuga began five thousand years ago, with Krishna’s death, around 3102 B.C., and it is 4,32,000 years long. But certain childlike races or savage races are in their golden age. That is because, ancient teaching is that at one and the same time, some races might be in the Golden Age and others in the Black Age. Those ethnological races which have gone out of existence have completed their *Kali yuga*. Since races and sub-races overlap each other, the old races that are dying out, might be in their *Kali yuga*, but the new Root-race or sub-race might be in its Golden Age. The duration for the four *yugas* are longer for Root-races, lesser for sub-races and minor races, such as, family races and ethnological races.

Kali Yuga is marked by darkness—darkness of ignorance. We are given graphic description of deterioration of mankind and spiritual values in *Kali yuga*, in the first chapter of Book VI of *Vishnu Purana*. H.P.B. says that it is amazing how Sage Parasara who wrote *Vishnu Purana* has so accurately predicted the future, while giving description of Kali Yuga. Among other things, we are told that simultaneously in many parts of the earth, the kings that ruled will be mean, wicked, full of falsehood and of violent temper. They will similarly influence other kings and people coming in contact with them, patronizing or supporting them. As a result, the barbarians would be supported by such Kings and princes, while the pure people would be neglected. The *Mlecchas* refers to these “low people,”

who are morally degraded and they are the ones who will rule and be at the centre, while the “noble people” or Aryas will be at the periphery and will have no say, referred to as “purer tribes.” That is what we see happening for a number of years or for many centuries. H.P.B. says that these are truly prophetic words.

Further, people will worship wealth, and people possessing wealth and property will be held in high esteem. Instead of coming together to lead a householder’s life, to bring forth children with high values and morals who can be of service to humanity, and to learn to live in co-operation, imbibing each other’s qualities, the two sexes, man and woman, will come together only for the purpose of sex. We see that already happening in our days. Additionally, we are told that the institution of marriage will be degraded so that marriage simply would mean mutual consent. Today we have co-habiting, contract marriage, live-in-relationship, in which no commitment is necessary. Women are objects of sensual gratification. “Weakness the cause of dependence,” implies that people then would have forgotten the law of interdependence, and recognize it only when they have become weak. We see in our days a lot of assertion of independence. Most people live a self-centred life, till they are old and or sick and helpless, then they need and seek support, which they may not get.

The *Purana* continues to say that men of all degrees (that is even those who are not learned) will be conceited and claim that they are equal to Brahmins, *i.e.*, men of learning. Moreover, burdened by famine and taxes, people will retire to valleys. People, unable to bear the heavy burden of tax, will take refuge amongst the valleys of the mountains, and will be glad to feed upon wild honey, herbs, roots, fruits, flowers, and leaves; their only covering will be the bark of trees, and they will be exposed to the cold, wind, sun and rain. Mr. Judge observes that at present, there is great thirst for riches and material betterment, while the spiritual life is ignored. If spiritual light were prevalent, the rich and the poor would still be there, but the poor would know how to accept their lot and the rich would find out ways and means to improve the conditions of the poor.

We also read in *Vishnu Purana* that after gradual moral degradation, Vishnu will come as *Kalki Avatar*. An *Avatar* is Divine Incarnation. The descent of a god or some exalted Being, who has progressed beyond the necessity of rebirths, into the body of a simple mortal, is called an *Avatar*. Every world-reformer is an incarnation of a partial or full logocentric consciousness.

Humanity is waiting for the next *avatar*, which will be *Kalki*. We are told in *Vishnu Purana* that the being who will descend upon earth will be an eminent Brahmin of Shambhala village, and he will be endowed with eight superhuman qualities. These should be the qualities possessed by a perfected Being. Buddhists speak of a perfected Being possessing *Maha-Prajna* and *Maha-Karuna*, or Great Spiritual Insight and Great Compassion. The footnote on p. 416 (*S.D.*, II) tells us that it is from *Arghya Varsha* or “land of libations,” which is supposed to stretch from Mount Kailas to Shamo Desert that the *Kalki Avatar* is expected to come. We are able to recognize this as the place of Sacred Island which is now an Oasis in Shamo Desert. It is probably this *Shambhala*, that is referred to in *Vishnu Purana* as Shambhala village.

In Buddhism we hear of Maitreya Buddha and in Zoroastrianism they mention *Sosiosh*, which are all equivalent of *Kalki Avatar*, described as “messenger” who is supposed to come at the end of *Kali Yuga*. *Kalki Avatar* is described as when either Vishnu will come in the form of a White Horse, or he will come riding a White Horse, and that horse is supposed to be an envelope of the Spirit of evil, and Vishnu mounting it will destroy the falsehood, illusion, Idol-worship or Self-worship.

On p. 483 (*S.D.*, II), we are told that Vishnu will appear as *Kalki Avatar* and re-establish righteousness, awakening the minds of those who live at the end of *Kali Yuga* and make them clear and pure as crystal. Those who live at that time and are changed in this way will be the *seeds of other human beings*. H.P.B. says that these beings who are awakened refers to Sixth Race. They will give birth to a race who will follow the Laws of purity of *Krita* age, and that will

be the Seventh race of “Buddhas” or “Sons of God.” This does not seem to refer to Seventh Round and Seventh Race, but the Seventh Race on our earth, globe D. Just as it is said of Fourth Race that it was in *Kali yuga* when destroyed, so also, the Fifth Race will come to an end with the end of *Kali yuga*. However, since the races are always overlapping, the beginning of Sixth Race would have already been made before the end of *Kali yuga* and end of Fifth Race. In the article, “Premature and Phenomenal Growth” H.P.B. writes that now and then there are presentiments of the Sixth Race humanity among us. The Sixth Race will have natural lifespan of 200 years, which will gradually increase to 300 and then 400 years in its last two *yugas*. They will be of darker skin and have shorter period of infancy and old age.

Goethe said that the Golden Age is passed and only the good have the power to bring it back. We may not be able to bring back the Golden Age for the entire race, but we can do so for ourselves. It is the Yuga or Age of single combat between the divine and the carnal man. In other ages, the forces of Karma and of the cycles are along the line of natural impulse, *i.e.*, mortals are good because such is their nature; and in the Golden Age masses are like children, innocent and ignorant, blissful of darkness. In *Kali yuga* we have the opportunity to fight and overcome evil and selfishness, and unfold light and peace. In our ideation and imagination we must determine how we will fight and overcome in us, competition, money-mindedness, craftiness, pride, and unfold piety, humility and self-confidence. In *Kali-yuga* the so-called contentment of the people is the *tamas* of the mind. Our minds have become sluggish with eating of rich food, engaging in gossip and reading of sense-tickling literature. Mr. Judge describes the difficulty of overcoming the influence of the age, thus: “It takes a very strong soul to hold back the age’s heavy hand.... All the inner as well as the outer fibre of the man is the result of the long centuries of earthly lives lived here by his ancestors. These sow seeds of thought and physical tendencies in a way that you cannot comprehend. All those tendencies affect

him.” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 131)

Kali yuga is like night time; the effect of this *yuga* as of the night hours depends upon what we do in it. Robbers and thieves use this time for stealing; students use it for their study. The astral light, which keeps the record of thoughts, feelings and actions of the ages past, acts as a hypnotizing agent so that we find ourselves acting blindly under the suggestions cast upon us by these past impressions. However, we are told that we cannot do much *against Kali Yuga*, but we can do much *in* it, as *Kali Yuga* is the shortest of the four Yugas with the rate of vibrations (cause and effect) being four times faster than in other *yugas*. Thus: “There is one thing peculiar to the present *Kali Yuga* that may be used by the Student. All causes now bring about their effects much more rapidly than in any other or better age. A sincere lover of the race can accomplish more in three incarnations under *Kali-Yuga’s* reign than he could in a much greater number in any other age. Thus by bearing all the manifold troubles of this Age and steadily triumphing, the object of his efforts will be more quickly realized, for, while, the obstacles seem great, the powers to be invoked can be reached more quickly.” (*Ibid.*, p. 132)

We may correlate this with the remark in *Vishnu Purana*, namely, “In Kali age, shall a man acquire by a trifling exertion as much eminence in virtue as is the result of arduous penance in the *Krita* age, or age of purity.” There are 4,27,000 years of *Kali yuga* yet to pass. Since, an *avatar* comes to destroy the Black Magician who is the very personification of evil of his time, we are told to introspect and make sure that we, who have a potential black magician lying in our lower nature, will not give it an opportunity to manifest in future lives, by giving way to selfishness. Let us take to heart these words of Mr. Judge, “As each student *lives* a better life and by his example imprints upon the astral light the picture of a higher aspiration acted in the world, he *thus aids souls of advanced development to descend from other spheres.*” (*Ibid.*, p. 134)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

THE LIVING and the Dead, also entitled “Living or Dead?” is a sensitive story, by Rabindranath Tagore, that traces the journey of a widow Kadambini, from a loving, caring aunt to a dead, dreaded ghost. The story begins by introducing the readers to the family of Sharadashanker, a zamindar (landlord) of Ranihat. Kadambini is a widowed daughter-in-law of this zamindar, with no family of her own on her father’s side. She is childless. However, she shares a deep bond with her elder brother-in-law’s youngest son. She had brought up this child as his mother had been ill for a long time after giving birth to him. She loves this child as her own son. And then, one rainy night Kadambini dies suddenly. For some reason her heart stops beating. To avoid the unwelcome police inquiry, four Brahmin employees of the zamindar proceed to cremate the body immediately. Having reached the crematorium, they place the corpse inside the hut nearby, and wait for the arrival of the wood for the pyre. After some time two people go to enquire about the delay, while the other two men sit in the hut guarding the corpse.

Meanwhile the “corpse” moves. Startled at the movement of the corpse, the two men run away. After running for three miles they meet their colleagues coming back with a lantern, but without wood. All four of them return to the hut. As they enter, they see that the body has gone. Outside the hut, they could see a woman’s tiny footprints, freshly made. Knowing that it would be difficult to persuade Sharadashanker to believe in a ghost story, they decide to tell him that the body has been burnt. Those who brought the wood at dawn for burning the body are told that the body was already burnt using some wood already in the hut. The author makes a very thought-provoking remark: “As every one knows, even when there are no signs of life in a person, life is often secretly present, and may begin again in an apparently dead body. Kadambini was not dead; only the machine of her life had for some reason suddenly stopped.”

When consciousness returns to Kadambini, everywhere around her is darkness. At first, she thinks that the lonely dark place is the House of Yama (Death), but when she is able to see in a flash of lightning, she sees the tank, the banyan tree and the great plain, and recollects how she would come here to bathe in the tank. She is in a dilemma. She wants to return home, but tells herself that she is not alive, and knows she would not be welcome to return. She realizes that even though the living fear the dead, the dead fear the living as well.

As she wanders, a man approaches, and asks her if he can help her to go back home. Kadambini asks the man to take her to the house of her childhood friend, Yogmaya. The man complies, and when the two friends meet, they are overjoyed. Kadambini offers to work as a servant in her house, but Yogmaya refuses, and invites her to stay. All the time that she stays in her friend's house Kadambini feels that she is dead. She says to herself, "She (her friend) shares affection and duty with the people of the world; I am an empty shadow. She is among the living; I am in eternity." Meanwhile Yogmaya also feels uneasy, and gets fed up with Kadambini's presence. She sends her husband to Kadambini's family house to find out why she is not living there. He finds out that Kadambini had in fact died. He conveys the same to his wife, but the two are unwilling to believe. But Kadambini confirms that she did indeed die, and therefore, is thrown out of the house. She becomes a living dead, with no house and no companions. She tries to evade herself from human touch, as she considers herself a ghost.

Finally, Kadambini decides to return home and her brother-in-law's little son is happy to see her again. "After a long time, Kadambini was feeling today as though she had not died—the familiar house, everything, the boy, her love for him, all of it was as alive as they had ever been. She could sense no gap, no gulf. At her friend's house she had felt that her childhood friend had died—in the boy's room she realised that the boy's 'Aunty' was not dead at all." However, when others in the house see her, they are petrified

of her presence. Sharadashanker begs her to leave the boy alone, saying, "Ever since you left he has been wasting away, his illness will not leave him, he calls for you all the time. Since you have left the world, you must cut the strings now. We will perform your last rites suitably."

Kadambini is not able to bear it any more. Saying, "how can I persuade you that I am not dead?" she lifts a brass pot from the ground and dashes it against her forehead. The blood runs from her brow, but the family members are unmoved. Finally, she throws herself into a well in the courtyard and dies there. It is only by dying that she was able to prove that she was alive.

"The Living and the Dead" may well be considered a supernatural tale and the ironic parable. It is one thing to examine philosophically and clinically a case of Near-Death-Experience, or a case of suspended animation, and quite another to explore it from the personal and social point of view. Here Tagore vividly portrays the idea of what it is to be trapped between life and death. Rabindranath Tagore has succeeded in conveying a profoundly philosophical point of the possibility of "revival" from the death, and vividly portrayed the insensitivity of people towards such beings, out of ignorance. A commentator writes, "It is a satire on society... with a hint upon the insensitivity of us as fellow human beings and our callousness in ignoring a living woman, but showing reverence to the dead ones, especially when they are supposed to have become ghosts." Though the narrator tells us that people do get into "suspended animation," from time to time, the characters in the story are not enlightened, so that Kadambini's close friend, accepts her old friend as perfectly alive for the majority of their time together, but she can no longer see her as anything but a ghost, when she learns of her previous death. The belief that the dead do not return, is stuck so fast in their minds, that they are ready to overlook the reality, and the poor woman is forced to die in order to be recognized as having been alive.

To understand revival and resuscitation of the dead we must

understand the difference between real and apparent death. When are the “dead” really dead? What the physiologists call the “real death” is actually not so. The man is not dead when he is cold, stiff, pulseless, breathless and even showing signs of decomposition. The ancient philosophy teaches that death occurs at the instant when both the astral body (or life-principle) and the spirit leave the physical body *forever*. The man is not dead even when he is buried, till a certain point is reached. That point which an occultist calls as “real death” is, when the vital organs, such as heart, liver, brain, etc., have become so decomposed, that if reanimated, they could not perform their customary functions. But until that point is reached, the astral body, which is the design body for the physical, can be caused to re-enter the physical body, either by the effort of the spirit or through the will of an occultist—one who has knowledge and control over the potencies of nature. There are instances in medical history when the patient recovers spontaneously, and that is because the astral body has not parted from the physical body, only its external functions are suspended. In such a case, the person appearing to be dead is only in a state of lethargy or torpor. Such a state is called the state of “suspended animation.” There are cases of suspended animation as a result of asphyxia (suffocation) by drowning, the inhalation of gases and other causes.

Nothing in nature is sudden, so too, death is gradual. Just as it takes a long and gradual development to produce a living human being, time is required also for complete withdrawal of the vitality from the body. In *Isis Unveiled*, several instances of suspended animation have been narrated. There is the case of a gentleman who twice apparently died and was twice going to be buried, but revived spontaneously at the point of burial. The wife of a wealthy merchant in Moscow, remained in a cataleptic state for seventeen days. Since the decomposition had not set in, she was not buried, and she revived at the end of seventeen days. H.P.B. narrates the case of Colonel Townshend who threw himself in somnambulant trance in the presence of medical men, who were convinced that he was dead.

However, he revived after three hours. Thus, Demokritus rightly asserts that there exist no *certain* physical signs of real death.

And yet, instances such as daughter of king Jairus recalled to life by Jesus and the Corinthian bride resuscitated by Apollonius of Tyana show that these beings had the knowledge and the skill to distinguish between real and apparent death, at a glance. Before reviving the daughter of Jairus, Jesus said, “She is not dead but sleepeth.” So too, Apollonius had said of the Corinthian bride, “She has *seemed* to die.” There is also the instance of a dead man reviving, when the burial party was accosted by the robbers. Eliphas Levi explains that since the people who had come to bury the person were frightened, through sympathy their fright was communicated to the dead person. Since his (astral) soul was still hovering in the vicinity and felt horrified at the idea of the dead body being desecrated, it re-entered the body. At death, the astral body exudes out of the physical body and hovers about the physical body by a double attraction, physical and spiritual, until the physical body decomposes. Under proper conditions it is possible for the astral soul to re-enter the physical body. One of the reasons for the recommendation to keep the dead body for twelve or thirteen hours before burial or cremation could well be this possibility of revival.

In “From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan,” H.P.B. mentions that among the Parsis the dead body is placed in *dakhma*, with a flock of vultures flying above it. However, there are cases of the dead regaining consciousness. “It is curious that vultures, which devour the corpses at once, will never touch those who are only seemingly dead, but fly away with loud shrieks.” (p. 32 fn.)

There is no miracle in such resuscitations. The clock has run down, it can be wound. If the death is absolute, so that the organs have not only ceased to act, but cannot be reanimated to perform their functions, then “the whole universe would have to be thrown into chaos to resuscitate the corpse—a miracle would be demanded,” writes H.P.B.

A TRIBUTE TO H. P. BLAVATSKY

DURING the coming month Theosophical students everywhere will commemorate the anniversary of the passing away of H. P. Blavatsky, who cast off the body on May 8, 1891, the body which she had used in the service of humanity. She fed the hungry souls, and showed the right ways and means for redressing social wrongs and rendering social justice. The philosophy she promulgated helped its students to help the race.

We reprint below an extract of the editorial which appeared in *The New York Tribune of Sunday*, May 10, 1891:

Few women in our time have been more persistently misrepresented, slandered, and defamed than Madame Blavatsky, but though malice and ignorance did their worst upon her there are abundant indications that her life-work will vindicate itself, that it will endure, and that it will operate for good. She was the founder of the Theosophical Society....The life of Madame Blavatsky was a remarkable one, but this is not the place or time to speak of its vicissitudes. It must suffice to say that for nearly twenty years she had devoted herself to the dissemination of doctrines the fundamental principles of which are of the loftiest ethical character. However Utopian may appear to some minds an attempt in the nineteenth century to break down the barriers of race, nationality, caste, and class prejudice, and to inculcate that spirit of brotherly love which the greatest of all Teachers enjoined in the first century, the nobility of the aim can only be impeached by those who repudiate Christianity. Madame Blavatsky held that the regeneration of mankind must be based upon the development of altruism. In this she was at one with the greatest thinkers, not alone of the present day, but of all time; and at one, it is becoming more and more apparent, with the strongest spiritual tendencies of the age. This alone would entitle her teachings to the candid and serious consideration of all who respect the influence that make for righteousness.

In another direction, though in close association with the cult of universal fraternity, she did important work. No one in the present generation, it may be said, has done more toward reopening the long sealed treasures of Eastern thought, wisdom and philosophy. No one certainly has done so much towards elucidating that profound wisdom-religion wrought out by the ever-cogitating Orient, and bringing into the light those ancient literary works whose scope and depth have so astonished the Western world, brought up in the insular belief that the East had produced only crudities and puerilities in the domain of speculative thought. Her own knowledge of Oriental philosophy and esotericism was comprehensive. No candid mind can doubt this after reading her two principal works. The lesson which was constantly impressed by her was assuredly that which the world most needs, and has always needed, namely the necessity of subduing self and of working for others. The man or woman who deliberately renounces all personal aims and ambitions in order to forward such beliefs is certainly entitled to respect, even from such as feel least capable of obeying the call to a higher life.

The work of Madame Blavatsky has already borne fruit, and is destined, apparently, to produce still more marked and salutary effects in the future. Careful observers of the time long since discerned that the tone of current thought in many directions was being affected by it. A broader humanity, a more liberal speculation, a disposition to investigate ancient philosophies from a higher point of view, have no indirect association with the teaching referred to. Thus, Madame Blavatsky has made her mark upon the time, and thus, too, her works will follow her. She herself has finished the course, and after a strenuous life she rests. But her personal influence is not necessary to the continuance of the great work to which she put her hand. That will go on with the impulse it has received, and some day, if not at once, the loftiness and purity of her aims, the wisdom and scope of her teachings, will be recognised more fully, and her memory will be accorded the honour to which it is justly entitled.

ASCETICISM—TRUE AND FALSE

THE DOCTRINE of asceticism teaches that a person can attain a high spiritual and moral state by practicing self-denial, mortification, abstinence and austerity. Ascetic practices are integral part of most of the religions of the world. They are resorted to by religious people for various reasons and out of different motives and beliefs; they vary in the degree of intensity and severity. It is a common practice among devoutly religious people to resort to fasting, vow of abstinence, and mortification of body for a more or less period for expiation of sins, or to get rid of a personal habit or for attainment of an object of desire. Strong religious beliefs lead many a faithful to live a severe ascetic life. Saint Labro, the Roman Catholic saint, for instance, cited in *The Key to Theosophy*, by H.P.B., is said to have sacrificed his body for forty years to feed and benefit the vermin which infested it. Simeon Stylites, a pious Syrian Christian monk, lived in fervent prayer on the top of a tall stone pillar with a small platform on top for thirty-seven years, exposed to sun and rain, sleet and snow, for redemption of sins. Lord Alfred Tennyson has written a poem on this extraordinary penitential ascetic saint.

Severe asceticism of this kind has been in vogue for many a millennia in India among the Hindus, Buddhists, Jain monks and Sufi saints, called Fakirs. Motivation, generally, among these ascetics is attaining salvation or *moksha*. They are *Hatha Yogis*. Hatha Yoga is, “The lower form of Yoga practice; one which uses physical means for purposes of spiritual self-development. The opposite of *Raja Yoga*” (*The Theosophical Glossary*). There is a wide gulf between the two forms of Yoga leading to two entirely different results.

The basic premises of the Hatha Yogis who practice severe mortification of the body are that the body should be mortified, external senses controlled, breath regulated and controlled through certain breathing techniques called *Pranayama*, for attainment of psychic powers and for liberation. In other words, they seek to reap spiritual benefits by physical means.

There are several schools of mendicants, *sanyasis*, of Hatha Yoga. They renounce the world, cut off all worldly ties, live in seclusion in forests or on mountains, and practice severe mortification of the body. The Buddha in his quest for enlightenment to save the world is said to have tried the system of the Hatha Yogis, among whom he lived for a time, and realized that it was sheer folly to punish the body and mutilate the sense organs, which can never lead to liberation. The physical practices of these mendicants, is given in Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia*: They sought to kill attachment to sensual pleasures by severe mortification of the flesh and maiming organs of sensation; threaded their flesh with jungle thorns and spit, besmeared it with mud and ashes, dwelt in cremation ground amidst corpses, chanting Siva’s name five hundred times a day, their crowns blistered by the blazing heat, eyes bleared, sinews and muscles shrivelled, visages haggard, with hissing snakes around their emaciated necks and flanks; thus, by mortifying the flesh, they thought, the soul is purged of sins, and the soul so purified would ascend to glorious heavenly spheres of splendour past all thought. Even the Buddha’s reasoning with them that torturing of the flesh does not lead to Liberation, made little impact on them. In the seventeenth chapter of the *Gita*, Krishna, speaking of the folly of these practitioners of the mortification of the flesh, says:

Those who practice severe self-mortification not enjoined in the Scriptures are full of hypocrisy and pride, longing for what is past and desiring more to come. They, full of delusion, torture the powers and faculties which are in the body, and me also, who am in the recesses of the innermost heart; know that they are of infernal tendency. (verses 5 and 6)

Self-mortification of the kind practiced by the Hatha Yogis may lead to acquisition of psychic powers, or lower *siddhis*. But they belong wholly to the lower self and material nature, and are lost at death. All that remains after death is a tendency to indulge in that

kind of practice in future lives by reason of the cyclic return of the impression, or *samskara*, induced in the mind and nature of the practitioner. It leads the practitioner, in each rebirth, farther from Truth, which is realization of true Self which is the Self of All, or Universal Brotherhood. This is fraught with dangers as it accentuates the passions of the lower self, rendering it an unworthy vehicle of the Higher Divine Self. “The *Hatha* so called was and still is discountenanced by the Arhats. It is injurious to the health and alone can never develop into Raja Yoga.” (*S.D.*, I, 95)

Raja Yoga is “The true system of developing psychic and spiritual powers and union with one’s *Higher Self*—or the Supreme Spirit, as the profane express it. The exercise, regulation and concentration of thought. Raja Yoga is opposed to Hatha Yoga, the physical or psycho-physiological training in asceticism.” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

In Raja Yoga is found the philosophy and the practice of true asceticism. It is not concerned with outer formal observances and physical practices, such as, breath control, assuming various bodily postures, eating unaccustomed food, punishing the flesh, gazing at the tip of the nose, concentrating the mind on vital centres of the body, and so on. It is based on a correct intellectual comprehension of the true nature of the Self as the Self of all beings, and of the absolute justice of the Law of Karma; the relation between the physical sheath and the Inner Real Man, and mutual interaction between the two. This study enables students to understand the supreme importance of the Inner Man over the physical body, broadens the mind and deepens intuitive perception of the Unity of Self, and of the just moral order of the universe, brings about a radical change in the outlook of the student on life, arouses in him the sense of duty and responsibility towards the higher progress and well-being of fellow-beings and all humanity. Fired with zeal by such a higher perception and understanding the whole aim and purpose of his individual life undergoes a gradual transformation in motive from selfish intent, which ordinarily moves people in general,

to altruism. Performance of duties of daily life of the student of Raja Yoga is characterised by disinterestedness in any personal benefit or loss from works, equanimity of mind, placing entire reliance on the just Law of Karma and the Higher Self—which are, in fact, one—aspiring to be guided and ruled by the Divine Self. Unselfish devotion to Humanity will be his prime motive in life. Thus, while striking off past Karma and making no new Karma which bind one to errors of conditioned existence, he gradually renders his brain, mind and his whole nature porous to the light of the Divine Self within to shine through him for the elevation and benefit of humanity, and spiritualize the lower nature. Raja Yogi contemplates in spirit the moral beauty and goodness of the divine nature, and assimilates his being more and more into Universal, Eternal Love.

HENCE we may learn the reason why many people not only lose the benefit, but are even the worse for all their mortifications. It is because...they think them to be real parts of holiness, and so rest in them and look no further, but grow full of self-esteem and self-admiration for their own progress in them. This makes them self-sufficient, morose, severe judges of all those that fall short of their mortifications. And thus their self-denials do only that for them which indulgences do for other people: they withstand and hinder the operation of God upon their souls, and instead of being really self-denials, they strengthen and keep up the kingdom of self.

—WILLIAM LAW

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS STUDY, APPLICATION AND PROMULGATION—XI

THERE are two types of emotions: lower and personal, and higher and impersonal and so truly elevating. Therefore, music falls into two classes also. Confucius was a lover of music. Beethoven *is* elevating—*e.g.*, the Moonlight Sonata, the Fifth Symphony, etc. Jazz music is one thing; sacred and classical music, another.

Not much is said about the Jews. What there is, is in *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. Remembering Karma and Reincarnation, and that there can be no “Jew souls” any more than “Dutch souls” or “Hindu souls,” we can watch the unfolding of Karma.

About the *Jataka Tales* and the world of symbols: Fables have always been a means of expressing fundamental truths in a way that the ordinary man can understand. You may notice in these tales that a difference has been made between those which refer to animal incarnations and those that refer to human incarnations. In the first case the tales begin with the statement: “The life that was to become the Buddha...”; and in the second case with “He that was to become the Buddha...” Not many people will see this difference, but Theosophical students ought to do so. Certain constituents in our make-up have come through the animal kingdom. How else could our many qualities have been built up? The stories help us to realize the link between all kingdoms of Nature and the qualities that have to be built up. Animals, you say, are not entities; but they are, for that lifetime; and during that lifetime growth takes place along their natural lines.

The Secret Doctrine is for all, but each one will get out of it what he is capable of getting. Do not, therefore, just read it through or try to understand it at once. Read first the Introductory and the Proem to get a background. Then read in Volume I from page 266 onward, and also page 272 and onward. Book I, Part II, you may find interesting; also the section beginning on page 634 of Book I, Part III. In Volume II, page 303 and onward on Reincarnation and Karma

will be a good study. It is a good plan to take from any book just what seems to give one a little illumination; then struggle to understand some difficult part. Knowledge comes slowly, but unless we make the effort that we are capable of making, we cannot progress in knowledge.

Coming to the work of the Lodge, you young friends should prepare yourselves so that older people may be relieved. I do not agree with the view that there is time enough, and if not now, then in the next life you can achieve something. There is no time to wait. Procrastination is a very weakening force and it is so flourishing in India that we are apt to be overtaken by foreign powers and forces and be enslaved by them. It is good that you should want to improve your knowledge of your own language so that your platform work as well as your correspondence and conversation with your own people may be creative and productive to a greater extent.

As students of Theosophy we all agree. The moment we come to politics there is difference of opinion. It shows the binding power of Theosophy. We have to learn to take a further step—“Can I with the help of Theosophy understand the point of view of my brother with whom I differ on any particular problem, including political problems?” But one must have a liberal mind and a spirit of universalism to be benefited practically by Theosophical teachings in this way.

The gathering of knowledge, the endeavour to practise it in daily life and the wish to so live that we may pass on the soul-satisfying knowledge of Theosophy to others and further the work of the Great Masters and of H.P.B.—these are the things that we must work for. It is a trust imposed on us through our interest in Theosophy, and making Theosophy a living power in our lives to an ever increasing extent will bring its own recompense.

ZODIAC—A LOST KEY

V

IN THE NOTE on “Astronomos” in the *Theosophical Glossary*, we read that Astronomy was synonymous with Astrology in the days of old. In Egypt, at Thebes, during Astrological Initiation the priests were perfected in the science of Astrology. After passing through six initiations, in the Seventh Degree the Initiate was given the title of Astronomos and a Healer. Before getting that title, he was taught about the mystic signs of the Zodiac, in a circle dance which represented the course of the planets, after which he received a cross Tau. In one sense, the dance of Krishna and the Gopis represents the course of planets through the twelve signs of the zodiac. Likewise, there is intimate connection between chemistry and astronomy, and therefore with astrology. “Hippocrates had so lively a faith in the influence of the stars on animated beings, and on their diseases, that he expressly recommends not to trust physicians who are ignorant of astronomy” writes D. F. J. Arago, who has always supported the reality of the sidereal influence of Sun, Moon and the planets.

The Theosophical Glossary describes Astrology as a very ancient science, which defines the action of celestial bodies upon mundane affairs and claims to foretell future events from the position of the stars. A horoscope is a map of heavens at the moment of birth of an individual. This “map” constitutes a chart, as it were, of the life-journey of a person then born. This chart gives an insight into his character, qualities and temperament, as also, indicates certain events in his life.

As stated in exoteric literature, at the moment of birth of a person, if the observer stands upright with extended arms facing the south, he forms two imaginary lines, first through his body and next through his arms so that each extended line touches the celestial sphere at two points which are called as cardinal points or angles of horoscope—Zenith, Nadir, Ascendant and Descendent. The Rising

Sign or Ascendent would be seen on the left just peeping above the horizon. The two intersecting lines divide the circle into four quadrants. Each quadrant is further divided into three “houses” of 30 degrees each and are numbered in rotation; beginning with the Ascendant. The twelve houses have affinity with the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac; thus the first house is in affinity with Aries and rules head, the second with Taurus ruling throat, and so on.

Thus, at the time of birth of an individual, if zodiac sign rising in the east was Leo, then the astrologer casting the horoscope will place Leo in the first house, and Virgo in the second house, etc., and Cancer in the twelfth house of his horoscope. A horoscope roughly consists of the position of the Sun, position of the Moon, the ascendant, or the sign rising in the east, and the planetary aspects, or position of planets with respect to each other. According to some astrologers, the Sun sign or Sun’s position in a particular Zodiac sign in the horoscope is indicative of the permanent or *moral* character of the person, while the Moon sign or the Moon’s position in a particular Zodiac sign in the horoscope is indicative of the *personal* character of the person. In short, the Sun represents the life side, governing the Individual, and the Moon the form side, governing the whole of the Personal and physical characteristics. The Ascendant or the sign rising in the East at the time of birth indicates the physical body, which is the instrument or tool used by the personality to carry into effect the purposes of the individuality as interpreted by and through the personality, writes Alan Leo.

The fourth important constituent of horoscope is mutual position of planets, depending upon the house and the sign in which they are. When planets, as viewed from the earth, are 180 degrees apart they are said to be in opposition. When they coincide, then they are said to be in conjunction. H.P.B. points out that to have two planets in conjunction is a rare thing and to have three planets in conjunction is rarer still, while conjunction of five planets is the rarest event. It was only in 2449 B.C. that five planets were in conjunction and that was the time when Chinese astrologers predicted a great disaster

for China. And 500 years later it was found that there were lots of social upheavals and internal wars and the golden period of China almost came to an end. H.P.B. wonders why people do not believe that planets can have influence on earth.

Interestingly, the zodiacal sign of Pisces is connected with the Messiahs. For the zodiacal sign of Pisces or *Meenam*, H.P.B. points out that the term Dagon means fish as well as a prophet or a Messiah. She observes that the Christians have tried to connect the zodiacal sign of Pisces (symbolized by fish) only with Jesus Christ. But Jesus was only one of the several world-reformers. The zodiacal sign of Pisces and the constellation is connected with *all the* spiritual saviours, past, present and future, who give out light to dispel darkness. It is erroneous for the Christians to claim that when the Sun entered the sign of Fish, Jesus was born. Kepler maintained that at the moment of the “incarnation,” all planets were in conjunction in the sign of *Pisces*, which was called by the Jews (the Kabalists), the “constellation of Messiah.” It is in this constellation that the “*star of the Magi*” was placed. H.P.B. says that notwithstanding his science and great erudition, no occultist will agree with this claim made by Kepler. (*S.D.*, I, 653-54)

Planets are only the focal points, *indicators* or *pointers* that describe what is going to be the influence of the whole of the heavens on a particular man or on the earth or nation, writes Mr. Judge. Depending on the planetary position, the astrologer predicts, but neither he nor the planets influence the destiny of the individual. Every Ego is born with a backlog of Karma to be exhausted in a given life. The position of the planets at the time of the birth of an individual is the result of the causes generated by the entity seeking birth. H.P.B. points out that we are inextricably linked and that there is ONE LIFE that connects human beings, the stars, the planets and the heavenly bodies. Our thoughts and actions produce vibrations which impinge upon *Akasa*, and knowing the laws that govern these vibrations, Astrology makes predictions.

Making predictions or interpreting a horoscope is a very complex

mathematical science. Interpreting an individual’s horoscope involves taking into account the sign and the house in which each planet is situated and the aspects (angles) that each of them makes with other planets, and so on. It would give rise to an immense number of permutation and combinations and the interpretation, so that to take them all into account would require more than mere mathematical acumen. H.P.B. points out that in addition to mathematics, intuition on the part of the astrologer is necessary.

It is interesting to understand how cosmic events are indicated by the Zodiac or by certain positioning of planets in the Zodiac. In the poetic description of the Solar pralaya (dissolution) taken from the Hindu Books, we are told that “Strange noises are heard...and the Sun passes away behind the thirtieth degree of *Makara* (Capricornus) and will reach no more the sign of the *Minam* (Pisces). The gurus of the pagodas appointed to watch the *rasi-chakra* (Zodiac), may now break their circle and instruments, for they are henceforth useless.” (*S.D.*, I, 376)

Sun entering thirtieth degree of Makara or Capricornus, may refer to the fact that Sun enters Makara or Capricornus, at the winter solstice, which is around December 21st. Probably, thirtieth degree of Makara symbolises winter season, when all life is asleep, which is awakened by goddess Ostara, in Spring season. Pisces is the sign connected with Spring, the season of renewal. Hence, after Solar pralaya, the Sun will not reach Pisces. However, the deeper meaning is that the sign of Makara is connected with the birth of the spiritual “microcosm,” and the death of or dissolution of the physical Universe, and its passage into the realm of the Spiritual. The Kumaras, as mind-born sons of Siva, are connected with both the processes, of destruction and regeneration (*S.D.*, II, 579). Being the description of Solar pralaya, wherein everything begins to disintegrate and die out, the Sun and the Zodiac would also perish after Solar pralaya. We are told that the Zodiac or *rashi-chakra* will no longer indicate the future, and therefore it was no longer useful to watch the Zodiac.

The ancient Hindu Sages divided the Zodiac into twenty-seven *Nakshtras* or lunar constellations. Each constellation covers 13 degrees, 20 minutes. The calculation of *Nakshtras* begins with Ashwini *Nakshtra* at zero degree of Aries and ends with thirty degrees of Pisces covered by Revati *Nakshtra*. In the Astrology followed in South India, they speak about being born under a “Star,” and by that they mean the constellation in which the moon was at the time of birth. Thus, for a person whose moon sign is Pisces, moon is situated in the zodiac sign Pisces, in his horoscope. But Pisces includes a portion of *Purva Bhadrapada*, entire *Uttara Bhadrapada* and *Revati* constellations. Now if the moon in Pisces is in *Uttara Bhadrapada* constellation then the person will say that his Star is *Uttara Bhadrapada*.

Coming to deeper aspects, astrology is not just about personality, it also deals with the individuality of man. It is that aspect of man which is not perishable, but goes from one life to the other, the Reincarnating Ego. Thus:

The star under which a human Entity is born, says the Occult teaching, will remain forever its star, throughout the whole cycle of its incarnations in one Manvantara, But *this is not his astrological star*. The latter is concerned and connected with *personality*, the former with INDIVIDUALITY. (*S.D.*, I, 572-73)

There are seven hierarchies of divine beings governing the universe. At the head of each of these hierarchies is a being called Dhyani Buddha. Dhyani Buddha is the “Angel” of that Star under which the human entity is born and he is the guiding “Angel” “in every new rebirth of the monad, *which is part of his own essence*.” Interestingly, Vishnu Purana says that Krita or Golden Age will return when asterism *Pushya* (Vedic *Tishya*), *i.e.*, Delta Cancrī, Sun, Moon and Jupiter are all in *Pushya Nakshtra* of Zodiac sign Cancer.

(Concluded)

APHORISMS ON KARMA—SOME REFLECTIONS XI

APHORISM 17: “*The appropriateness of an instrument for the operation of Karma consist in the exact connection and relation of the Karma with the body, mind, intellectual and psychic nature acquired for use by the Ego in any life.*”

Aphorism 18: “*Every instrument used by any Ego in any life is appropriate to the Karma operating through it.*”

Aphorism 19: “*Changes may occur in the instrument during one life so as to make it appropriate for a new class of Karma, and this may take place in two ways: (a) through intensity of thought and the power of a vow, and (b) through natural alteration due to complete exhaustion of old causes.*”

The term “Ego” used in Theosophical literature should not be confused with the meaning attached to it by modern western psychology. In Theosophy, Ego means “self”; the principle of self-consciousness in man, the feeling of I-am-ship. “Esoteric philosophy teaches the existence of two *Egos* in man, the mortal or *personal*, and the Higher, the Divine and the Impersonal, calling the former ‘personality’ and the latter ‘Individuality.’” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

The true and immortal Entity in us is the Higher Ego, the “Individuality,” also called the *Real Man*, as distinguished from the outward mortal form of clay, the physical body. *Personality* is the Lower Mind in intimate association, during embodied life on earth, with the principles of *Prana*, or life, the *Astral Body*—the vehicle of *Prana*—and *Kama*, the passions and desires. This *personality*, the compound of these four principles together with the lower mind, is the *apparatus* or the *instrument* which the Ego acquires in every rebirth on earth as a result of its Karma during its previous incarnations. Instrument is the appropriate term to designate the personality. As we use a tool or an instrument for a specific purpose it is meant for, so the personality with its senses and faculties is the

instrument of the Ego which it uses for its purpose; and, the personal self, the earthly man, having freedom of choice, ought to learn to so live as to serve the purpose of the Real Man.

We must always remember that “we” are not this body or personality, with which, through habitual ignorance, we identify ourselves as our *self*. Our true self is the unborn and deathless Divine Individuality. The Ego can only act on earth indirectly through its earthly personality, its instrument. The man, the personal self, endowed with free-will and power of discrimination, may choose to follow the dictates of his divine parent and enter on the path of higher evolution to divinity; in which case, the god within becomes the active guide and the inner ruler of the man; or, live pursuing mainly earthly interests and desires, when the god in him will remain a silent witness. In either case, man makes Karma which bear fruits in his future lives.

The personality is the maker of Karma and in each life it is the product of past Karma. Every man thinks and acts on four distinct planes in earth life: the physical body with its organs of sensation and action; emotional nature, the plane of Karma or desire; the organ of thought on mental plane, which includes memory, intellect, reason and judgement or discrimination; and moral nature or the plane of ethics (“I ought to do this, I ought not to do that”) which harmonizes the intellect and the emotions. Psychic faculties and senses also pertain to the personal self. The faculty of spiritual perception or intuition comes from the Divine Ego if the person has developed it in himself. These are the set of instruments the Ego uses in every life to come in touch with manifested Nature for gaining experience, and through it, to attain to self-knowledge.

Man acts on all these different and distinct planes. The quality, capacity, character, defects, peculiarities, strengths or weaknesses, and relative development or lack of it of the faculties of these planes of action in respect of every person is the exact and just outcome of the good or bad use to which he has put the universal life-force which is focused in him, by his thoughts, motives and actions. This

is the cause of differences in capacities, character, defects, various dispositions, idiosyncrasies among people.

Practical illustrations of this may be seen in everyday life in the world. We meet people, for example, with healthy body, a fine intellect, but lacking in ethics; another is born with unhealthy or even a deformed body but with excellent intellect; one may be born with mediumistic or abnormally developed psychic faculties but wanting in moral sense; and so on, with as many permutations and combinations of qualities as there are people in the world. Children of the same parents are known to exhibit characteristics unique to each according to the thoughts and acts of it in its previous embodiments.

We may recapitulate that there are three classes of Karma: that which we are experiencing at the present time; that which we are making now, which will bear fruit later, either in the present life or in a later incarnation; and, the accumulated Karma of innumerable past incarnations. In every rebirth of the Ego in the physical world the instrument it acquires—*i.e.*, the personality with its physical body, mental, intellectual, psychic faculties and moral nature with their specific qualities and peculiarities—are in exact accord with a portion of the accumulated Karma of the past which is manifesting in that life. This is stated in the *Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali* thus: “From these works, there results, in every incarnation, a manifestation of only those mental deposits which can come to fructification in the environment provided,” (Book IV, Verse 8). These are *vasana* or tendencies which the Ego had acquired in the past, rendered in English as *mental deposits*. Thought associated with desire, or emotion, is the real basis of action. Every act makes an indelible impression, or memory, in the ground of the mind as well as in the life-atoms, which build and maintain our bodily life and faculties. These memory impressions are the *mental deposits* or *vasanas*. Mr. Judge teaches that these remain as subtle but powerful links with magnetic threads that enmesh the solar system through which various effects are brought about (*The Ocean of Theosophy*,

p. 97). Neither the mental deposits which the Ego carries in the mind nor the character and the tendencies the Ego had imprinted on the lives of the body during life—called *skandhas*—are destroyed when the body dies. Though the atoms of the body are dispersed the *skandhas* remain as potential force in elemental nature, and these are connected to the disembodied Ego in *Devachan* by means of subtle indissoluble magnetic threads. When the Ego returns in the next incarnation, after expending the force of higher thought it had generated which caused it to be in that state, the *skandhas* rush to meet the returning Ego and build the bodily apparatus for it. Thus, the Ego becomes clothed in each life with fabric of life with its specific qualities which it had fashioned by its past thoughts and actions by the blind reproductive power of desire or *Kama*.

There are therefore two kinds of memory: cell-memory and soul-memory. This is illustrated by Mr. Judge by an incident of his childhood. When he was a four-year old child, sent to school early, he had difficulty in spelling words. At the age of seven a change came over him, and was able to easily spell words; and, besides, exhibited knowledge of, and interest in, many other things, though he had not read any books. Explanation of this extraordinary change may be discerned in the fact that a highly evolved Ego took possession of the child's body when it was seven years old following the exit of the one originally born into it, due to its own Karma and the Karma of the family. The physical cells of the child had the power of spelling words, among other things, in a latent state, as the atomic lives which composed them had been impressed with that ability in the past incarnations by the Egos then using them. The Ego which came to occupy the body after the exit of the original inhabitant had the power to enliven and manifest the latent potentiality in the cells because it had similar ability to spell words which it had acquired in the past, which remained as its mental deposit. It is said that such latent potentialities in the physical cells, which are Karmic inheritance from past incarnations, having come into a new body, cannot manifest them in the new body until they

are drawn out by the *Inner Man* or the Ego, who also has been through a similar set of experiences in the past, now occupying that body.

In other words, there must be an interaction and interrelation between the physical collection of atoms and man inside. If the inner man has been, say, a speller of English, and the mass of atoms composing that body has been also used by those who have been good spellers, then it will be possible for the person to pick up old knowledge. But this goes to show that it is in any case the remembering of what we once learned, and that always depending on the physical instrument. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, pp. 153-54)

Geniuses sometimes appear in the world and leave behind them enriching cultural influences, when such Egos find appropriate instrument in a family, and the life-atoms which make up the family line are strongly impressed with their particular talent. But it soon fades away from it if other Egos coming into the family are deficient in that particular talent. The great musician, Bach, for instance, was born in a family of musicians, the Ego having found the appropriate instrument in the family for the expression of his genius and also because of its past affinities with the members of the family. Subsequently, Souls with musical talent came into that family for similar Karmic reason but, over a time, the musical ability disappeared from the family because of the fact that, due to family Karma, souls with little or no such leanings began to be born in that line, who, therefore, had no ability to draw out the potential in the atoms of the body. Says Mr. Judge: "This is a great lesson in karma and universal brotherhood if looked at in the right way. It was the karma of that family to draw Egos to it of indifferent capacity, and those using the atoms of the family gave them new and other impressions and tendencies until at last Ego after Ego was attracted to the family devoid of talent. The same may and does happen in respect to virtue." (*ibid.*, p. 154)

The lesson in the working of the Karmic law is that great moral

responsibility devolves on individuals, families and nations. This was well known in ancient times in India when true knowledge prevailed and family virtues and distinctions were perpetuated for long generations through the mechanism of heredity—heredity being the effect of, and subservient to, Karma—so as to convene suitable environment for Egos having similar virtues and abilities to be attracted by and incarnate in it, thus conferring benefit to the world. Now, in this dark age, as true knowledge, virtuous living, and high civilizational ideals are lost, and materialism reigns supreme, pure family lineages have disappeared. In this age, therefore, there is generally a mismatch between the potentiality of the Ego and the suitable environment for its expression in earth-life. This is the reason why such paradoxes as birth of geniuses in families destitute of it, disparity between character and conditions, etc., are frequently seen.

Brain is not the cause of mind. In fact, the depth and variety of brain convolutions are caused by the presence of the mind. The Ego, though all-knowing, will not be able to use the brain to its full capacity unless it has experience. For instance, savages have good brain capacity, but the Ego is not mature and experienced to use it to its highest capacity. It is like asking two people to use computers. One who has mere working knowledge can only use it as a typewriter or calculator, while the other who has experience and knowledge of computer, can utilize it better. It is only when the Ego has passed through various experiences of life and learnt from them that it acquires the power to utilize the brain to its full capacity. Men are wise, not in proportion to their experience, but in proportion to their capacity for experience. Thus, on the one hand, we need to increase the capacity of the Ego to use the instrument through assimilation of the life experiences, and on the other hand work towards achieving the purity and soundness of the instruments or vehicles.

(To be continued)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Coronavirus has been declared by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a global pandemic. All preventive measures, such as, washing hands, wearing of masks, closure of schools, colleges, airport screening, hospitalisations and treatments, are carried out on a war footing, with a view to contain the disease. The whole world seems to be in agreement that the virus has to be contained and eliminated. “The virus has done what humankind would take decades to do—unite us and make us move in one direction,” writes P. V. Vaidyanathan. From a spiritual perspective the attack of Coronavirus can be understood in terms of vibrations. In this vibrational universe, everything exists at a particular vibration, and it works on the principle of like attracts like. When the collective vibration of the world reaches the same vibrational level on which the virus exists, then we are in sync with that vibration and we open the door for the virus to enter. However, when the world’s collective vibrations will rise above the current levels, this virus will no longer affect us. We and the Virus being at different vibrational levels, will then be as if living in two different apartments.

We seem to be living in a state of constant fear, anxiety, paranoia, greed, isolation, panic and selfishness, which lower our vibrations, and that in turn attracts more of this virus in our world. “Our lesson from the viral infection has always been and will always remain the same—to move from fear to love, from selfishness to unselfishness, from taking to giving, from hoarding to distributing and sharing, and towards humanity and oneness.” When we learn to put our faith in the divine nature, and learn to trust, love and be peaceful, we will raise our vibrations to higher level, then the virus threat will recede. Earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, and other calamities show that we have gone off track, that we have perhaps ignored those who daily suffer from hunger, poverty, accidents, and other diseases, more than we do now. Hence, besides taking preventive measures physically, we should strive to raise ourselves vibrationally by

learning to focus more on trust, hope, peace and love, writes Vaidyanathan. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, March 15, 2020)

The Secret Doctrine (I, 122-24) mentions the Cosmic Forces of North, South, East and West, having each a distinct occult property. There are the four *Maharajas*, described as Regents or Angels, who preside each over one of the four cardinal points and rule over these Cosmic forces. These Beings are also connected with Karma. Karma needs physical and material agents to carry out her decrees, such as the four kinds of winds. Science admits the four kinds of winds to have evil and beneficent influences upon the health of mankind and every living thing. The Roman Catholic doctrine which traces various public calamities, such as the epidemics of diseases and wars, to the invisible “Messengers from North and West,” is based on the occult philosophy. H.P.B. explains that we produce the cause, which awakens the corresponding powers in the sidereal world. These powers are magnetically attracted to those who produced the causes, by thoughts or actions. Thus, it is not the *Maharajas* who punish or reward, but man himself, who attracts evil and calamity to himself through the individual and collective Karma. The cosmic forces on the invisible plane, and winds on the material plane become agents of karma, and bring the effects of causes sown by us.

We can look upon earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes and tsunamis, as also epidemics to be like a sickness of the earth. Mr. Judge describes physical illness as discharge of the inner sickness of the inner being on the physical plane. Similarly, “the lives of the earth that have been impressed by the harmful thoughts—the selfish thoughts—of millions of men [and women] have reached a point of explosion, which comes about just as naturally in its own order and cycle, as day follows night. Those...who suffer most from such events have earned the suffering....Man *is* a part of Nature, and if he makes Nature suffer, he will suffer through Nature.” (*“Because—” For the Children Who Ask Why*)

Amherst college professor, Catherine Sanderson, in her book, *Why We Act*, challenges us to become “moral rebels,” writes Gary Drevitch. She argues that we should try to build the ability to stand up for what is right, as early as possible, in the face of peer pressure, corrupt authority and even family apathy. She points out that it is very easy to mute moral instincts of people in our virtue-challenged culture, which we must strive to convert into a virtuous culture. Why do most people become passive bystanders when they witness lynching, bullying, sex assault and other offenses? We are wrong if we think that bad behaviour is caused by bad people, because even good people participate in such behaviour when they are part of a group like a community, fraternity or some problematic “tradition.” She observes that we experience (and may be also examine) our actions less intensely when we are following orders than when we act on our own. Often people do wrong or support wrong almost against their gut instinct, against their values, and such people can be helped to develop the confidence to follow their conscience. That is why the need to teach children to be “moral rebels.” Those who can stop, step back and take time to think are far more likely to do the right thing. A huge crowd can discourage us from intervening but so also a virtuous group can motivate us to act.

Those who have confidence in their judgement and their values and know that their intervening can make a difference, can become moral rebels, going against even norms of their peer group. They know what they believe in and agree with the statement that if everyone saw the things as they do then the world would be a better place. It is not enough to feel empathy, rather it must be translated into action by showing what is wrong. For those who are diffident to speak up, will find their own moral strength when they are shown examples of moral courage in action. “A single voice can be enough when that one person gives others the courage to speak up,” says Sanderson. She draws attention to the University of Pennsylvania finding, according to which, it is not the silent majority but a small minority that is ready to take a stand, that can create a tipping point

leading to the establishment of a new norm, writes Drevitch. (*Psychology Today*, March 2020)

The failure to support and uphold the morals is condemned as much as “lip-service” paid to morals and virtues without attempting to put them into practice. “Modern ethics are beautiful to read about and hear discussed; but what are words unless converted into actions?” writes H.P.B. Thomas Carlyle said, “The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest.” It is the duty of every person who subscribes to morals and values, towards the society and humanity to uphold those values and fight against its violation, if not by physical strength then by arousing public opinion in the right direction. Moral courage to speak up, to intervene, is a courage of conviction. It is more a question of “how willing we are to suffer and to be inconvenienced” than “how courageous we are.” A *sine qua non* condition for one wishing to earnestly walk the spiritual path is, a brave declaration of moral principles and a courageous defense of those who may be unjustly attacked or persecuted.

In the olden days there were orders such as the order of the Knight Templars, who used to defend and protect the people, so also in India there were *Kshatriyas* who were ready to risk their own lives to save another. A *Kshatriya* is one who saves another from injury. If we have such *Kshatriya* temperament, we should not think twice before intervening and helping. We may begin small. A person in the family, in the social circle, or a colleague in the office may be wrongly accused and persecuted, then we may defend, instead of keeping quiet. We may contribute by joining the social institutions, which fight against injustice.

“What is the soul, if not the better version of ourselves?” says John Cottingham, professor of philosophy of religion at the University of Roehampton, London. He explores the concept of the soul in the light of the saying of St. Paul that what would it

profit a man who may gain the whole world but loses his soul? The question is still relevant and retains its urgency. We may not quite know the meaning of the term soul, but intuitively we grasp that “losing the soul,” implies a sort of moral disorientation and collapse, so that what is true and good slips from sight and we wake up and realize that we have wasted our lives on some specious gain that is ultimately worthless. For instance, we always thought that science and technology would gain us the world, but instead it seems to allow us to destroy the world. The fault is not with scientific knowledge but with our greed and short-sightedness in exploiting that knowledge. We have lost the world and we might end up losing our soul as well.

But what is the soul? Modern science would rather describe man and the world as organisms operating through physical, chemical and biological processes, than in terms of spirit and soul. Though scientific perspective is not entirely wrong, it is also true that many aspects of human experience cannot be adequately captured in the quantitatively based terminology of scientific enquiry. But when we turn to poetry, novels and ordinary speech, we find that the term “soul” is used to describe certain powerful and transformative experiences that give meaning to our lives. “Such experiences include the joy that arises from loving another human being, or the exaltation when we surrender to the beauty of a great artistic or musical work,” or when we feel at one with the natural world around us. When we use the term “soul” to refer to such experiences, we apply to it a set of attributes, such as, cognition, feeling and reflective awareness, wherein we enter a world of meaning and value that transcend our biological nature.

What makes us fully human is not the qualities of thought or rationality but the richness and depth of emotional responses that connect us to the world. We are yearning to go beyond utilitarian routines and find something that will bring healing and completion, and help us express the longing for a deeper meaning in our lives.

The idea of the soul is bound up with our search for identity or

selfhood or the self that makes us what we are. This core self is not a static or closed phenomenon, but it reminds us of the fact that no matter what we are at present, there is in us the power to become better. Therefore, when we say that we have a soul, it partly means that we are humans. “In the transformative human experiences and practices we call ‘spiritual,’ we glimpse something of transcendent value and importance that draws us forward. In responding to this call, we aim to realise our true selves, the selves we were meant to be. This is what the search for the soul amounts to; and it is here, if there is a meaning to human life, that such meaning must be sought,” writes John Cottingham in an article in *Aeon* magazine.

Soul is not something particular to man alone. In the Bible we read, “God breathed into the nostrils (of man) *the breath of life* and man became a living soul,” or *nephesh*, and the soul of the animal is also called *nephesh*. Theosophy speaks of three souls: Animal soul, human soul and divine soul. What distinguishes a man from an animal is self-consciousness and power to think and choose. These arise from mind. The animal soul is *kama* or passions and desires; the human soul is mind, whereas the divine soul is *Buddhi*.

Self-consciousness belongs to man alone and proceeds from the higher Manas (Mind). Hence, unless science admits the existence of lower (animal) and higher (divine) mind in man, free will and higher manifestations of mind will remain a riddle to it. It is the higher mind which enables us to say “I am I” and in conjunction with *Atma-Buddhi*, becomes the Individuality or Reincarnating Ego or “Hidden Self.”

When mind is involved in desires and passions, it makes man an animal-man. When the mind functions on its own plane—thinking and reasoning—it is mind *per se*, making man a rational man. When the mind works in conjunction with spiritual nature, it makes man divine.