

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

THE GREAT problem of death and immortality must be considered both from the metaphysical and from the practical aspects. We should examine the question first from the universal point of view and then apply our understanding to man, to ourselves. From the metaphysical point of view, death and immortality are simply two aspects of one and the same thing. Life, energy, consciousness, the omnipresent immutable principle, manifests itself always everywhere as duality. All manifested objects, then, can be grouped into pairs of opposites—spirit and matter, ideation and substance, consciousness and form, subject and object, rest and activity, and so forth. Contrast and duality are necessary for the manifestation of the One Life and without them manifested or conditioned existence could not be. But both these aspects, Spirit and Matter, are simply the two opposite poles of the One Unity, which is life.

This same law and duality, of contrast, shows itself in the alternate change, which takes place everywhere around us and in us. The universe comes into manifestation and goes out of manifestation under that very law. Light follows darkness and is in its turn followed by darkness. We are born, we die, and we are reborn. Day and night, death and rebirth, “light and darkness are the world’s eternal ways” and imply a changeless reality at the back of these ever-changing phenomena. If manifestation emerges from the great unknown and then disappears, *i.e.*, is reabsorbed in the unknown to

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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be followed after a period of rest by a new manifestation, then there must be an ever-existing reality at the back of both manifestation and non-manifestation. That is the first principle to grasp, the existence of an immutable, ever-present, infinite and eternal Unity and its dual aspect in its manifested condition.

The manifestation must be of the very nature of mortality, of death. It begins at a particular moment of time in a particular point of space, and although, time and space are both eternal and infinite, that which begins must end, and so the same law that causes birth, brings about death. Once this is seen we begin to look upon death as an aspect of the law of duality, the law of periodicity, and this enables us to dwell upon the question in a purely impersonal way. Most of our sorrows and our sufferings result from our illogical desire that things that begin may by some mysterious process last forever, *i.e.*, become endless, and we do not see that beginning implies and must be followed by ending. But just as sleep and waking are two conditions of which we are conscious, and hence reveal the existence of something in us which is above and beyond both sleep and wakening, and passes through both retaining its individual identity, so too, birth and death, show forth the existence of an immortal something in us, whether in the body or without a body.

Man is both immortal and ever dying. Applied to us, the law of duality, therefore, simply means that man is both deathless and ever dying, changeless and of the nature of change. And the remedy to despondency and dejection, such as shown forth by Arjuna in the *Gita*—such as all of us encounter time and again in our lives, lies in our acceptance of the law, in our understanding that “there is no existence for that which does not exist and that there is no non-existence for that which exists.” It seems very simple and yet we are constantly confused by our desire to have mortal things become immortal, and things which are of the nature of change, remain changeless.

For that is all that death is—a change, the ending of one state or condition, and beginning of another and a different state or condition.

And the reverse is also profoundly true—every change is of the nature of death. We generally think of death as the big change which recurs at the end of our life and which is marked by the ceasing of the body’s activity—but that is a narrow conception of death. If we broaden our outlook then we would be able to view all changes within the external world and within ourselves, as so many deaths. In nature, Spring must die, that Summer may be born, Summer in its turn must cease to be, that Autumn may begin. These cyclic changes are of the nature of law, of order, of rhythm and harmony, and it would be futile as well as foolish for man to attempt to break down the cyclic course of these periodical changes and recurrences. The same is true within ourselves. The infant must die that the youth may be born. The birth of manhood implies and results from the death of youth. Manhood must end, and old age begin. Each of these four periods has its own place in the scheme of life, its own duties, its own experiences, and to try to prolong one at the expense of another is to create for ourselves unnecessary pain and anguish.

Changes, which proceed from natural law, are always and invariably useful, beneficent, productive of valuable experience. The wise man views them with equipoise, as necessary avenues for growth and progress. The foolish man rebels against them and when he is conquered by nature and compelled to undergo the dreaded change, he lets sorrow, despair and despondency overcome him. Change and death are not in themselves sources of pain alone—they are neither painful nor joyful—they simply are. To some they appear painful, to others joyful. The pain and joy are within man himself—in our inner attitude and not in the outer events. This is a tremendous lesson which we all must learn. We generally look for happiness in external things, we think that attaining certain objects, producing certain circumstances in life, will bring to us joy and happiness. We also fancifully imagine the cause of our sorrows to be outside of us, in outer incidents and outer conditions. We are blind to the great spiritual truth that external changes are not the real reason for our pain or our joy, but that it is our attitude to the changes

in life and in ourselves, which determines our moods and our reactions. This at first may seem far-fetched, and difficult to accept.

Let us take an example. Let us think of two children who have both enjoyed intensely the games and the toys adequate to their stage in life. Time comes for them to put aside childish things, to give up, let us say, all their favourite toys, because they are starting their school career. One is able to do so without any heart burning, without bitterness or rebellion, but readily, willingly, almost eagerly in his desire to begin his next stage, to help nature and learn from new experiences. To such a child the great change is but a cause for added zest and joyful enthusiasm. On the other hand, the second child is resentful, grieved and alarmed. His attachment to his own toys is of such a nature that he has become identified with them and is not able to see himself happy and interested in any other condition. To him, for the time being, the giving up of his toys seems a cruel catastrophe against which he tries to fight, in vain. Thus, exactly the same event means joy to one and pain to another. Why? Because of the attitude of each within himself, an attitude determined by his knowledge or his ignorance, his right or wrong valuation of experience which must be gone through, his understanding or lack of understanding of the purpose of change in life.

To the personal man who is of the nature of change, death and change are sorrowful because they mean cessation. To the Real man who is of the nature of changelessness, death and change are but new conditions, useful experiences which will add to the storehouse of his accumulated knowledge and wisdom. We see that it is indeed we ourselves that create through our attitude both our pain and our pleasure, and that changes will no longer mean to us anguish and sorrow when we cease to identify ourselves with temporary and evanescent things. Arjuna's despondency is caused by the great change, which is to take place in him—the giving up of his past interests, habits, pleasures, for the acquiring of greater faculties. His personal life must end, so that his spiritual life may begin. "Give up they life if thou wouldst live." The mutable must

be sacrificed for the permanent, the changing for the changeless. This surrender is typified in the fight now commenced in which Arjuna is asked to take an active part, and Krishna's advice brings comfort and encouragement to all those who suffer, whether the suffering be caused by actual death of bodies or by the necessary death of one or other of the various aspects of our own mortal selves.

To understand the difference between the mortal and the Immortal man, we have to understand the difference between man's body and his soul. Science has proven well and demonstrated the continuous changes that take place in the physical body. In fact, we are taught that the many "lives" that make up our body undergo an incessant process of change and renewal so that every seven years the body has undergone a complete change. This is clear to most of us. That which is not so clear and which science is as yet unable to explain is why the incoming "lives" should group and arrange themselves in the same general contour and present the same general appearance, why they should make up a human form throughout life, instead of building up altogether a different shape? The answer which Theosophy gives is in the explanation of an inner body, invisible to the physical eye, yet substantial and real, the model for the physical frame. This body which is thus the design of the physical body is known as the astral body. That body also is mortal, destined to disintegrate after death and disappear in course of time. The mortal man is made up of these two bodies, the physical and the astral, as well as the feelings and the thoughts. We tend to mistake the feelings and the thoughts for the real man, but we are aware that the feelings and thoughts are changing, hence cannot be part of the immortal in us, but must die. Body, astral body, feeling, and thoughts make up the personality, the garments or the instruments of the Real Man and not only must they be renewed and altered to suit our requirements during life, but at the end of a period of activity, of one incarnation, they must be completely abandoned and discarded.

Moreover, who is that dweller in the personality, in the mortal nature? It is the Soul, the Ego, who incarnates life after life, gathering

new experiences, acquiring further knowledge with each life through the help of these mortal instruments which he uses and which bring him in contact with physical and external nature and with sentient life. The purpose of human evolution is the purification of the mortal self so that more and more of the Spirit may become manifest in the body, while the Soul, united with its spiritual source may know and realize its own immortality.

Immortality then is not achieved by the death of the body, the Soul knows no more and no less out of its physical encasement than it did within the body. All that happens at death is a separation of the various principles of man's being, the physical body on the one hand, the astral body with the evil feelings and thoughts on the other, the Soul with its good feelings and thoughts. That Soul, clothed in the good it was able to garner from its last life, enters into a Subjective State, a State of rest and of assimilation, preparatory for a new incarnation, for new period of active work in the objective world. The Soul is born again, comes back to earth and it is here and now, in the body and during life on earth, that the Soul must unite itself with the Spirit, and thus gain its own immortality. Immortality then is a condition, a state to be attained and experienced, realigned and understood while in the physical body.

The path of Immortality is the Path of self-control and self-discipline. The Soul must consult the Voice of Conscience, the voice of its accumulated experience, and become attentive to the Voice of Krishna. It must follow the dictates of its highest knowledge and act without attachment to the results of action. Thus, and thus alone can the self of matter, the mortal self, be overcome and the self of Spirit, the Immortal Self become manifest. Therefore, it is that Krishna says: "He who hath his senses and organs in control possesses spiritual knowledge." It is this spiritual knowledge, which is embodied today by the great Sages of the Race, the Elder Brothers of Humanity who having conquered death and gained Immortality live the life of the Spirit even while in a body of physical matter.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE AIRMEN WHO WOULD NOT DIE—II

THIS BOOK, as seen in the first part, is based on true stories of men who after their death, communicated with those on earth, thus showing that death is not the end. "Death is not dying. It is waking into another life," teach the Upanishads. Our everyday experience shows that man is not just a body. Man *is* a soul, and that soul can exist apart from the body. This is seen in the innumerable instances of people who have had OBEs [Out-of-the-Body-Experiences]—in which they describe rushing out of the body, observing the body from a distance and re-entering it—showing that soul can exist independent of the body. That which survives the death of the body is the soul or Ego, which takes up a new body at every birth, teaches the *Gita*.

But before another birth the Ego passes through certain states of consciousness, described as "hell" and "heaven" in every religious tradition. H.P.B. mentions that a person's phantom, apparition or astral body can appear before his dearest friend at the instant of death or moments after his death. Such an apparition could be produced by the intense conscious or unconscious thought of the dying person and is known as *mayavi rupa*. If the dying person thinks very intently of the person he is anxious to see, then his thought travels or is telegraphed along the wire of sympathy and becomes objective. The astral body of the dying person that visits another man is like a reflection in a mirror. This astral or "double" would carry the expression of the dying person. In the story we are told that Colonel Henderson, a friend of Captain Hinchliffe, who was on a ship, had reported that Hinchliffe had appeared before him and said that he was lost, and did not know what to do, and then simply disappeared. He had seen Hinchliffe's apparition. It could well have been *Mayavi rupa* of Captain Hinchliffe.

Immediately following the death of the physical body, the Ego takes the review of the life just ended. As soon as the Real Man's

task of “reviewing” the past life is over, the five constituents, minus the physical body and the life energy, pass on to the astral region called *kama loka*. *Kama Loka* is the world or plane of desires.

The death of the physical body marks the “first death,” but the process of death continues in *kama loka*, wherein there is separation of the astral body, desire nature and lower mind from the higher trinity of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* or the Real Man, which goes to *devachan*, *swarga* or paradise, after the separation. This is termed as “second death.” *Kama loka* is the purgatory of the Christians, the slag-pit of life, where the Ego sheds or discards the unwanted elements of the last personality. There is separation of the lower principles from the Higher. After the dissociation of the three higher elements, the astral body, desire nature and the lower mind integrate with each other to form an entity, called *Kama rupa* or the *Desire body*. This Desire body is akin to the “soiled garments,” thrown away by the real man while moving towards *devachan* and hence our ancestors termed it Satan or Devil. It is variously termed *bhuta*, *Pisacha* in India, and as spook or ghost in the West.

The Ego or Real Man, after remaining for a longer or shorter time in *kama loka*, falls into a condition called pre-*devachanic* unconsciousness. When this stage is over, the Real Man enters the *devachan* and enjoys unalloyed bliss and happiness. The Ego departs to *devachan*, taking with it the spiritual aroma or noble qualities of the last personality. Hence the important question is how long does the Ego remain in *kama loka*? The general answer is that it falls almost immediately into pre-*devachanic* unconsciousness. However, if he had some strong unsatisfied desire, or if he wanted to convey something to someone on earth, then the Ego of such a person would be detained longer in *kama loka*. It may be for a few hours, days, months or even years. The reason behind the ceremonies for the dead is this belief that the soul may be detained in *kama loka* by the enormous force of some unsatisfied desire and cannot get rid of the astral and *kamic* clothing until that desire is satisfied by someone on earth or by the soul itself.

Thus, in rare cases, after death, the Real Man remains behind for a brief period, if he has some intense unfulfilled desire or something important to communicate to someone. He forces his higher consciousness to remain awake. It is then possible for the real man—the spirit of man or soul within—to communicate with us. After this brief period, the soul has no more to do with earth until it reincarnates again. Many such instances have been reported in which a dead person is known to have appeared before his mother or wife or a friend or a distant relative to convey some important message—often far away from the actual place of his death. But in these cases, the spirit has not yet left our earthly plane and may appear in his inner, finer body—called the astral body or *Mayavi rupa*—to someone who is sensitive and receptive, to tell something important or just to be with them. Such was the case of Captain Hinchliffe who communicated with his wife through a medium, *via* a series of séance room sessions.

Theosophy raises a caution. While the desire to communicate with our dear-departed is natural, it is very dangerous to seek to re-establish contact with the dead person. Such people are drawn to séance rooms and mediums, that promise to put them in touch with their loved ones. A medium is a person who is influenced by others to such an “abnormal extent,” as to lose all self-control and has no power of will to regulate his own actions. Mediumship means yielding of weak nature to the suggestions and control of “spirits” and intelligences other than one’s own immortal, divine spirit within. A “medium,” in this sense, is necessarily an excessively passive person. The more passive the person, the more successful he or she is as a medium.

These mediums claim to bring the spirits of the departed to the séance rooms. And it is not surprising that the desperate, distressed, bereaved person on this side of the earth, grabs this chance of establishing a channel of communication. He has no idea what a dangerous zone he is entering into, when he walks into a séance room to get in touch with the spirit of the departed. With an intense

desire to be reunited with the dead, he is credulous, unprepared and unguarded. Those who believe that it is indeed the spirit of the loved one who appears at the séance should ask themselves whether it is possible to drag the spirit back from its happy *Devachanic* state to the sorrowing group of his loved ones, just to reassure them of his undying love or to answer their questions of purely worldly nature? Moreover, could it be done on a regular basis day after day, like family members coming together, over the dinner table, every night? Can we believe that the spirit that has passed on to another plane can ever be attracted to the foul atmosphere of our séance rooms? It is only in some rare instances that an unpaid and pure medium ascends to the state of *Devachan* and communicates subjectively with the beings in that state. But in today's world of paid mediums where people flock the place to ask the spirit which horse they should bet on and what stocks they should invest in, in short with a selfish desire for profit, cases of mediums ascending to actually contact the spirit of the departed in their subjective *devachanic* state are almost entirely absent.

If Theosophy affirms that it is not our dear-departed who appears at a séance, then what is the entity that appears, talks, answers questions with seeming intelligence through tapping or by writing on paper in the handwriting of the departed? What is it that repeats past incidents and happenings, moves objects without touching, and bears strong resemblance to the late being? Theosophy says that it is the shell, the *kama-rupa* of our dear departed, or worse still, the shell of another person masquerading as our loved one under the guidance of very wicked and depraved entities who are always present at séances. These are the depraved beings who severed their contact with their higher nature through several lives of evil actions, now destined to go to pieces through the slow process of disintegration, and who try to hold on to life, vicariously, through the vitality of the mediums and sitters in the séance rooms. These are called “controls” or Elementaries.

On the astral body are impressed all the thoughts and feelings of

its owner; it carries, like a sensitive photographic plate, the record of everything that happened in and around the life of the person. It is this shell which now repeats like a gramophone, the words and thoughts of its owner, acts and moves as it did during life, using borrowed vitality, helped by the class of beings called elementals. It shows the signs of automatic life and intelligence like a vivisectioned frog or a beheaded cock. Would you make the mistake of calling the gramophone, which faultlessly reproduces the song, “the great dead singer”? Moreover, these shells are saturated through and through with the lower and at times positively evil and vicious thoughts of the dead person. It happens in case of an executed criminal who is rehearsing his crime, hatred and feeling of revenge against those who, in his opinion, got him unjustly executed. Such men are only *partly* dead and they inject their ideas of murder and revenge into sensitive persons, inciting them to commit similar crimes, against their better nature. A shell is truly the devil in man who appears at the séance—the *bhut* (ghost) of the Hindus. That is why we are advised never to indulge in such practices.

The medium's astral body becomes a channel for making connection with the shell that is vivified into artificial life by absorbing the vitality from the body of the medium and sitters. The shell then gives off old impressions like a replaying of a gramophone record. This is the reason why in almost every case such communications have nothing spiritual or worthwhile to offer. Such practices eventually ruin the physical, mental and psychic health of the mediums whose vitality is depleted at each sitting. Often, it is the medium's astral body that oozes out, without his knowledge, to form an electro-magnetic surface to be used to reflect the images or pictures of the dear-departed, from the astral light. These are the psychological frauds about which H.P.B. has warned us. In this case, there is no presence of the shell. Often the electro-magnetically prepared form is used and reused to reflect images of different persons according to the desire of the sitters, the images of their loved ones being picked up from their minds by the medium or the “controls” at the séance, by the help of elementals.

Mr. Judge tells us that the fact of death, kind of death, place where the dead person's will might be found, have been told by the "spirit" appearing at the seances; personal peculiarities of the deceased have been revealed; and these have all been too easily accepted as a proof of his identity. These facts are no proof. Communicating with the dead is treated as a kind of entertainment by some people who have made it their hobby, little knowing that the subtle evil influences that radiate from these entities that crowd the séance rooms diffuse moral poison in the mental atmosphere of all present.

If only people would listen to these warnings! Hindus recognize these dangers well. Their after-death ceremonies are aimed at speedy departure of their dead to the heaven world. Among them, holding of séances is called the "worship of the dead"—for that is what it is—and is forbidden. A mass is said for the *rest* and peace of the departed soul, in order that it should not become a *bhut*, a restless, wandering soul, in the earth's atmosphere. In order to prevent the soul of the dead from being earth-bound, the ceremony the Feast for the Dead is held throughout Christendom on 2nd November.

Theosophy says that spiritual, holy love is immortal, and the law of Karma brings, sooner or later all those who loved each other with such spiritual affection to incarnate once more in the same family group. More important is the fact that while we miss the physical presence of our loved ones in our waking hours, we meet them during the quiet hours of our sleep.

"Hence, although there is hardly a human being whose Ego does not hold free intercourse, during the sleep of his body, with those whom it loved and lost, yet, on account of the positiveness and non-receptivity of its physical envelope and brain, no recollection, or a very dim, dream-like remembrance, lingers in the memory of the person once awake." (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 30)

(Concluded)

H. P. BLAVATSKY—OUR GURU AND GUIDE

ALL sincere students of Theosophy will prepare themselves for the auspicious occasion of White Lotus Day, to commemorate anniversary of the passing away of our Guru, guide, philosopher and friend, H. P. Blavatsky, on May 8th. Those who are able to value H.P.B.'s writings as instructions given for application, are bound to feel the Power the Guru enshrined in those instructions. For these few, for whom H.P.B. has become a Guru, there is a companionship of co-disciples. If the companions treading the path of discipleship, which is the path of tests and trials, move in amity, faith and devotion, then they will pass their tests and overcome their trials. Disciples learning the Law of the Heart will not succeed if they fail to help others also to succeed. For, the Law of Heart Doctrine will try our Love and test our lust; try our Patience and test our anger; try our Generosity and test our greed.

We need not be afraid of our weaknesses. Out of failures must come the power of repentance; out of the successes the power of service. Every failure can be turned into a success, and every success into Soul-Power. H.P.B. taught to build a firm foundation for our pledge or promise, thus: "Every pledge or promise unless built upon four pillars—absolute sincerity, unflinching determination, unselfishness of purpose, and moral power, which makes the fourth support and equipoise the three other pillars—is an insecure building. The pledges of those who are sure of the strength of the fourth alone are recorded." As can be seen, Moral Power is indispensable in the living of the soul-life and in serving all souls.

Every student of Theosophy develops a feeling of gratitude towards the philosophy of Theosophy when he discovers that it is teachings of Theosophy that have enabled him to overcome his prejudices and weaknesses. At that same time the student is bound to feel grateful to the Masters of Wisdom for having sent H. P. Blavatsky, Their messenger, with the Torch of the Wisdom-Religion, at which he could light his own small heart-light, which in turn

enabled him to fight the battle against passions, desires and personality, against ignorance and selfishness. He is able to appreciate that the philosophy of Theosophy has made a difference in his life, strengthening his will and helping him to raise himself a little above the general run of humanity, always oscillating between hope and despair.

The student-aspirants have to gradually come to the stage of walking the Path of Sacrifice, by ceasing to claim their rights. When we feel hurt and wounded, and imagine that our rights were trampled under foot by friends, co-students or helpers, we are not yet ready to tread the Path of Sacrifice. Let us not ask what Theosophy has done for us, but try only to find out what we have done for Theosophy. We should be ready to undertake our duties with knowledge and responsibility. “The first *duty* taught in Occultism is to do one’s duty unflinchingly *by every duty*.” When we perform our duties whole-heartedly, we pay our karmic debts, daily, hourly, yearly. It is the careful and cheerful performance of our duties which paves the way for walking the Path of Sacrifice, “giving to others *more* than to oneself.” The necessary and sufficient condition for the furtherance of Cause is the brotherly feeling. “Let ten determined theosophists unite themselves; let them work together, each according to his own way. . . .let each one be in sympathy with his brother; let this be done, and we can answer for it that each member would make greater progress in the sacred science in one year than could be made in ten years by himself,” promises H.P.B.

Let us take to heart these words of H.P.B. which remind us of our work in the world: “What we should seek is to bring some peace on earth to the hearts of those who suffer, by lifting for them a corner of the veil which hides from them divine truth. Let the strong point the way to the weak and help them to climb the steep slope of existence. Let them turn their gaze upon the Beacon-light which shines upon the horizon, beyond the mysterious and uncharted sea of Theosophical Sciences, like a new star of Bethlehem, and let the disinherited ones of life recover hope.”

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS SPIRITUAL LIFE AND SUFFERING

THE spiritual life is a life of vigour and virility—not the shoving of responsibility from one’s own shoulders onto the shoulders of another.

If you want to get rid of personal suffering you will have to get at the root of the things, and once you get there you will find out that we evolve (1) by following the dictates of the God within us and (2) by preaching the healthy right doctrine.

Self-appointed spiritual leaders are never a real help. “Playing the Guru” is an itch, a disease. For us the only Guru is H.P.B. and Those who are behind her.

Now about yourself: you must not be disgusted with your weaknesses. The process of growth generally begins by ourselves noting our weaknesses. This is the first step. But you must not be obsessed by them, for that way you will strengthen them. After noting them you can work on them in two ways: first, by trying to cultivate the opposite virtue and, secondly, by using them to kill out other weaknesses; the latter is difficult and has its own peculiar dangers.

It is true that those who try to live the spiritual life and teach the great spiritual truths have sometimes to suffer. It does not matter after all. If we can keep our own centre of consciousness surrounded by strength, calm, serenity and peace, and cultivate that attitude which makes us remain unaffected by outside impacts, by actions, emotional or mental, we are safe. This will ultimately bring spiritual realization. The tendency to rush out in many directions, to make contacts with the objects of the senses, is creating pain and suffering; but even that, in a way, helps human beings to learn, though indirectly. The direct method is to attune ourselves to our own inner consciousness; let it impress itself on the personal consciousness. Therefore, cultivate the habit of gaining peace within, and the strength and power of the spiritual nature which fears no failure, courts no success. That is the lesson which you should learn first. Then you will be able to make the distinction between fretting and fighting, between gossip and right studying of the hearts of others, between sham indifference and true dispassion. These are the things that students of Theosophy have to learn early.

PHILOSOPHY—WISDOM OF LOVE

A FEW basic feelings, commonly felt by all of us, are the root of all other emotions. Love is the foremost of them. It is experienced universally. Even a hardened criminal feels the stirrings of love, though he may repeatedly choose to silence it. As *Light on the Path* says:

He that chooses evil refuses to look within himself, shuts his ears to the melody of his heart, as he blinds his eyes to the light of his soul. He does this because he finds it easier to live in desires. But underneath all life is the strong current that cannot be checked; the great waters are there in reality. (p. 23)

But are all kinds of love essentially the same? The self-sacrificing love of a patriot, the unselfish love of a mother, the altruistic wishes of a teacher, are all qualitatively different from the sensual love of the beloved, the love of the gourmet turning him into a glutton, the love of activity and excitement in a businessman. Differing not only in degree, but in kind too, as they originate from different aspects of man, and thus produce different effects. “He who loves, lives. He who loves himself, lives in hell; he who loves another, lives on earth; and he who loves others, lives in heaven.”

While religions differ in prescriptive details, they are unanimous in one injunction: Love everyone. Among the “universal great duties” enjoined by the Yoga philosophy of Patanjali, *Ahimsa* or non-violence is given the first place. Those who claim that the *Bhagavad-Gita* preaches violence and war are either grossly mistaken or misled, since Lord Krishna urges his favourite disciple to see himself abiding in all sentient beings, and bear love to all. The Sufi saint’s definition of forgiveness is that “it is the fragrance that flowers give when they are crushed,” and this confirms the injunction of angel Jibriel (or Gabriel) to Prophet Mohammad, that “Allah commands you to forgive those who wronged you, give to those who deprived you, and keep relations with those who cut themselves off from

you.” When Jesus was asked whether one should even forgive the seventh transgression of one’s enemy, the unequivocal response was, “I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.”

It is surprising that every religion is founded on love, preaches friendship, and prescribes forgiveness as the path to spiritual progress, and yet religions themselves are the most prolific source of divisions and animosity. Is it due to misinterpretation of religions by vested interests? *Or*, is it owing to the tacit license given by the priestly class to the masses, a compromise of morality for the sake of formalism and dead rituals? Is it too much to expect human beings to behave like humans? The ardent religionist must ponder over these, keeping in mind the distinction between the letter of the scriptures and its Spirit; between the priestcraft of the vested interests and the piousness of the sages; between the institutionalised religion and the inner spiritual dimensions.

The most important question that begs an answer is why would anyone, let alone a “wise one,” advise reciprocating hate with love? Why would the great teachers urge us to forgive and forget, to “love our enemies,” when it is so counter-intuitive, and—as some would argue—perils our very existence in today’s world? Is there something the “Wise Ones” know that we are not aware of? We cannot fling the charge of insanity on every sage and saint who has preached forgiveness! The only conclusion one can reach is this: the sages are aware of dimensions of reality that we are yet ignorant of.

Every Platonic dialogue either establishes the truth of different levels of reality, or makes the fact a cornerstone for further investigations. The physical world is a layer of reality, and an ephemeral one at that. The distinction between the Real and the Seeming, and the Real being masked from us by our own ignorance, is the subtext of every spiritual teaching. The exhortation to render good for evil is based on this deeper insight into the noumenal world. We too can perceive that Reality, if we furnish the necessary conditions of moral probity and spiritual purity.

Just as the laws of physics dictate that water flows downwards and

warm air rises upwards, there are mental, psychic, moral and spiritual laws, which dictate the workings of invisible worlds. Violating the laws of physics causes us physical harm, *i.e.*, your hand burns, leg breaks or muscle tears. Just so, breaking the laws of morality damages our moral and mental being. The damage to the body is limited to this life, whereas the diseases of moral nature we carry from life to life, until we cure them through right morality. Revenge and hate most violently disturb the harmony on the inner, real planes of existence, and the consequences of which bear heavily on everyone. An evident gap—a chasm, one may argue—in present education *vis-a-vis* the ideas of the ancients, is the existence of a trans-physical reality and its relation to the world as we perceive. Not only modern education, even religions themselves have lost the scientific basis of ethics.

It is the hope of every sincere student of theosophy to bring out and demonstrate to the common man the logic of forgiveness and other ethical injunctions. Depiction in every religion of the same ontological verities, under the differing garb of symbols, convinces him of the presence of a higher science. The transformative influence of such an understanding inspires him to investigate further and work for the cause of brotherhood.

This higher science demonstrates the grave mistake of thinking that hate can distance us from a person or a community. On the contrary, hate binds us with that person, closer and closer, with every passing birth, and we are reborn in more intimate relationship with the person we dislike, such that we are inescapably bound with one another. Love also produces the same result of coming together, but in a helpful and friendly relationship. Love and animosity both bind a man to the other; one results in friendly atmosphere, while the other results in inimical relationships. Our future, then, depends on our attitude towards not only our friends, but especially our “enemies.” How shall we, then, think and act that makes for a future full of friends and benefactors?

Firstly, we have to accept the responsibility for the circumstances we are in. Whether as a nation, a family or an individual, every event of our life is an exact outcome of the past actions—collective

and personal. The results of actions of past lives reach us in the present and future. As a sage once said, past and future are trees, while the present is the seed: the present is the seed born from the tree of the past, and gives rise to the tree of future. After selecting and sowing the seed, and nurturing the sapling, who shall we blame for the resultant fruit on the tree?

One who understands this has no cause for complaint. This non-complaining, responsible attitude makes him fit to receive the instructions from the Inner Ruler, and opens up his vision to higher realities. He has reached the position of Arjuna, as “one who finds no fault” in people and events. *As Through the Gates of Gold* says, “There is only one way of escape from this terrible danger which we battle against every hour. Turn round, and instead of standing against the forces, join them; become one with Nature, and go easily upon her path. Do not resist or resent the circumstances of life any more than the plants resent the rain and the wind. Then suddenly, to your own amazement, you find you have time and strength to spare, to use in the great battle which it is inevitable every man must fight—that in himself, that which leads to his own conquest.” Herein lies the secret of spiritual strength.

Secondly, forgive your detractors. Not only is the animosity the result of your mutual antagonism, generated by both of you in the past; the power to rectify it is present in both the parties. The other person’s choices are not in our control. But shall we not use the supreme power to change our (and of all others’) future for good, by choosing the right path? We can, and we ought to disentangle and liberate ourselves from the spiral of hate that binds us for eternities, until we realize that we are part of the same Whole. No god or saint can do it for us, because the human soul is not so constituted. In our innermost nature, we are Deity itself, and the power of choice is sovereign and supreme in each of us.

Returning good for evil is not a sentimental course of the weak-hearted. It is the power of the strong who understand the unity of life, that he and his enemy are but reflections of the same Light.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

II

OCCULT Philosophy teaches that every object on earth is dual in nature, spiritual and material, visible and invisible, and that the ultimate cause of everything is spiritual in nature. However, neither science nor religion admits the existence of the occult or super-material region, governed by laws. In *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. gives examples of infants born with missing limbs—cases of imagination of the mother affecting the child in her womb. In one case, a woman witnessed the beheading and went into premature labour, giving birth to a headless child. Physiologists have recorded such incidents. While some have described them as “curious-coincidences,” only a few have been honest enough to admit their ignorance. Many have been too proud and have said: “*There is no reason to believe that imagination of mother can have any influence in the formation of these monsters*; besides, productions of this kind are daily observed in the offspring of other animals and even in plants” (*Isis*, I, 387). “The field of scientific investigation is bounded by physical nature on every side; hence, once the limits of matter are reached, enquiry must stop and work recommenced,” says H.P.B. In other words, science is reluctant to go to a realm beyond the physical for finding the unknown cause.

This is corroborated by Sir William Grove, F.R.S., who seems to suggest that investigation of modern science for the cause or causes behind natural phenomena stopped with material realm. Sir Grove says that on the other hand, whenever ancients came across a natural phenomenon, which could not be explained on the basis of any mechanical action, they ascribed it to a soul, or spirit or some supernatural power. The ultimate origin or cause of physical elements or chemical elements is something spiritual is seen in the fact that the term *pneuma* and spirit were used to designate both soul as well as gas. Pneumatics is a branch of mechanics that deals with the mechanical properties of gases. Air and gases were seen as something

spiritual before being seen as something material as we do now. He says that the term gas is derived from *geist*, which also means ghost or spirit. It shows how there was a gradual transmutation of the spiritual into the physical conception.

In the Preface to his book, *The Correlation of Physical Forces* (p. xiv), Sir W. Grove shows that Light, Heat, Electricity, Magnetism and Chemical-affinity are all convertible material affections, *i.e.*, those that produce effect on each other. Thus, one of them will be cause and the other will be its effect. “Assuming either as the cause, one of the others will be the effect: thus, heat may be said to produce electricity, electricity to produce heat; magnetism to produce electricity, electricity magnetism; and so of the rest. Cause and effect, therefore, in their abstract relation to these forces, are words solely of convenience.” In other words, each of the physical forces is a cause and also an effect, so that it is for the sake of convenience that we use the terms cause and effect. Therefore, Grove suggests that exact science should only be concerned with studying the effects in relation to physical forces, and try to establish mutual relation between them through experiments, rather than trying to find causes. That is because, the “causes” that science finds are but effects, as the real causes remain hidden on the metaphysical plane. “We are totally unacquainted with the *ultimate generating power* of each and all them, and probably shall ever remain so. . . . We must humbly refer their causation to one omnipresent influence,” *i.e.*, science will never find “ultimate generating power” or *spiritual cause* behind all the physical forces.

Heredity is the passing of traits to offspring, from its parent or ancestors. If that be so, how does one explain the birth of idiots or vicious children to parents who are good, pure or highly intellectual? We find exceptions to the hereditarily transmitted traits, when we see differences in character and capacity of the children of the same family. Also, in the family line of the great musician Bach, his direct descendants showed a decrease in musical ability, so that finally, it disappeared from the family stream, altogether. That is because

heredity cannot be considered the *ultimate cause* for the physical, mental and moral traits of a person. Otherwise, a criminal who comes from the family of criminals cannot be held responsible for his crimes, as he has *inherited* that tendency. “Heredity has been looked at, or is beginning to be, as the cause of crime and of virtue. It is not a cause but only a means or instrument for the production of the effect, the cause being hidden deeper,” says Mr. Judge. The cause can be discovered only if we take into account the laws of Karma and Reincarnation.

It is not correct to link mental illnesses and moral or immoral behaviour to genetic causes. Once alcoholism was associated with weakness of character, but now science has found a gene that increases the risk of alcoholism. Scientists now admit that just because a person carries a gene associated with murder, he will not become a murderer. “While genes influence behaviour, they do not govern nor determine it,” says Deborah Denno, director of the Fordham University Neuroscience and Law Center.

Steven Rose, director of the brain and behaviour research group at the Open University, observes that in the passage of time one biomarker (biochemical cause) of a mental disorder has been replaced by another. Very soon today’s attempts to locate causes in terms of genes will seem misguided. Rose writes:

I am still not sure whether you would want to argue that, once you have catalogued all your genes of small effect, you would say you have “explained” the “causes” of schizophrenia. The phenotypic effect of any one of your genes will be probabilistic....It may be that your techniques *will* point to new drug prospects, but I fear that “explanation” will still elude simple reductionism. (*Prospect*, October 2005)

Heredity provides the Ego with appropriate body and environment. Mr. Judge explains in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that genes or heredity—transmission of trait and tendency by means of parent and body—is the *mode* selected by nature to provide the

Ego with the appropriate tenement. The environment, the personality and the limitations imposed on the Ego are exact consequences of that Ego’s actions in prior lives. It is the Karma of previous lives, which “governs the station in life, sex, the conditions of the irresponsible years of childhood, the constitution with the various diseases inherent in it.”

Human heredity is enormously more complicated as compared to heredity in lower kingdoms, because human evolution is not by natural impulse but by self-conscious choices. The human germ plasm is dominated by the spiritual plasm, which is a spiritual potency in the Ego itself. In case of human beings, heredity is subservient to individual and racial Karma. Really speaking, inborn mental and moral characteristics are not inherited from parents and ancestors, but are brought over by the individual from his own past lives. A particular trait is transmitted because under karma, it is the tendency or *skandhas* brought by the Ego. If the Ego does not bring that tendency then although that hereditary trait might be present in the family line, the Ego will not inherit the same. The great musical ability in the family of Bach came to a stop when the Egos coming in that family line after Bach, did not bring that ability with them.

Scientists are able to get at the immediate cause, which is on the physical plane. Thus, for instance, how do they explain earthquakes and Tsunami? In terms of movement of tectonic plates of the earth, etc. But that is only the effect or immediate cause. There is a subtle cause behind that, which occult philosophy explains in terms of “lives” or elementals. We often explain that disease is inner sickness of inner person, brought to the surface on physical plane. There is disturbance at the level of *prana* or astral body, which surfaces as a disease. We can look upon earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes and tsunamis to be like a sickness of the earth. When “lives” or atoms of the earth are given negative impressions, of selfish and harmful thoughts of millions of people, they reach an exploding point, and then there is earthquake or volcanic eruption. The ultimate cause being human thoughts and feelings.

Scientific or social service touches the world of effects; Theosophical service touches the world of causes. “All the good and evil things in humanity have their roots in human character, and this character is, and has been, conditioned by the endless chain of cause and effect,” writes H.P.B. The one suffering from cold and cough can take medicine to be cured, but that would prove to be a temporary cure, if the real cause is eating of too many ice-creams. So also, imposing of laws may prove to be only a temporary deterrent, the emphasis must be on individual morality.

When someone asked Robert Crosbie, “Why is it that Theosophists are so passive to political and social conditions?” He replied: “No true Theosophist is passive to *anything*; his knowledge, however, shows him where his energy can be best used for the benefit of humanity. He does not waste his energy poulticing the boils on the body corporate, but devotes it to the pointing out of the seat of the disease and the remedy. It is apparent to anybody that the cause of all human troubles is selfishness and ignorance....The greatest need, then, is to have a right and true philosophy of life.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 77)

The Buddhist doctrine of conditioned co-production shows how birth, old age, disease and death are inherent in phenomenal existence, which arise in dependence upon conditions, and cease in the absence of those conditions. The law of conditioned co-production or dependent origination consists of twelve links (or *nidanas*) in a chain. Desire or *trishna* is an important link in the chain of causes or *Nidanas*, which under the Law of Karma, cause rebirth. The first *Nidana* is *Avidya* or ignorance. Shankaracharya describes *Maya* as illusion-producing ignorance. As the drunken man sees things differently from what they really are, *Avidya* makes us mistake conditioned as unconditioned and impermanent as permanent, leading to *Samkhara* or Karma-formation—actions done in ignorance create karma which prove binding. The fifth *Nidana* is *Sparsa* or contact producing pleasant or unpleasant sensation or *Vedana*, which produces craving or *Trishna*. This is followed by remaining *Nidanas* and finally *jara-marana* or decay and death. It is

the thirst or craving for the sensation which brings us back to life again and again. When we have learnt to experience the sensation, without allowing corresponding craving to arise, we succeed in breaking the link between *Vedana* and *Trishna*, and overcome the necessity of rebirth. Desire of any sort, satisfied or unsatisfied, deludes the Ego, and creates a magnetic attraction in which the Ego is caught and compelled to take birth.

We are effects of the causes set into motion by us in this or in some other life. The Law of Karma is the law of action and reaction; cause and effect. The law of Karma adjusts every effect to its cause and restores the disturbed equilibrium in the physical world and broken harmony in the moral world. When a stone is thrown into a pond it creates disturbing waves that oscillate back and forth till they converge back to the point of disturbance, bringing the waters to a state of calm tranquillity. In the kingdoms below man, evolution proceeds naturally; each kingdom acts in accordance with its own law, and therefore there is no self-conscious causation. We, human beings, sow causes every moment, by thinking and acting selfishly, for our own benefit, and thus disturbing the universal harmony. In each life, we have generated innumerable causes, both in right and wrong directions, on the physical, mental and moral planes, and we feel their effects in a given life through joy or suffering.

We will remain entangled in the wheel of cause and effect, till we learn to set into motion pure causes, in terms of pure thoughts, pure words and pure deeds. When a person renounces interest in the fruits of actions, he is not bound by actions, because then, he does not offer an individual focus, where karmic effects could return. He only introduces beneficent causes into collective karma of humanity. He is like a writer who has made a deal that all money that comes to him as royalty must be distributed as charity. He is then not forced to take birth, but voluntarily, complying with the law of cycles, can take birth at appropriate times to help humanity. Such are the Great Beings, known as Mahatmas or Elder Brothers of Humanity.

(Concluded)

TWO KINDS OF FAITH

TRUST and confidence in something, or in someone, or in a concept, or a belief, or in the efficacy and truth of a doctrine—religious or not—is called Faith. The term is the rendering in English of the Sanskrit word, *Shraddha*. It is devotion to an idea or an ideal, or a cause. Being an attribute of the human spirit faith is illimitable in its power and sweep, but on the utilitarian plane of the personal self, it is limited and modified by narrow and limited ideas which people generally hold. No one, not even a skeptic, or a materialist, is devoid of faith. Jesus is credited with having said that if one has faith even as little as a grain of a mustard seed, and says to a mountain to move to another place, it would move. “Faith is a quality endowed with a most potent creative power,” teaches Theosophy. Universal tradition is replete with instances of prodigious cures of diseases accomplished by the unconscious exercise of the power of faith by individuals. Amulets, charms, relics, images in the sanctum of temples and churches are credited with effecting cures. But it is said that the virtues of the latter are enhanced a hundredfold by the implicit faith of the devotee. The faithful attributes the accomplishment of the object of his ardent prayers to the deity to which he is devoted, or in the person in whose powers or holiness he has implicit faith. The truth is that it is the intensity of his own faith which brought about the intended results. The principle to be remembered is that there is no power or a virtue a man may exercise by evocation or prayers or otherwise in the production of prodigies, whether consciously or unconsciously, which is not a manifestation of the powers of his own self. Faith is the power of the creative human will in action.

We are all the time expending the exhaustless power of the life force along the lines of our thoughts and desires, beliefs, and aspirations, which are productive of results in an endless concatenation of cause and effect, in which we become entangled. The more liberal and universal the thoughts, and the truer the aspirations, the more beneficent and liberating would be the resulting

effects for universal good. Contrarily, thoughts and actions which have selfish intent, which are sectarian in spirit, and founded in beliefs not in accordance with universal axiomatic truths, must invariably be constrictive and retrogressive because discordant, and, therefore, productive of much evil.

Faith, therefore, is of two kinds. One is blind faith in the authority of a person, or of an institution, or a social custom, and the other founded on knowledge, and reasoning on that basis. The one is regressive and the other progressive. In this truism is found the efficient cause of the evils which afflict mankind and also insight into the clue to their relief.

The millions of the “faithful” in Christendom, for instance, believe in the religious dogma that mankind is originally from its inception sinful, and that man’s redemption from sin and his salvation is contingent on the affirmation by him of his belief, before the priest, even if it be at the last moment on his death bed, that the Saviour atoned in advance on the cross for the sins of mankind, and on the mercy of God. The unreasonableness and injustice implicit in the dogma are evident. Blind because, not being true, it is not amenable to reason nor to the principle of natural justice, and it offends simple commonsense and morality. Can a murderer, for instance, escape justice and be saved by confessing his faith in a dogma of his religion? It is obvious that the pain and the loss suffered by the victim and his dependents by the action of the criminal cannot be wiped away, nor the far-reaching repercussions on society of the crime committed by him are mitigated by his deathbed conversion. The effects of action of an individual affects all beings, for good or ill. True religion, based on the firm foundation of knowledge teaches that the only atonement the offender can make is by his experiencing the painful retributive effects of the disharmony he created during the process of restoration and readjustment of the disturbance he had caused. The just Law of Karma compensates for the loss suffered by the victim or victims of his crime, while the perpetrator is afforded the opportunity to redeem himself in the pain and suffering that he has to undergo when the retributive justice reaches him. Incidences of crime

and immorality will be almost negligible in a society where such a belief based on knowledge is prevalent. The belief that one may escape the consequences of one's actions is an instance of blind faith. Yet millions unquestioningly subscribe to the religious belief of vicarious atonement. It is evident that intense selfishness and immorality is the outcome of this belief.

The instance of false faith alluded to is not confined to Christendom alone. The belief that one may escape the consequences of one's questionable actions by means of religious prayers, ceremonies, and supplications to one's favourite deity has insidiously taken root in the minds of people in India, which is one of the principal causes of the same evils alluded to earlier which afflict Indian society.

The belief among Hindus and Buddhist masses that a human being who commits sins will be reborn in animal bodies is widespread and it is implicitly believed in. The same dogma coupled with religious injunctions pertaining to performance of after-death ceremonies by the next of kin of the deceased, and the supposed untoward consequences of its neglect, is a superstition and a blind faith which is perpetuated by the priest class by appeal to sentiment and the fear among the faithful. The faithful blindly conform to the dogma, convinced that they are diligently performing their religious duty. Few, if ever, question the veracity of the belief. The insidious evil effects of blind beliefs are so severe as to render the minds of the faithful impervious to the reception of the light of truth. One of the Masters of Wisdom points this out in a letter addressed to the Brahmins who expected to be taught and guided by Them:

“Faith in the Gods and God and other superstitions attract millions of foreign influences, living entities and powerful Agents round them with which we would have to use more than ordinary exercise of power to drive them away. We do not choose to do so. We do not find it either necessary or profitable to lose our time waging war on the unprogressed *planetaries* who delight in personating gods and sometimes well known characters who have lived on earth.” (*The Mahatma Letters*, Eighth Impression, p. 462)

The Master is referring to the “doctrine of shells”—the elementals and elementaries which throng in the aura of the believers in gods and dead saints, and in their vicinage—the vivid creatures of their beliefs created in the Astral Light by the imagination and thoughts of the faithful. The Masters say that it is much easier for them to communicate with and teach Western students of an agnostic mindset who have no such religious beliefs, although they may be subsisting habitually on meat diet and wine, the obstructive influences of which They say They can dispel with a little effort, but that it is very hard even for Them to dispel the “shells” which form a formidable obstacle in the way of reaching the minds which cling to false faiths, though they may be vegetarians, learned, and belong to a “high caste.”

Equally deleterious are the Karmic results of the life of people given over to selfish indulgence as a consequence of materialistic outlook that one short personal existence is the be-all and end-all of life. This is faith in materialism. The Great Master's Letter (Letter of the Maha Chohan) warns of the ill-effects of such false faiths—religious or secular:

The intellectual portion of mankind seems to be fast dividing into two classes: the one unconsciously preparing for itself long periods of temporary annihilation or states of non-consciousness, owing to the deliberate surrender of intellect and its imprisonment in the narrow grooves of bigotry and superstition—a process which cannot fail to lead to the utter deformation of the intellectual principle; the other unrestrainedly indulging its animal propensities with deliberate intention of submitting to annihilation pure and simple, in case of failure, and to millenniums of degradation after physical dissolution. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 33*, pp. 1-2)

The human mind and intellect are warped if persistently devoted to superstitious beliefs, and degraded by indulging animal passions. The culmination of such indulgence is spiritual death. No worse calamity can befall man.

Teachers say that in our age oblivion has come over the timeless wisdom-Science following the downfall of the venerable institution of Mysteries at the beginning of the Common Era and with persecution and exile of the Hierophants of the Sanctuaries. The ignorant and ambitious priesthood has usurped the holy seat of the Teachers of the Esoteric Science, and have wholly perverted the latter with the literal, dead-letter interpretation of the sacred scriptures, materialized and anthropomorphized mystical and philosophical tenets of the ancients. It is the light of the Esoteric Science and true Teachers of it alone can clear away the many superstitions, and dissipate blind faith with the light of true knowledge, and thus establish faith based on knowledge. One is faith on *authority*—the authority of the dead letter dogmas of the exoteric priesthood—and the other *faith based on one's spiritual intuition*.

Underlying the great religions and philosophies of the world is the eternal Wisdom-Religion or Theosophy, the synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy. It alone is capable of revealing to the seeker the truth concealed under the thick veil of the exoteric narrative of the scriptures of the world, which are recorded in the mystery language of symbols and myths, purify them of the dross of dogmatic faiths of centuries overlaying them, and reveal Truth. This is Knowledge—not knowledge in the ordinary sense of the term, but as the Teacher, H.P.B., defines it: *spiritual perception* (*H.P.B. Series No. 27*, p. 11). This is true faith.

This perception of the *Manas* may be called “faith” which should not be confounded with *blind belief*. “Blind faith” is an expression sometimes used to indicate belief without perception or understanding; while true perception of *Manas* is that enlightened belief, which is the real meaning of the word “faith.” This belief should at the same time be accompanied by *knowledge*, *i.e.*, experience, for “true knowledge brings with it faith.” (*ibid*)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What does it mean to give “silent treatment” to someone? The term implies shunning, social isolation, stonewalling and ghosting. These are all essentially different forms of ostracism. We have heard of people being *banished* from a country, *excommunicated* or *disconnected* from others. Kipling Williams, a psychology professor at Purdue University, who has studied the effects of the silent treatment for more than 36 years, finds that it harms both the victim and the perpetrator. In one case a father stopped talking to his teenage son, and though it was evident that the isolation had changed his son from being a lively boy to a morose individual, the father could not bring himself to start talking again. In its milder form, ostracism may include walking out of the room in the middle of a conversation or make monosyllabic replies. Since social contact is essential for our mental health, silent treatment may result in the victim becoming stressed, anxious, depressed and suicidal. The passive personality types might use silent treatment to avoid conflicts and confrontations, and the same may be used by strong personality types to punish and control. However, it ultimately harms the perpetrator, who tends to live in a constant state of anger and negativity.

If the relationship is truly founded on care then an apology from the victim for the wrong done, or expressing the pain of being ignored, may help in changing the attitude of the perpetrator. Anne Fishel, the director of the Family and Couples Therapy Program at Massachusetts General Hospital, observes that often it is better to engage in a conflict than use silent treatment, because “one of the worst feelings in an intimate relationship is to feel ignored.” However, “if the perpetrator still refuses to acknowledge the victim’s existence for long periods of time, it might be right to leave the relationship,” writes Darly Austin, a writer based in Utah, in an article that appeared in *The Atlantic*.

Silent treatment or ostracism is a weapon which must be used in a right way. Often that is the way adopted by a person or a group of

people to open the eyes of an erring person. It is a good substitute for condemnation or confrontation. There is a “difference between condemning in words—which is uncharitable—and withdrawing in silent pity from the culprit and thus punishing him, but still giving him a chance to repent of his ways,” writes H.P.B. This technique of silent treatment becomes akin to quiet, passive resistance, and must be used judiciously.

Ostracism and excommunication mean social shunning, and involves rejection or exclusion of an individual by the state or the society, and history shows that it has mostly found to have been used indiscriminately. The troubles and woes of excommunication suffered by even saints in India are well-known. Saint Jnaneshwar’s father, renounced the life of a householder, to be initiated by his guru as a *Sannyasin* or renunciate. When the guru learnt that he had abandoned the householder’s life, he was sent back to fulfil his duties. However, when he returned to his home town, people were horrified that a man who had once renounced the world came back to it, to live a married life, which was forbidden by the *Shastras*. He and his wife were excommunicated by the Brahmins. For several years they lived in a hut, on the outskirts of the town, and silently bore harassments of town people. In the course of time four children were born to them. In order that their children should find acceptance they ended their lives by jumping into a river. But the children continued to suffer rejection.

There are several such harrowing tales of ostracism. The worst being harassment of the “lower caste” people called “untouchables,” based on caste discrimination, by the higher caste people. These untouchables were prohibited from entering places of public worship, from accessing public properties and resources such as wells, ponds, temples, etc., from eating with other members of the society, and were engaged in bonded labour.

Music is a great vibratory power. Apart from human beings, plants

and animals also respond to music. Perhaps inanimate objects are also affected by this vibratory power. Experiments have shown that plants grew more rapidly with Bach’s music, and they had grown towards the sound of Ravi Shankar’s (Sitar) music, in comparison to western music. Cows have been known to yield more milk when made to listen to soothing music, which also is known to have helped in calming down the swift current of the river. “Music calms the savage beast.” Since human heart beats at the rate of 70 to 80 per minute, any musical sound with vibrations less than 70 per minute produces pleasing effect, because its musical rhythm is in tune with the heartbeat. The sound vibration with frequencies more than 90 tend to agitate the mind. Pythagoras, the great geometrician recognised the mathematical relationship between music and the spheres. “The astrophysicists of the University of Yale, United States of America, have successfully described the sounds of the planets. According to their findings Saturn hums a slow melody, while Mercury has a chirping sound.”

According to Hinduism, *Nadabramha* is the primordial sound that brought the universe into existence. This is described in Christianity as Word. We experience the vibratory power of music when we chant different *mantras*, which are a set of sound vibrations, producing definite effect on the mind of a person. It has been discovered that these mantras produce, precise, balanced and geometrical patterns. Since music is connected with human moods it has been used to induce a feeling of well-being and nourishment. *Bhajans* and *kirtans*, or singing of devotional songs lead towards the deepest interiorisation of awareness, writes Dr. B. K. Upadhyay. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, March 15, 2021)

Speech consists of thought, feeling, will and sound. *Mantrika sakti* is the power or the occult potency of sound, words, letters and numbers that are used in the *mantras*. The effect produced by any *mantram* is determined by the numbers, syllables, and intonation of the sacred metre. For instance, *Aum* can be pronounced as one, two or three syllable word. When it is pronounced with right

intonation it becomes an invocation, an affirmation and a benediction. In the mouth of an Adept, it would have infinite potency.

Music is defined as the combination and modulation of sounds and is known to have singular power, especially, over nervous diseases. In *Isis Unveiled*, mention is made of harmonica, an instrument composed of five tumblers, filled with, water, wine, oil, etc. Sound is produced by rubbing the edges of these tumblers. Sound has an attractive property, so it draws out the disease and the two kinds of vibrations blend together and disappear in space. Mesmer is supposed to have used harmonica to cure diseases such as insanity and epilepsy. Music helps to deal with and counteract sorrow, disappointment, depression and emotional upheavals in life. It helps eliminate negative emotions and enhances positive emotions.

In the Hindu philosophy *Aum* or *Omkara* is described as the primordial vibration pervading the entire universe. The subject of sound and vibrations is closely related to AUM. In the article, “AUM!” Mr. Judge points out that the Hindu Puranas and other philosophical texts have extensively dealt with AUM, and in doing that they were analyzing sound. The syllable *a* represents the Word, the Logos, or the *Verbum* of St. John, and is comparable to Brahma of the Hindus. It represents the Divine Resonance, or *Nada Brahma*, which pervades the whole universe. It is the vivifying power which stirs up all the particles in the universe. Without this resonance or motion among the particles there would be no visible universe.

Pythagoras seemed to suggest that the music produced by two strings whose lengths were in proportion 1:2, 2:3 or 3:4 would produce harmonious sound or vibrations. Arthur Koestler writes that extended to the stars, the doctrine took the form of the “Harmony of Spheres.” As the planets move around the Sun in their respective orbits, the swift revolution of each of these bodies causes a swish, or musical hum, in the air, or surrounding ether. “Evidently each planet will hum on a different pitch, depending on the ratios of their respective orbits—just as the tone of a string depends on its length. Thus, the orbits in which the planets move form a kind of huge lyre

whose strings are curved into circles. It seemed equally evident that the intervals between the orbital cords must be governed by the laws of harmony,” writes Koestler.

Life is a big paradox: It is all about me, and yet it is not! So long as we are focussed on what the “others” are doing, we tend to bind ourselves. We have always been advised to “think about the other person,” in the sense of being concerned about their needs and problems, but instead we seem to have merely focussed on the “other person” and become judgmental, discontent and disturbed. It is very easy to get immersed in other people’s affairs, instead of managing our own affairs. We are not expected to be oblivious to what happens around us, but in fact, be aware of the state of the world, so that we can make informed choices in our own lives, because we are making our own journey and our life is about *our* choices.

All the great teachers have asked us to “turn inwards.” If someone insults me, then instead of mulling over what that person said, I can take that as an opportunity to evaluate myself, and also try to find out if I am the kind of person whose happiness is tied up to the approval of others. Likewise, when I give something to another, I should reflect that the one who is benefitted by this act is my own self, because it shows that I nurture the sense of abundance. When I lie to another, again I become aware that I cannot be trusted. When I cling to something, let me be aware that it implies that I cannot trust the Universe to give me more.

It is easy to see that so long as I focus on what the other is doing or saying to me, and giving or withholding from me, I become a puppet in the hands of that other person, but the moment I try to find the other end of the thread and break it, I acquire the freedom to choose what response to give to all that happens. We must learn to regard every person and situation that comes our way as a blessing, because they mirror our beliefs and hidden defects, and thus give us an opportunity to correct the same. “The more we tread this path of

knowing ourselves, the more knots we break and the lighter we feel,” writes K. Geethanjali. (*Life Positive*, December 2020)

If we earnestly practice the injunction, “Man, Know thyself,” we can become aware of our own vices and weaknesses, and that might help us to become less judgmental towards others. “Every time we think that someone else has done wrong, we should ask ourselves two questions: (1) Am I the judge in this matter who is entitled to try this person? (2) Am I any better in my way? Do I, or do I not offend in some other way just as much as they do in this? This will settle the matter, I think,” writes Mr. Judge. Turning the focus on “me” also helps us realize how often we keep the “me” in the forefront. Mr. Judge advises that we should make a special effort to keep in the background. In a conversation, instead of talking about ourselves and our experiences, we should focus on listening to others. We are advised to practise this for a week, as it will show us that it takes a considerable effort, and also reveal the real meaning of “Man, know thyself.”

We should learn to focus on “me” by actually taking up the exercise of self-examination, at the end of the day, and review not only the events of every day, but also our thoughts, feelings, words and actions, without trying to explain away our mistakes and blunders. We must note our good points and weak points, and resolve to strengthen the good, and eliminate the weaknesses.

Ultimately, focussing on “me” reveals who we really are. We identify ourselves with the ever-changing perishable body, and with its conditions and relations, which are also ever-changing, making us say, “I am happy, or I am sad,” “I am sick, or I am well.” We notice that through all these conditions and forms, which are changing continually, there is that in us, the “we,” which has remained unchanged and unchanging. “If we can grasp this idea and hold to it, we will have taken first step towards right knowledge and freedom,” writes Mr. Crosbie.