

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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THE BONFIRE IN THE BRAIN

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Those enjoyments which arise through the contact of the senses with external objects are wombs of pain, since they have a beginning and an end; O son of Kunti, the wise man delighteth not in these .

— *Bhagavad-Gita*, V, 22

Said the Lama to Kim: "When I was a young man, a very long time ago, I was plagued with these vapours, and some others, and I went to an abbot—a very holy man and a seeker after truth, though then I knew it not. Sit up and listen, child of my soul! My tale was told. Said he to me, '*Chela*, know this. There are many lies in the world, and not a few liars, but there are no liars like our bodies, except it be the sensations of our bodies.' Considering this I was comforted."

—RUDYARD KIPLING

IT was once said by a teacher to a pupil, "Extinguish the bonfire in your brain or you will develop into a human fire-blight." Wise words these. What is a bonfire and what is a fire-blight?

A bonfire ordinarily is a large fire in the open air lighted at festivities; time was when it was lighted for the burning of bones. So the teacher must have meant the extinguishment of the fire of sense-pleasures and also of the dead bones of old and crumbling thoughts and feelings. And if this is not done, one acts as a fire-blight, a bacillus destroying twigs and leaves, blossoms and fruits—embodiments of beauty and of nourishment.

Sensations light bonfires in the brain now and again; sensations form

the second group of the five *skandhas* (*vedana*) which constitute the lower man, but which affect the higher man or the Soul. Sensations are very closely related to the senses and the organs. H.P.B. says that the senses are "the ten organs of man" and that "in Occultism they are closely allied with various forces of nature, and with our *inner* organisms called *cells* in physiology." (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

Sensations are agreeable or disagreeable, pleasurable or painful. They are caused by the contact of the senses with outer objects; these stir the senses and affect the personal consciousness. They are also caused by the desire-mind (*kama-manas*)—the emotional urges which stir the senses. Sometimes we have no sensation; we are indifferent, and indifference is reckoned as the fifth class of sensations.

Now, in living their lives ordinary men and women are affected by the numerous pairs of opposites rooted in impressions, sensations and emotions. As the senses and organs are living, they have a life of their own. This life engrosses ordinary men and women ignorant of the truths about the Soul or of the very existence of the Soul. They identify themselves with the life of the senses and strengthen the false "I" which comes into being in the antenatal life and which continues to grow after the birth of the body.

The inner life is of the Soul; the outer life is of the senses. The former is the real man—the individual; the latter is the mask of the former—the personality. The Inner Ego is the Immortal Thinker, one with the Supreme Spirit—he calls himself "I am I." The outer man is mortal, identifies himself with the bodily self and says, "I am Mr. So-and-So" or "I am Mrs. So-and-So." The beginning, the middle and the end of the Higher Life consists, first, in overcoming the notion of "I am So-and-So"; secondly, in the recognition of and identification with the real "I," the Thinker, who controls sense-life; and, thirdly, in reflecting upon the profound nature and powers of that Thinker and Soul. "Knowest thou of Self the powers, O thou perceiver of external shadows?"

We chase the external shadows of wealth and fame, of power over others, demanding love from others; the shadows of ambition, of comfort for the body, and of home-life; we eagerly and zestfully pursue the desire for sensation; we endeavour to fulfil emotional urges; we long for praise from others. All such involvement in worldly tendencies wins for us the title "perceiver of external shadows." It keeps us oblivious of the very existence of the Soul; and perchance if under good Karma

a person hears about the Great Self and the Grand Hereafter, he does not cleave to the Self or reflect upon the Hereafter.

Let us quote the whole passage from *The Voice of the Silence* which advises the student-aspirant to master the mental changes in his Self and slay "the army of the thought sensations that, subtle and insidious, creep unasked within the Soul's bright shrine":

If thou would'st not be slain by them, then must thou harmless make thy own creations, the children of thy thoughts, unseen, impalpable, that swarm round humankind, the progeny and heirs to man and his terrestrial spoils. Thou hast to study the voidness of the seeming full, the fulness of the seeming void. O fearless Aspirant, look deep within the well of thine own heart, and answer. Knowest thou of Self the powers, O thou perceiver of external shadows?

If thou dost not—then art thou lost.

Originating from the ocean of *Jiva*, Living Wisdom, these precepts vitalize, like *Prana*, those "Few" to whom the *Book of the Golden Precepts* is dedicated. They possess the durability, constancy, utility and shining power of the royal metal—gold. They form most suitable frames for the priceless wisdom, the diamonds of truth, the rubies of love and the sapphires of beauty—the jewels for the Higher Life.

Let us study the precepts enshrined in the passage quoted above.

We have a shrine in the Astral Body, the shrine of our sensations, built on the pattern of the Akashic Temple of the Inner King, the Lord and Master, whose ambassador we are. Instead of taking our residence in the embassy provided by our royal master, we forget "the kindred points of Heaven and Home" and hire a house where the sensations of pleasure and the dead and dying skeletons of old beliefs and customs tempt us, and we fall prey to them. Thus, thoughts alien to the Soul creep insidiously on us, and a whole army of lower sensations is created.

The great Shankara has taught:

Things of sense are more penetrating in the hurt they cause than the venom of the black serpent. The poison slays only him into whom it enters, but things of sense destroy through mere beholding.

Our thoughts are often cruel and hateful, retaliatory and violent, and, though invisible to the naked eye, they swarm round our fellow men, including those we love and respect. When we are cruel to someone we dislike, not only is he affected by our wrong emotion but all who come

within the sphere of our influence, and among them are our friends and kin and innocent children, our own and our neighbours'. Our hate poisons *us* primarily, not only those we dislike; and more—vitiates the very air we and they inhale. Retaliation and vengeance, like a boomerang, return to their originator. Violence may strike fear in another who is weak or ignorant or even innocent, but that vice causes psychic apoplexy in him who resorts to it.

What is the remedy? Says, once again, the great Shankara:

When the sick man rightly uses medicine, he is restored to health, but not through the right actions of another.

What medicine shall we use? Our golden precept says: learn what is implicit in a profound metaphysical truth—the interrelation between the *vacuum* and the *plenum*. What seems empty is full: standing on firm earth and gazing heavenwards at the sidereal orbs, man fancies that he is able to see the shining bodies because there is no obstruction between earth and heaven; he overlooks the fact that the ocean of air is there and rays of light are there; that the seeming void is full. On the other hand, a solid rock has nothing about it to suggest voidness; and yet the rock as a solid body is *maya*, says the ancient Sage, and the modern physicist recognizes that illusionary character of the rock in his own way: the rock is composed of atoms, electrons, protons, etc.; that rock is a seething body of motions, and the rock *qua* rock has a vacuous aspect.

The *Majjhima Nikaya* has this to say on the subject of the *plenum* and the *vacuum*:

"By abiding in what (concept) are you now abiding in its fulness, Sariputta?"

"By abiding in (the concept of) emptiness am I now abiding in its fulness, Lord."

"This is the abiding of 'great men,' Sariputta, that is to say (the concept of) emptiness."

In one way or another, by continuous study and meditation, the student-aspirant should acquire that habit of mind which discerns "the voidness of the seeming full, the fulness of the seeming void." But neither study nor meditation will suffice. It is application leading to experience and realization which must be valued and used. Therefore we have to "look deep within the well of [our] own heart," and by self-examination, through purity and the exercise of virtue, we come to examine the Self,

Its powers, Its character, Its nature. If it is true that we proceed from the Teachings to the Teachers, it is equally true that in abandoning as worthless the "external shadows" we come to know "of Self the powers."

The Self IS; it cannot be said of It that It was, is, or will be. All else comes into existence, lives, and dies to become different.

It is in the Well of the Heart that the Waters of Wisdom are to be found; drinking them, we become wise.

It is in the Well of the Heart that the Waters of Immortality are to be found; drinking them, we become immortal.

It is in the Well of the Heart that the Waters of Unity are to be found; drinking them, we shall become brothers to all men, brothers to all women, brothers to all children.

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"KNOWEST THOU OF SELF THE POWERS?"

ONLY a few decades ago, any talk about the invisible soul and its hidden powers was laughed at by science, which saw in visible, tangible matter the only power and potency of life. Scientists proudly declared that the age of miracles was past. Their scientific modernism disdained the views, allegorical but profound, of their ancient peers. These ancient scientists did not say that the age of miracles was over; they affirmed that it never existed. By miracles they did not understand anything supernatural—outside the operation of the forces of nature. They conceived nature not only in its visible aspect, but also as the invisible within and beyond the visible. Their concept of matter or substance was derived not only from sense-observation, but also from cognizance of what to the naked eye is invisible. Similarly, their philosophical definition of matter enabled them to touch the very world of Spirit, *Atman*.

When H.P.B. began teaching this old scientific philosophy and philosophical science to the modern world, she was not only laughed at but rejected without a fair hearing. She herself performed wonderful phenomena which covered a wide field, ranging from visible matter, through invisible substance, to the very world of Spirit. She demonstrated that the nature of matter was other than what 19th-century scientists conceived. More, she offered detailed explanations of the laws governing visible matter which scientists did not understand, and which, if they had studied with care and reverence, would have opened their eyes to other spheres, and the progress of science would have not only been speeded up but also proven more beneficial and more moral in its influence on humanity.

This preface is necessary because today there are still numerous phenomena in physics and chemistry, in physiology and embryology, and above all in psychology, which we can better understand if we take the aid of H.P.B.'s expositions. Her *Isis Unveiled* is a comprehensive collation of actual events and happenings of super-normal, not supernatural, realms and powers, outside as well as within us. Not only does the book provide such a collation, but, further, it offers their rational explanation.

Today, even modern science does not hesitate to acknowledge the existence of invisible matter and the unseen processes taking place in the infinitudes of space. Nor does modern psychology deny that in

every man and woman strange faculties are at work, producing complexes, inhibitions, and what not. But their theories are ever changing, one hypothesis giving way to another, and the civilization based on such knowledge is also shifting, changing, going round in a circle all the time. The very opposite is the case with ancient Asiatic science. Its propositions, its explanations of the laws of nature, its instructions about man, are always the same—constant and consistent. But the ancient Asiatic philosophers and psychologists have not been accorded in the modern West that honourable hearing due from impartial students and inquirers.

As a preliminary to what Theosophy has to say about the human soul, its powers and faculties, we should grasp three main propositions, for they will facilitate our understanding of the details of the subject.

First, nature is triune: there is the visible, objective nature; there is the invisible, indwelling, energizing nature; and there is Spirit, or spiritual, subjective nature. Visible nature is *Prakriti* or Matter; energizing nature is *Chaitanya* or Intelligence; spiritual nature is *Atman* or *Purusha*.

Second, man too is triune: there is the visible, objective man—the body; there is the invisible, intelligent, self-conscious man—the soul; and there is the spiritual, subjective man—the spirit. The body or man of matter is *Ahamkara*; the soul or man of intelligence and self-consciousness is *Manas*; the spirit of man is *Atma*.

Third, an intimate relation exists between nature and man, the three aspects of the one reflecting themselves in the three aspects of the other. Man is the miniature copy of nature. Nature is the Great Universe, Macrocosm; man, the small universe, Microcosm. The laws operating in nature also operate in man. Nature develops man in the first half of evolution—*Pravritti Marga*, the Path of Forthgoing; man develops nature in the second half—*Nivritti Marga*, the Path of Return.

Once these three basic ideas are grasped, much indeed will be understood about man and nature. To recapitulate: Nature is spirit, soul and body; man also is spirit, soul and body. Through body, the nature of matter is comprehended; through soul, the nature of mind or intelligence is comprehended; through spirit, the nature of *Atman* is comprehended.

Man being triple, has three sets of powers. Because he is spirit, there are spiritual powers; because he is soul, there are soul powers; because he has the body, there are bodily powers. Except for bodily powers, the classification is difficult for ordinary people to understand, and they

have been misled by numerous false classifications. According to the way in which we divide man and number his constituents, will vary the division of his powers.

One thing must be noted, that in each of these classes of powers some have already manifested and others are still to manifest; there are patent powers and there are latent powers. Take the body, for instance: five sense organs (*Gnyana Indriyas*) and five organs of action (*Karma Indriyas*) have developed, but in each of us these are differently developed. We are not the same in sensitiveness—either in receiving impressions or in making expressions. Then, there are two more senses, which in ordinary human beings of our race are latent. Theosophy teaches that in the course of yugas and ages we will develop a sixth and a seventh sense. Similarly, we have already unfolded some soul-powers and others remain to be developed. In our spiritual nature, likewise, we have already unfolded some powers and others, though latent now, will have to be unfolded in the future. So we have three sets of powers, each of which is partially developed; in each set there are powers yet to be evolved.

Let us examine our triple human constitution and the powers pertaining to each constituent.

Bodily powers are not difficult to recognize. There are two main functions of the body—receiving of impressions from outside via the senses, and expressing ourselves from within outwards with the aid of the organs of action. Senses and organs are concrete, and through each only one kind of process or function takes place. We can walk with our legs but not with the tongue; we can hear with the ears, but not with the nose, and so on. So *concretization* is the mode of bodily powers. The world of matter and the body of man show concrete forms in the one, concrete organisms in the other.

But when we come to soul and spirit we enter a strange realm. The human soul is a self-conscious entity, with the power to say "I am I." It knows itself as an independent entity, distinct and separate from all else. Arising out of this is its second characteristic—the assigning of right values to all beings and things. Without self-conscious intelligence, these two powers are not possible. A dog does not know itself, cannot say, "I am"; nor is it capable of assigning real values to things. Human beings might sometimes act like animals, might assign false values to things, not in terms of the things themselves, but for what they give to us of pleasure or pain. The price of a toy might be a few rupees

to the buyer, but to the child that toy might mean a lot more. Understanding this is the starting point for the great change in the life of the soul. We could say that the whole process of evolution in the human kingdom is the learning of the correct value of every single thing in the universe. How? By the development and constant use of discrimination.

The power to discriminate, one of the powers of the human soul, is as yet latent in most people. The entire process of soul-evolution consists in learning to assign true values to the whole of nature, and that is achieved by finding out the true value of oneself as the human soul. The Pythagoreans, learning the real *Sankhya-Yoga*, science of numbers (not what remains of it now), insisted that each member of the Sodality of Crotona should find out his own number or value. According to the Esoteric Philosophy, each human soul is a number, with a definite value; the moment any human soul finds out his own real number, that moment he is also able to know the true numbers of all things and beings in nature. Hence the need to develop the faculty of discrimination which belongs to the soul—the power to reason and, through comparison and contrast, to learn one's own relation as a soul to all things in nature.

Each of us possesses the power of discrimination, but the animal or lower nature has so coloured and overpowered our real human nature that most of the time discrimination is not at work. Instead of using reason, comparison and contrast of self-conscious intelligence, men and women act by impulses running towards the things they like and away from the things they do not like. Every time we act on impulse, we are not acting like real human beings. Soul-life means, among other things, using our discrimination every hour of the day. Our study, our meditation, our work, all our efforts, are simply ways and means, modes and methods of developing discrimination. Self-knowledge, the knowledge of the soul, is acquired *pari passu* with the use of discrimination or *Viveka*.

In the process, we unfold another power of the soul—*Vairagya*, dispassion. *Vairagya* does not mean indifference to the world; it means the power to give to each thing in the universe its proper place, its true value. Very few human beings possess true dispassion—detachment from all things.

By constantly detaching ourselves from our body and brain, from our

sense-organs and action-organs, by weakening our sense of possession, we begin to see the true nature of the soul. We learn that as human souls we are all rays of the Spirit, and that in proportion as we detach ourselves from the world of matter, forms and objects, we begin to see the intimacy that subsists between ourselves and the real spiritual spark in all things. We grow in unity. The soul which as a self-conscious entity seemed so distinct and separate, is no more so. For, in that soul all the powers of nature inhere. We begin to see man as the microcosm of the macrocosm—the universe. When discrimination and dispassion are unfolded, we enter the realm of the Spirit where other glories await us and where we become omniscient, above time and space.

What shall we do at the stage at which we are?

(1) The first thing to do is to stop impulsive action, impulsive speech; these two, hasty action and thoughtless speech, are the foes of the soul. The faculties of the soul, its integrity and discrimination, are destroyed by impulse. There is no need to rush; there is time enough for everything that the soul has to do. To curb impulse and to develop the calmness required for unfolding discrimination, study of right philosophy is necessary.

(2) Let us loosen our hold on sense-objects, on our "possessions"—*my things, my home, my wife, my children, my work*—all the time *my-my-my*. Only our *Viveka*, our discrimination, will go with the soul when death of the body occurs; all else we needs must leave behind. So, the second thing to do is to let go of things. This is real relaxation.

(3) Let us take to the study of books which do not excite our lower feelings and emotions, which are not just wordy and argumentative and leave us cold, but books that give us insight into the true philosophy of life and bring to birth within us love, compassion and devotion.

Studying the Living Philosophy, practising calmness, and acting deliberately, will we contact Living Philosophers—those who have not only mastered death, but also life. They control nature; we are controlled by nature; They teach us how to free ourselves from the grip of death, how to live, how to attain immortality, how to secure peace and prosperity of the Spirit. May we all come nearer to these Great Ones in whom the powers of the soul are no more hidden, in whom they shine forth in splendour and glory.

UNITY—STUDY—WORK

We have but to keep continually in mind and heart the *original lines* laid by H.P.B. and W.Q.J., namely UNITY first, as a focus for spiritual growth and mutual strength; STUDY, that a knowledge of the Movement, its purpose, its Teachers and its Message, may be had; WORK, upon ourselves in the light of that study, and for others first, last, and all the time.

—*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 381

UNITY—Study—Work may be said to be the three sides of an equilateral triangle and stand or fall together. They lie at the very foundation of Theosophic discipline and by emphasizing one aspect of the trinity and neglecting the others, we can do serious damage not only to ourselves in our Theosophical endeavours, but also to the Movement as a whole and the good that it would do in the world.

Unity, Study and Work have to be understood and implemented in their wider aspects to make them really effective. Unity among companions and co-students is not only desirable but is the first and most important of our three objects; but with that as a nucleus the circle has to be expanded to embrace the whole of mankind. "A love of collective humanity is our increasing aspiration," said the Master; it should be ours as well. Spiritual growth is impossible without Unity as a basis.

Study, if understood in its wider aspect, constitutes not mere book study, but also self-study, learning through experience, learning from others. "The purpose of life is to learn and it is all made up of learning." Studying intelligently the hearts of men and our own heart requires many lifetimes of dedicated work.

Work, not only in the without, important as that is, but in and on ourselves, each one. "That has for its object the enlightenment of oneself for the good of others," says Mr. Judge. Even the work of self-improvement requires an altruistic motive—to benefit mankind.

Study—Application—Promulgation, like Unity—Study—Work, are aids to development of the *whole* man. To benefit mankind, knowledge is the first requisite. Without knowledge there can be no practice; without service, no knowledge. Theosophy shows the way of lasting cure for the lopsidedness that is almost universal in our age. Man's constitution must be correctly understood if this defect is to be overcome; and, furthermore, man's identity with the Macrocosm. Man, the small cosmos, will remain

lopsided until each of his limbs acts as part of the limbs of Adam Kadmon, the "Heavenly Man"—Humanity as a whole. The genuine application of ethics is intimately connected with the study of Man. Therefore study of the human constitution, study of correspondences, of the relation between Man and God, Man and Nature, etc., is a must. H.P.B. and W.Q.J. took pains to record as much as we at our level are ready to receive on these and other matters, with a specific object—not just to satisfy our intellectual curiosity, but to enable us to find out for ourselves the applications of this knowledge to live the Life necessary and at the same time to benefit mankind.

Lack of study is the real weakness of many social-service programmes. Men cannot be truly moral without real knowledge, nor can the development of love and compassion take place. The *pranic* or vital connection between unity, study and application-work needs to be understood. Mr. Judge says, "Through Brotherhood we receive the knowledge of others." Through application we learn. It is significant to note that the Stanzas of the *Book of Dzyan* and the *Book of the Golden Precepts* form part of the same series. Metaphysics and ethics are the two wings we must use to soar upwards, and the connecting link between the two is unity. We cannot soar, or even rise above the mundane level, without unity.

What Mr. Judge states in the second chapter of *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* is worthy of note:

Although philosophy seems dry to most people, and especially to minds in the Western world who are surrounded by the rush of their new and quite undeveloped civilization, yet it must be taught and understood. It has become the fashion to some extent even in the Theosophical Society to scout careful study or practice and go in for the rapid methods inaugurated in America. In many places emotional goodness is declared to exceed in value the calmness that results from a broad philosophical foundation, and in others astral wonder seeking, or great strength of mind whether discriminative or not, is given the first rank. Strength without knowledge, and sympathetic tears without the ability to be calm—in fine, faith without works—will not save us. And this is one of the lessons of the second chapter.

The greatest of the Ancients inculcated by both symbols and books the absolute necessity for the acquirement of philosophical knowledge, inasmuch as strength or special faculties are useless without it....But, so as not be misunderstood, I must answer the question that will be asked,

"Do you then condemn sympathy and love, and preach a cold philosophy only?" By no means. Sympathy and emotion are as much parts of the great whole as knowledge, but inquiring students wish to know all that lies in the path. The office of sympathy, charity, and all other forms of goodness, so far as the effect on us is concerned, is to entitle us to help. By this exercise we inevitably attract to us those souls who have the knowledge and are ready to help us to acquire it also. But while we ignore philosophy and do not try to attain to right discrimination, we must pass through many weary treadmills of life, until at last little by little we have been forced, without our will, into the possession of the proper seeds of mental action from which the crop of right discrimination may be gathered. (pp. 40-42)

H.P.B. went to the extent of saying that "*outside* of metaphysics no occult philosophy, no esotericism is possible" (*S.D.*, I, 169). Study of Theosophy, regularly pursued, trains the mind to free itself from the net of petty, personal and mundane thoughts and to dwell more and more on lofty, universal and impersonal ideas, thus making it porous to higher influences. Such study gives the mind breadth of vision and liberality of view, makes it tolerant and appreciative of the viewpoints of others and at the same time endues it with the faculty of discrimination. Unity follows from such study as a focus for spiritual growth and mutual strength. And the basis of successful work is Unity.

The U.L.T. Declaration provides a real basis for Unity, Study and Work. "Any considerable number," said Mr. Crosbie, "living, thinking, acting upon this basis, must form a spiritual focus, from which all things are possible." Those who have a proper bent of mind and a purposeful desire to achieve, instinctively seek the company of those similarly imbued. The unity of thought, will and feeling that pervades a conclave of students reacts for their mutual good, helping them on to see the unity of all things. Supplementing the strength-giving bond of companionship and extending as beneficent an influence are our authentic textbooks which help to keep the mind tuned to a higher note of moral intellection. Study is the effort to tune oneself to be in harmony with life, and if the unity that is felt is to be realized, then the potency of selfless work in the hard school of the selfish world must make itself felt. The results of study when diverted to selfish ends lead to that isolation which is the opposite pole to unity realized through selflessness.

These words of H.P.B.'s contain a warning and a hope: "Before you

volunteer to serve the Masters you should *learn Their philosophy*, for otherwise you shall always sin grievously, though unconsciously and involuntarily, against Them and those who serve Them, *soul and body and spirit.*" And what better assurance than these words of a Master: "Lead the life necessary for the acquisition of such knowledge and powers, and Wisdom will come to you naturally."

INTUITION and intellect represent two opposite directions of the work of consciousness: intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction, and thus finds itself naturally in accordance with the movement of matter. A complete and perfect humanity would be that in which these two forms of conscious activity should attain their full development. And, between this humanity and ours, we may conceive any number of possible stages, corresponding to all the degrees imaginable of intelligence and of intuition. In this lies the part of contingency in the mental structure of our species. A different evolution might have led to a humanity either more intellectual still or more intuitive. In the humanity of which we are a part, intuition is, in fact, almost completely sacrificed to intellect. It seems that to conquer matter, and to reconquer its own self, consciousness has had to exhaust the best part of its power. This conquest, in the particular conditions in which it has been accomplished, has required that consciousness should adapt itself to the habits of matter and concentrate all its attention on them, in fact determine itself more especially as intellect. Intuition is there, however, but vague and above all discontinuous. It is a lamp almost extinguished, which only glimmers now and then, for a few moments at most. But it glimmers wherever a vital interest is at stake. On our personality, on our liberty, on the place we occupy in the whole of nature, on our origin and perhaps also on our destiny, it throws a light feeble and vacillating, but which none the less pierces the darkness of the night in which the intellect leaves us.

—HENRI BERGSON

THE VISION WE NEED

LOOKING back at the history of the Theosophical Movement of our era, a student cannot help but be struck by the fact that of the many who had great opportunities only a few seized and made beneficent use of them, simply because the majority were engrossed in what may be considered trifles from the Theosophical viewpoint.

Some became engrossed in the Society—not in its objects. Others were occupied in making "progress"—not in furthering *Brotherhood*. Some got absorbed in sectarian beliefs and practices—not in comparative study of religions and philosophies with a view to detecting and using the vital principles underlying them all. Some became engrossed in phenomena—not in an effort to investigate and understand the laws of their occurrence. Speculations were indulged in by many—not the serious and careful *study* of what was given for their guidance and instruction. Opinions intrigued them—and many expressed these in books instead of promulgating the record of Truth they had been given in trust.

Trifles, trifles showing only the narrowness of the knowledge, experience and outlook of those who were beholding the greatest phenomenon in centuries: H.P.B., her life and work.

H.P.B., the embodiment of what she taught, passed out of sight. Let today's students learn from the mistakes of those who came before them!

It is one thing to study the great doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation from the standpoint of our own present personal predilections and prejudices; quite another thing to study ourselves in the light of these twin truths. Yet, if Karma and Reincarnation are the keys to the riddle of existence with all its contradictions, what other mode of study will bring the enlightenment we all seek? Neither religions nor science, any more than our own knowledge and experience, have been able to enlighten us. The study of man is Man. Let us, then, avoid trifles, trivialities and side issues. The law of human progress takes no account of these.

The best evidence of anything is the thing itself; the best evidence in regard to anyone is the acts, the life, of that person himself. Too many concern themselves with reputation—a trifle; too few with *character*. Those who would learn the truth in regard to themselves must distinguish between reputation and character. The former depends on

hearsay, opinion, influence, inference and like trifles; the latter depends on nothing but the individual himself. The same applies to ideas; their worth is inherent in them. The Law takes no account of trifles; nor should those who aspire to work with the Law.

THE only possible inference [from my efforts to integrate biology with quantum physics] is, I think, that I—I in the widest meaning of the word, that is to say, every conscious mind that has ever said or felt "I"—am the person, if any, who controls the "motion of the atoms" according to the Laws of Nature....

In itself, the insight is not new. The earliest records, to my knowledge, date back some 2500 years or more. From the early great Upanishads the recognition ATMAN = BRAHMAN (the personal self equals the omnipresent, all-comprehending eternal Self) was in Indian thought considered, far from being blasphemous, to represent the quintessence of deepest insight into the happenings of the world. The striving of all the scholars of Vedanta was, after having learnt to pronounce with their lips, really to assimilate in their minds this grandest of all thoughts.

Again, the mystics of many centuries, independently, yet in perfect harmony with each other (somewhat like the particles in an ideal gas) have described, each of them, the unique experience of his or her life in terms that can be condensed in the phrase: DEUS FACTUM SUM (I have become God)....

Allow me a few further comments. Consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular. Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown.... There is only one thing and that, what seems to be a plurality, is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing, produced by a deception (the Indian *Maya*); the same illusion is produced in a gallery of mirrors, and in the same way Gaurisankar and Mt. Everest turned out to be the same peak, seen from different valleys.

—ERWIN SCHROEDINGER

CULTURE OF CONCENTRATION

IV.—The Ethereal Vesture

THE shunning of evil and the doing of good is excellent discipline. Yet it is a mere preparation and that too on one plane of existence only. It is not an end in itself, but a stepping-stone to startling realities. The door to those realities has to be found and the keys which unlock it, discovered. This is no small task, but even the little progress made thus far signifies that the approach to concentration has been undertaken, and in the right way. Ere the door can be opened with safety, it becomes necessary to understand what lies beyond.

Behind the outer forms of life, there is always an inner or a motivating force which guides the forms and which survives their destruction. The planet and the blade of grass, as also all forms that move and breathe and are subject to change—each is animated or rather "lit" by a mysterious something which no physical instrumentation can probe. To the scientist, Life itself has remained an enigma, a thing for conjecture, because it cannot be grasped or tamed or understood, either by any machinery that the physical brain can devise, or by senses which, limited to the physical, are useless for realms which are above the physical. In order that he understands that part of himself to which he is yet a stranger, the aspirant has to recognize and then develop those senses and organs which alone can afford his consciousness an egress on planes beyond the physical. Just as without the aid of the microscope one has no eye for the denizens that crowd, for instance, in a drop of water, so too with regard to the astral and the spiritual senses. Unless these are brought consciously into action and used in the manner for which they are best suited, the inner light appears to the aspirant darkness. Without an arousal of these senses and organs, whole strata of human and divine consciousness are not available to him and he has to remain content with such fragments of knowledge as are obtainable by the physical senses alone.

Each child when born has to force its lungs to breathe. By effort, however unconscious, is this achieved. This is its first hold on physical life, and does not come easy to it as it represents a radical change from conditions obtaining in the pre-natal stages. Yet the child does it through the force of habit formed through innumerable incarnations. Its next great effort is the co-ordination of the eyes and the brain. This also the child has to do by itself. No physician or parent can help the

process. So, too, with the ears and with the other senses. Each has to be so trained and mastered that it will bring its messages of the outside world with as little distortion as possible. On the same analogy, the inner life and the inner senses have to take birth. While it is quite true that in the inner man are latent all the powers and peculiarities of the astral body, it is equally true that those powers are in the generality of persons still latent or only partially developed. To him who denies this inner realm, birth into it is as impossible as for the child who refuses to breathe. But, for him who intuitively senses that realm, everything is possible within the limits of his effort.

In the ordinary person, the inner being is inextricably mixed and mingled with the physical body—cell by cell, fibre by fibre. At the stage of development already reached, it becomes necessary that this inner man be carefully extricated from the physical. The process is neither easy nor quick, and careful training and experimentation must continue over long periods until the inner man coheres into something more than irresponsible and quivering jelly. This development and coherence follow upon perfecting the power of concentration, which is really the control and eradication of the *vrittis*. Thus, whereas in the average person there is no demarcation between, say, the inner and the outer ear, in the man of concentration the inner ear begins to awake and to separate itself from its bodily counterpart. Concentration has thus the power to arouse each inner organ, and the aspirant begins to duplicate his powers. His bodily organs are not injured but remain for use on the plane to which they belong. The new organs which he is in the process of acquiring he will be able to use on the plane of nature which is peculiarly theirs.

If concentration can give birth to and awaken the inner organs, these same organs can be destroyed or their utility seriously impaired by actions done on the physical plane. Therefore, during this stage which is so dependent on the acts and the thoughts of the physically matured person, several changes, reactions and interactions have to be carefully observed. In the initial stages, this newly forming ethereal body begins by having a cloudy, wavering appearance. It begins to have certain centres of energy which are produced by the dawning emergence of organs which correspond to the brain, heart, lungs, spleen, liver, etc. As concentration deepens, this new body and its organs begin to have coherence. The aspirant is as it were creating himself limb for limb, organ for organ. And just as the infant has to learn how to use the organs

and the senses, so too this ethereal infant born in the world of light has to familiarize itself with the use of the ethereal senses; must, in fact, use and exercise them constantly lest they become powerless through disuse. In fact, as a child of the world must crawl before it can walk, and must learn to walk before it can run, so this ethereal child must do the same.

When the aspirant has familiarized himself with the conditions obtaining in this tenuous state of matter, when breathing and action in the new atmosphere have become automatic, or rather intuitive, then will he understand why the kingdom of heaven has to be taken by storm. For, this inner realm has its own laws; and ethics, or the lack of them, become immediately perceptible by signs which appear on the ethereal body. Here, there can be no pretence, no camouflage of feelings. Beauty or ugliness here is a portrayal of the true man, and he thus shifts his psychic health up or down, high or low. It is when this process of inner growth is going on that he will discover for himself proofs of the compelling necessity to observe virtue and practise brotherhood. Anger, envy and vanity, to take only three, react on the ethereal body like poison on flesh and cause a psychic ill-health which may result in death or a long convalescence during which no great progress can be achieved.

Anger, for instance, has the effect of pulling the ethereal body apart. It may even act like an explosive and shatter it, in which case either death may result or that which was so laboriously extracted from flesh and fibre is made to fly back to it and the whole process of extrication has to be started *de novo*. It matters not whether the anger was justified or "righteous." It is an explosive, and the effect of the explosion is the same, even though it may have been caused by ignorance or pressure of events. Calmness ever present and an all-abiding love are the only protection.⁹

Envy has yet another type of effect on the inner body. The "green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on" produces in the inner body a very disagreeable colour that is the precursor of putrefaction. This is followed by the dissolution of the inner body, and this process leaves its scars on the outer man.

Vanity, on the other hand, produces a different kind of reaction. It has the tendency to conjure up all sorts of erroneous and evil pictures before the mind's eye, and has the effect of so distorting judgment that anger or again envy is aroused, and thereafter destruction of the ethereal body becomes inevitable. The remedy for vanity is, of course,

selflessness and the poverty of heart that both Jesus and the Buddha preached. One of the forms of vanity is the parading of one's achievements in concentration, or the claiming of occult powers. This vain show of superiority in virtue, acquisitions or knowledge brings on the inner delusion with its drastic results.

It has to be understood that these corroding vices are the more dangerous because they attract to the aspirant's vicinity thousands of malevolent beings of all classes. These break through his protective shield and precipitate themselves upon him, arousing in him every evil passion to which his particular nature makes him susceptible.

It will thus be seen how dangerous it is to go in for concentration or meditation, or to enter into the Silence without long and often tedious preparation. When one is steeped in the clinging attachments of the outside world and is not willing to abandon those attachments and the fruits garnered from them—when money, pleasure, fame, sex and the thousand other attachments which stupefy the soul have still their lure for him, how can he be expected to succeed? When teachers ask for or accept money for instructions, how can they be expected to teach the divine Sapience?

(To be concluded)

WE must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavour. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

LET US BE LEARNERS

IT is well recognized by all that success in any walk of life depends on knowledge, for knowledge gives capacity. The businessman must possess the knowledge of his line of business; the financier must learn economics and the laws of finance; we will not employ a cook if he does not know his job; but strange as it is, people do employ a priest who knows next to nothing about spiritual matters or about religion. We insist that a clerk or a stenographer be efficient and accurate; but somehow all people have not come to the view that in affairs of the Soul, too, efficiency and accuracy are grave essentials. People make sure that a doctor of the body is competent, ere they consult him; but how many take that precaution before running to any so-called doctor of the Soul? We make sure that the man to whom we go for legal advice is an expert lawyer, but how many of us ask, when consulting a priest, an astrologer, a palmist or a soothsayer, if they know the laws of Nature?

What is true in the realm of mundane affairs is equally true in the region of the Soul. Without knowledge, confusion, mistakes, suffering and sorrow result. Not only in individual life, but also in national life, unless correct knowledge is acquired, people and leaders of the people are bound to make blunders. To look at the history of this country of India: Today she is trying hard to emerge from centuries of obscurity; but in olden days, when she reached the zenith of her power, India was the mother of statesmen who were sages, saints who were magicians, kings who were altruists. The greatness of India, even her political grandeur and her economic prosperity, came from the poets who chanted the Vedas, the philosophers who recorded the Upanishads, the scientists who wrote the Shad-Angas. It was when her spiritual knowledge declined that the fall of India came about, and only with the rise of Soul-Wisdom will India regain her ancient glory.

Leaving national aspiration alone, let us look at the individual lives of all of us. Everywhere there is confusion and sorrow, craving and discontent, bodily disease and mental anguish. Is there anyone who does not desire to secure peace, to obtain contentment, to gain equipoise? Is there anyone who does not wish to be skilful in action, or anyone who does not yearn for a controlled and non-wandering mind? And yet people make very little effort to secure all this. Who does not know that mere orthodox religion and religious ceremonies avail not? Who does not

know in his heart of hearts that mere money cannot and does not bring Soul satisfaction? What is the remedy? The answer that Theosophy, the Knowledge of the Ancients, provides is: Take knowledge; refuse to act without knowledge; stop feeling and desiring without knowledge; do not even think without a basis of knowledge. We must learn to act wisely by constant practice; but to do that, knowledge is an essential requisite.

The first thing to learn is that sure knowledge is available. We know it today as Theosophy. Theosophy is not made up of fanciful theories and speculations; its teachings are not the vague imaginings of one or more individuals; it is an exact science; it is a profound philosophy; it is the mother of all religions; it is a synthesis of science, religion and philosophy. In the *Gita*, Krishna speaks of *Jnana-Marga*, the Path of Knowledge, and refers to ancient knowledge as a mighty art which was lost in the progress of time and which he had come once again to proclaim. What is that knowledge?—Theosophy. The Buddha attained the Light of Wisdom. What Wisdom?—Theosophy, *Bodhi-Dharma*, the Wisdom-Religion. Jesus said that he had come to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. Which Law and what Prophets? Theosophy is the Code of Law and Master Theosophists the only true Prophets. Theosophy is the knowledge recorded in all the great scriptures of the world. That knowledge is made available for our modern era in the recorded Message of H. P. Blavatsky.

People might ask: "But why should not we who are Hindus go to the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*; or we who are Parsis to the *Gathas* and *Yashts*; or we who are Muslims to the Sufi poets and mystics?" Let them try: let them study Lao-tse's *Tao-Te-King*; let the Hindu explain the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Chhandogya Upanishad*; let the Parsi make any sense if he can of the *Yashts* and the *Vendidad*; let the Muslim understand the words of the ancient Sufis. It cannot be done so easily. A key is required to understand the allegories, the metaphors, the symbols used by the Old Masters. Books are necessary, suited to the mind of the present generation, and this key and these books Theosophy supplies.

We cannot be happy or contented for long without knowledge; nor should we think that virtue is all that is necessary. Those whose lives are full of kindly, charitable and even sacrificing acts are equally full of errors and blunders. To perform duties, to progress towards perfection and to serve our fellow men we must obtain right knowledge. In our civilization not many undertake the study of the knowledge of the ancients, not many endeavour to add wisdom to virtue.

Theosophy is spiritual knowledge—knowledge about the Spirit. The word "spirit" is grossly misunderstood. It is used concretely for alcoholic drinks which ruin all chances of true spirituality in humans; it is used vaguely for the invisible counterpart of all things, *e.g.*, the spirit of a book, of a meeting, of the age, and so on; it is mistaken for the mind by some; others identify it with the Soul; the spiritists call ghosts and spooks spirits; and so on and so forth. Theosophy is the Philosophy of the Spirit and this Spirit has two aspects, individual and universal. Universal Spirit is Paramatman, and individual Spirit is Atman. These two are not separate and distinct, but are rather like the dazzling sun (Paramatman) and its many rays (Atmas).

This knowledge about the Spirit, the Philosophy of the Spirit, is the wisdom about the Universal SELF and the individual Selves. How Atman, the individual Self, came forth from Paramatman, the SELF of the universe; why it so came forth; by what process the seeming distance between the two can be made to disappear; what is the energy, power or *shakti* of the Atman in each one of us; how that power can be evoked and used—the knowledge of all that is Theosophy. But it is not remote, for the Philosophy of the Spirit touches also our mind and thoughts, our feelings and desires, our body and sensations. We live by and because of the Spirit, which is the very Self of us all.

The Path of Knowledge starts in the world of mortals, in the world of ignorance and errors, and ends in glorious light Nirvanic where dwell the Mahatmas difficult to find. We must look at the steps of this Path of Wisdom in a practical fashion. We must try to find ourselves on it, for each one of us is treading it already, though we are unaware of the fact. Each one of us is Atman, a ray of Paramatman. In this great world we are lost in the maze of pleasures and pains, and know not our place on the Path of Knowledge.

To find our place, each of us must ask himself some simple questions, and the very first one is: "What am I here in life for?" One class will answer, "We don't know—and why bother?" The second will say, "We wonder why?"—but they have no desire to find out if there is an answer. The third will go a step further and add, "Let us find out"—but there is always a "tomorrow." To the fourth class belong those who, having heard the question, are fired by its implication and begin the great quest.

There are still other classes. There are those who contact the

Philosophy of the Spirit and turn away because it looks very difficult. "I am not ready for it," they say; which in other words means, "I am not done with the world." Such a man who, having glimpsed the truth about the Higher Life, turns away, is preparing himself for greater disappointments and more suffering. Then there are those who become regular students of the mighty Philosophy of the Spirit, but who study only by the mind and not by the heart; *i.e.*, they know the facts of Theosophy only theoretically. Finally there are those who apply the Philosophy in daily living; who become accurate, punctual and pure; who practise control of the senses and purification of the flesh; who try to acquire the higher virtues, the divine *Paramitas* taught in *The Voice of the Silence*. To which of these classes we belong we must find out for ourselves.

There are some fundamental teachings which every Soul yearning to acquire the higher Wisdom should grasp:

First, we must note that the Soul is the learner in the great school of Life, and that by constant practice it advances grade by grade, towards perfection.

Second, that all men and women are at the same school; therefore Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis; rich and poor; learned and ignorant—all are our co-students, co-learners. Some of us may be clever, others may be dull; some of us may be good, others goody-goody only, and others naughty. Each one of us has a duty to his co-pupils; by our labour or laziness we affect the "morale" of the whole school.

Third, that the process of learning is a slow one and it takes countless lives for the Soul, the learner, to grow and evolve fully. Reincarnation is a mighty law, a tremendous fact in Nature, and its knowledge must be acquired on the Path of Wisdom.

Fourth, that our own evolution is aided or hindered by us, for ourselves. There is no god or devil, no priest or prophet, who can turn one inch our course of life, which we ourselves determine, by knowledge or in ignorance. This is the doctrine of Karma: our fate flowers on the tree that we have watered and planted. By free will, by self-choice and self-determination, we can change fate and overthrow the evils and obstacles created in the past.

Fifth, that the power to go wrong and make bad fate or Karma, as well as the power to make good fate or Karma, lies within each one of us. To

learn something about this power we should know about our whole human constitution—not only the anatomy of the body, the physiology of the blood and the psychology of the brain, but also the anatomy of the mind, the physiology of the passions, the psychology of the Soul and, above all, the great Metaphysics and Philosophy of the Spirit.

On the Path of Knowledge each one learns by the mind and stores in the heart the great facts of the Philosophy of the Spirit by his own efforts. Life after life we learn, making our body more sensitive, our blood more pure, our brain more porous, our behaviour more just, our character more compassionate, our mind more illumined. We learn in life, and assimilate the lessons after death, in post-mortem conditions, and come back to learn some more.

The gaining of knowledge is the first step. There are hundreds of thousands who undertake the service of their fellows, but they do it before any knowledge is gained. Theosophy warns against the danger of indiscriminate service without a basis of knowledge. The service of Souls, not only of bodies and minds, has to be practised. Therefore we have to begin with study. We cannot improve our moral character without knowledge; we cannot practise virtue without knowing what virtue is or how it is to be obtained. Application of what is studied is the second step. And the third is promulgation. On the Path of Wisdom we learn as we teach; we teach as we learn. Learning and teaching are two aspects of but one experience.

As we acquire knowledge—not only knowledge that makes us good, but which makes us wise and spiritual—apply it in our daily struggles of life and promulgate it to help and to serve others, we take a step towards Those Who Know, Those who wait and watch, eager to guide us, eager to serve us. Knowledge brings us reverence, the conviction that the Glorious Gurus exist, and we proceed to seek Them. "Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee, and knowing which thou shalt never again fall into error."

FAME and wealth without wisdom are unsafe possessions.

--DEMOCRITUS

THE NUMBER SEVEN

III

[Collated from *The Secret Doctrine*]

"AS it is above, so it is below" is the fundamental axiom of occult philosophy. As the logos is sevenfold, *i.e.*, throughout Kosmos it appears as seven logoi under seven different forms, or, as taught by learned Brahmins, "each of these is the central figure of one of the seven main branches of the ancient wisdom religion"; and, as the seven principles which correspond to the seven distinct states of *Pragna*, or consciousness, are allied to seven states of matter and the seven forms of force, the division must be the same in all that concerns the earth. (II, 29 fn.)

Iswara, say the Vedantins, is the highest consciousness in nature. "This highest consciousness," answer the Occultists, "is only a *synthetic unit* in the world of the manifested Logos—or on the *plane of illusion*; for it is the sum total of Dhyan-Chohan-ic *consciousness*." ...There are seven chief groups of such Dhyan Chohans, which groups will be found and recognized in every religion, for they are the primeval SEVEN Rays. Humanity, occultism teaches us, is divided into seven distinct groups and their sub-divisions, mental, spiritual, and physical....Hence the seven chief planets, the *spheres* of the indwelling seven spirits, under each of which is born one of the human groups which is guided and influenced thereby. There are only seven planets (*specially* connected with earth), and twelve houses, but the possible combinations of their aspects are countless. As each planet can stand to each of the others in twelve different aspects, their combinations must, therefore, be almost infinite; as infinite, in fact, as the spiritual, psychic, mental and physical capacities in the numberless varieties of the *genus homo*, each of which varieties is born under one of the seven planets and one of the said countless planetary combinations. (I, 573)

In the clearer words of the *Commentary*:—

"The Globe, propelled onward by the Spirit of the Earth and his six assistants, gets all its vital forces, life, and powers through the medium of the seven planetary Dhyanis from the Spirit of the Sun. They are his messengers of Light and Life."

"Like each of the seven regions of the Earth, each of the seven First-born (the primordial human groups) receives its light and life from its

own especial Dhyani—spiritually, and from the palace (house, the planet) of that Dhyani physically; so with the seven great Races to be born on it....So also with man and every 'man' in man (every principle). Each gets its specific quality from its primary (the planetary spirit), therefore every man is a septenate (or a combination of principles, each having its origin in a quality of that special Dhyani). Every active power or force of the earth comes to her from one of the seven Lords. (II, 28-29)

Every life-cycle on Globe D (our Earth) is composed of seven root-races. They commence with the Ethereal and end with the spiritual on the double line of physical and moral evolution—from the beginning of the terrestrial round to its close....

The first root-race, *i.e.*, the first "men" on earth (irrespective of form) were the progeny of the "celestial men," called rightly in Indian philosophy the "Lunar Ancestors" or the Pitris, of which there are seven classes or Hierarchies. (I, 160)

Occultism defines and limits the number of primordial races to seven, because of the "seven progenitors," or *prajapatis*, the evolvers of beings. These are neither gods, nor supernatural Beings, but advanced Spirits from another and lower planet, reborn on this one, and giving birth in their turn in the present Round to present Humanity. This doctrine is again corroborated by one of its echoes—the Gnostics. In their Anthropology and Genesis of man they taught that "a certain company of *Seven* angels," formed the first men, who were no better than senseless, gigantic, shadowy forms. (II, 611)

There is not an old fragment but shows belief in a multiform and even multigeneric evolution—spiritual, psychic, intellectual and physical—of human beings, just as given in the present work....Our races—they all show—have sprung from divine races, by whatever name they are called....Every nation has either the *seven* and *ten* Rishis-Manus and Prajapatis; the seven and *ten* Ki-y; or ten and seven Amshaspends, ten and seven Chaldean Anecdots, ten and seven Sephiroth, etc., etc. One and all have been derived from the primitive Dhyan-Chohans of the Esoteric doctrine, or the "Builders" of the Stanzas. From Manu, Thot-Hermes, Oannes-Dagon, and Edris-Enoch, down to Plato and Panadores, all tell us of seven *divine* Dynasties, of seven Lemurian, and seven Atlantean divisions of the Earth; of the seven primitive and dual gods who descend from their celestial abode and reign on Earth, teaching mankind Astronomy, Architecture, and all the other sciences that have

come down to us. These Beings appear first as "gods" and Creators; then they merge in nascent man, to finally emerge as "divine Kings and Rulers." But this fact has been gradually forgotten. (II, 365-66)

When mortals shall have become sufficiently spiritualized, there will be no more need of *forcing* them into a correct comprehension of ancient Wisdom. Men will *know* then, that there never yet was a great World-reformer, whose name has passed into our generation, who (a) was not a direct emanation of the Logos (under whatever name known to us), *i.e.*, an *essential* incarnation of one of "the seven," of the "divine Spirit who is sevenfold"; and (b) who had not appeared before, during the past Cycles....The esoteric doctrine explains that each of these... had first appeared on earth as one of the seven powers of the Logos, individualized as a God or "Angel" (messenger); then, mixed with matter, they had re-appeared in turn as great sages and instructors who "taught the Fifth Race," after having instructed the two preceding races, had ruled during the Divine Dynasties, and had finally sacrificed themselves, to be reborn under various circumstances for the good of mankind, and for its salvation at certain critical periods; until in their last incarnations they had become truly only "the parts of a part" on earth, though *de facto* the One Supreme in Nature.

This is the metaphysics of Theogony. And...every "Power" among the SEVEN has (once individualized) in his charge one of the elements of creation, and rules over it....These elements are: The cosmic, the terrene, the mineral, the vegetable, the animal, the aqueous, and finally the human—in their physical, spiritual, and psychic aspects. (II, 358-359)

In the "*Great Book of the Mysteries*" we are told that: "Seven Lords created Seven men; three Lords (Dhyan Chohans or Pitris) were holy and good, four less heavenly and full of passion....The *chhayas* (phantoms) of the Fathers were as they." This accounts for the differences in human nature, which is divided into seven gradations of good and evil. There were seven tabernacles ready to be inhabited by Monads under seven different Karmic conditions. The Commentaries explain on this basis the easy spread of evil, as soon as the human Forms had become real men. (II, 212)

The Pitris being divided into *seven classes*, we have here the mystic number again....Each class of Pitris is again divided into seven, a word to students and a query to the profane....The esoteric Mystagogy speaks of the mysterious relation existing between the hebdomadic essence or

substance of the angelic Heart and that of man, whose every physical organ, and psychic and spiritual function, is a reflection, so to say, a copy on the terrestrial plane of the model or prototype *above*. Why, it is asked, should there be such a strange repetition of the number seven in the anatomical structure of man? Why should the heart have *four lower* "cavities and *three higher* divisions," answering so strangely to the septenary division of the human principles, separated into two groups, the higher and the lower; and why should the same division be found in the various classes of Pitris, and especially our Fire Dhyanis? For, as already stated, these Beings fall into four corporeal (or grosser) and three incorporeal (or subtler) "principles," or call them by any other name you please. Why do the seven nervous plexuses of the body radiate *seven* rays? Why are there these seven plexuses, and why seven distinct layers in the human skin? (II, 91-92)

Our chief point in the present subject, however, was to show that the Septenary doctrine, or division of the constitution of man, was a very ancient one, and was not invented by us. This has been successfully done, for we are supported in this, consciously and unconsciously, by a number of ancient, mediaeval, and modern writers. What the former said, was well said; what the latter repeated, was generally distorted. (II, 640)

What is maintained is simply that every time the immortal *Ego* incarnates it becomes, as a total, a compound unit of Matter and Spirit, which together act on seven different planes of being and consciousness. Mr. G. Massey adds: "The seven souls (our 'Principles') are often mentioned in the Egyptian texts. The Moon god, Taht-Esmun, or the later sun god, expressed the seven nature-powers that were prior to himself, and were summed up in him as his seven souls (we say 'principles')....The seven stars in the hand of Christ in the Revelation, have the same significance," etc....Other Egyptologists have also found out that the septenary constitution of man was a cardinal doctrine with the old Egyptians. (II, 632-33)

The number seven, as well as the doctrine of the septenary constitution of man, was pre-eminent in all the secret systems. It plays as important a part in Western Kabala as in Eastern Occultism. Eliphas Levi calls the number seven "the key to the Mosaic creation and the symbols of every religion." He shows the Kabala following faithfully even the septenary division of man, as the diagram he gives in his "*Clef des Grands Mysteres*" is septenary. (I, 241)

What we have to say finally is this: Enough has been brought forward to show why the human principles were and are divided in the esoteric schools into seven. Make it *four* and it will either leave man *minus* his lower terrestrial elements, or, if viewed from a physical standpoint, make of him a soulless animal. The Quaternary must be the higher or the lower—the celestial or terrestrial Tetraktis: to become comprehensible, according to the teachings of the esoteric *ancient* school, man must be regarded as a Septenary. This was so well understood, that even the so-called Christian Gnostics had adopted this time-honoured system....According to the oldest and best preserved gospel of the Gnostics, *Pistis Sophia*...the human Entity is the Septenary ray from the One, just as our school teaches. It is composed of seven elements... the Seven Centres of Energy evolved, or rendered objective by the action of Fohat upon the one element; or, in fact, the "*Seventh Principle*" of the Seven Elements which exist throughout manifested Kosmos. We may here point out that they are in truth the Sephiroth of the Kabalists; the "*Seven gifts of the Holy Ghost*" in the Christian system; and in a mystical sense, the seven children or sons of Devaki killed before the birth of Krishna by Kamsa. Our seven principles symbolize all of these. We have to part or separate from them before we reach the *Krishna or Christ-state*, that of a *Jivanmukta*, and centre ourselves entirely in the highest, the Seventh or the ONE. (II, 603-4)

EVERYTHING that we know, or can possibly know, must be subject to causation.

All law has its essence in causation.

One link in a chain explains the infinite chain.

Everything, both mental and physical, is rigidly bound by the law of causation.

The cause of today is the effect of the past and the cause for the future.

The effect is always the cause worked out.

We make our own destiny.

No one is to blame for our miseries but ourselves.

Ignorance is the great mother of misery.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Scientists are increasingly split over the nature of consciousness and how our mental processes relate to the grey matter of the brain. John Cornwell discusses the issue in *The Sunday Times* (London). Ultimately at stake, he observes, is this: "What sort of definition of human identity will prevail in the 21st century?"

Since the late 1980s, there has been a spate of books advancing contradictory hypotheses on the mind-brain problem and the essential riddle of consciousness. While some philosophers and scientists offer a purely materialistic explanation for consciousness, calling the brain an "evolved biological computer," others maintain that consciousness cannot conceivably be propagated by mere mechanical computation:

The hypotheses are multifarious, multidisciplinary, largely contradictory; yet they appear to form two broad tracks of opinion heading for collision: "the closed" versus "the open." The "closed" view maintains that there is nothing in nature that cannot be explained by science. The "open" view emphasizes the elusive, unconfined scope of human imagination, the infinite nature of linguistic expression.

A central issue of the debate is whether a final, scientific solution of the mind will impoverish the human self-image. The "closed" factions argue that we are impoverished only by ignorance and superstition. The "open" group maintains that the "closed" factions reduce the human spirit, by contriving narrowly materialist descriptions of human identity to fit their theories. The important question remains: which tendency will prevail in society as a whole?...

There is clear evidence that the "closed" view is gaining ground in mass culture, more as a result of its easily digestible conclusions than the authenticity of its proposals. Since science seldom presents itself as a pluralist enterprise, still less invites a sense of judgment on the part of the non-scientific public, the reductionist view is invariably taken to be the unchallengeable voice of "official" science.

The notion that "most of today's society" should be excluded from a debate about issues crucial to human identity is "not merely alarming but momentous," observes Cornwell, adding that the idea propagated by ancient "folk knowledge," that the source of consciousness lies within the soul, has persisted well into the 20th century despite the rapid spread of secular materialism in western societies.

Cornwell considers two representatives of the "closed" and the

"open" factions within the framework of neuroscience. For Francis Crick, on the one hand, "you, your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules." On the other hand, Gerald Edelman

stresses the dynamism, the ceaseless novelty and creativity of mental processes, and draws from constant contrasts between the machines of our own devising and the brain's predicament as an evolved living (and dying) organism. He concludes that while evolutionary theory can elucidate the problem of consciousness, no ultimate scientific explanation of a human individual is possible. "To reduce a theory of...behaviour to a theory of molecular inter-actions is simply silly," he writes....Quoting Diderot, he likes to remind his readers that "to be human is to go beyond physics."

"What is important for the common reader," Comwell comments, "is the realization that the one body of scientific evidence can yield such contrasting conclusions."

So much for "exact science"! In all this mind-matter controversy and the reducing of consciousness to neuronal activity, what is lost sight of is the functioning of consciousness on more than one level—an important Theosophical teaching. Scientific demonstration of this fact would mark a step towards resolving the current dilemma.

There have been some striking instances of unusual healings of patients declared "incurable" by doctors. An encyclopaedic compilation by California's Institute of Noetic Sciences lists hundreds of such case reports unearthed from worldwide medical journals.

In the March/April issue of *Psychology Today*, Marc Barasch relates how his own experience with cancer, and "the stirring of great forces" that it caused within him, led him to explore how, and how often, remissions may be the result of spontaneous healing. "Was there some way that disease may summon barely suspected healing powers into existence?" was the question Barasch set out to answer. He spent years interviewing dozens of people who claimed to have had unusual healings. Many of them, after an initial feeling of helplessness and mortality, had turned inward for strength and resources and found there "a dormant treasure-source of power."

Of the many instances cited in the article, one is that of Mitchell May,

victim of a road accident, whose leg was shattered in 40 places and was so grossly infected that a team of doctors had declared it "unsalvageable." The patient, however, refused amputation, and resorted to the unorthodox methods of a healer. In due course, against all medical expectations, May regained the full use of his leg. The doctors, when asked to explain it all, called it a "miracle." May claims that his "miracle" was that of the human psyche.

Being literally dismembered [May recalls] somehow opened up a new world. It was as if by being taken apart, other energies could enter through the broken places. I was *forced* to discover the life of the soul, and I think *that* was most responsible for my healing.

It is only lately that science has begun to believe in such healings, but it has not yet been able to answer the question of what makes these patients different from other patients. Medical annals merely state the facts of the case and the remission of the disease, but rarely go beyond that to the patient himself or herself as a complete human being—to the mysteries of the psyche, of the mind and of the soul.

Medical recognition of the patient's inner capacity for healing is giving rise to many questions, such as:

Could remissions be a more common phenomenon than we suspect? Says Patricia Norris of the Menninger Clinic, who's best known for her work with a nine-year-old boy who healed of a terminal brain tumour, after all treatment had failed, using only biofeedback and mental imagery, "It's completely natural to heal. Spontaneous remission is too mystical-sounding....Doctors think mind-body factors are a very minor part of curing cancer. But patients who heal say it's major. If our culture supported it, I think more people could get over cancer by bolstering their own immune systems."...

Journalist Rob Schultheiss, writing about his survival of a devastating climbing accident, suggested that "perhaps the powerful hidden self only appeared when the normal limited self was shocked or sacrificed or otherwise blown out of the way for an instant, clearing the boards." Perhaps it is the same hidden self the late Norman Cousins referred to when he surmised the existence of "a healing system...a grand orchestration of all the body's systems in enabling human beings to meet a serious challenge."...

As the Arabic physician Ali Pul once wrote, "The medicine of the

soul is the medicine of the body"; what we do to live more wholeheartedly has innate healing power....

"Spontaneous remitters," another physician says, "almost invariably say they weren't shooting so much for a cure, but rather to live congruently at long last with their inner values."...Perhaps the most spectacular miracles begin with a single instance of self-listening, a few small acts of affirmation—with the tiniest mustard seed of faith in the deeper self. For some of those who walked the path of healing, disease seemed to have forced a moment that arrives for most of us all too infrequently, when life itself depended on becoming authoritatively, powerfully, even crazily, the person they were meant to be.

What says Theosophy about such cures? Just as the mind has power, acting through the astral body and the desire nature, to injure the physical body, so it has most remarkable power to heal.

With expectancy supplemented by faith, one can cure himself of almost any morbid condition. The tomb of a saint; a holy relic; a talisman; a bit of paper or a garment that has been handled by the supposed healer; a nostrum; a penance, or a ceremonial; the laying on of hands, or a few words impressively pronounced—either will do. It is a question of temperament, imagination, self-cure. In thousands of instances, the doctor, the priest, or the relic has had credit for healings that were solely and simply due to the patient's unconscious will. The woman with the bloody issue who pressed through the throng to touch the robe of Jesus, was told that her "faith" had made her whole.

The influence of mind over the body is so powerful that it has effected miracles at all ages. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 216)

In the post-colonial, post-modernist phase of ethnography all over the world today, there has been a marked revival of interest in the people, the communities, the social formations linked to environment, natural resources and bio-diversity. A multi-volume ethnographic project on the peoples of the world has been under preparation with a substantial number of entries from India contributed by Indian anthropologists.

Following the universal trend, a People of India project was designed in terms of the concerns about nation-building, preservation of the heritage of India's composite culture, promotion of harmony and so on. Its objective today is the documentation of all communities, of diversities of all kinds, and the exploration of linkages, both traditional

and modern, and of processes of interaction and sharing among the people.

K. S. Singh, former director-general of the Anthropological Survey of India, in his article in *The Times of India* (June 17), writes of the notions of caste and tribe and community imposed upon certain categories of populations during the colonial period and how they have been internalised over the last one hundred years. The overall picture, however, is that of unity in diversity:

Irrespective of the labels of caste or tribe, India has been the land of about 2800 "unique" communities, located in different ecological niches, and/or spread across a large part of the country in pursuit of various occupations. This reality cannot be wished away. The largely dispersed smaller communities—some of them already "endangered"—face the threat of being swamped by larger communities, culturally. Each community has an identity of its own at one level. They also meet one another at other levels....

India is not only a congeries of communities. India is also a cultural system, a civilization, which has both recognized and transcended diversities. The People of India project is not only a study of communities *in situ* even as it presents a contemporary, comprehensive account of them.... In exploring the ethnographic configuration of the people, the project discusses various ways in which they interact, integrate, enmesh, share traits and space, and also explores the processes that bring them together, naturally, spontaneously, at all levels—the local, regional and national.

As the traits tend to cluster, even coalesce at these levels, the project shows that the traits we share are far more than the traits we do not share, and that we are by and large, culturally, a cohesive people. The cultural traits link up with the larger civilizational processes, which reflect more deeply how people, the communities, perceive themselves, and interact among themselves.

Swami Vivekananda's universal outlook made him see unity in diversity at all levels. His concept of world peace is outlined in Swami Gambhirananda's article in the April *Sarvodaya*:

A passionate belief in the unity of existence cannot but engender greater love in human hearts. No politics can save the nations of the world unless they draw plentifully on this living inspiration. They talk of the socialization of industries, but can that save the masses for all time

unless human beings themselves are socialized? On that firm rock must be built the future United Nations even if the present one fails. The world cannot improve and be more firmly cemented unless men are made better. Power politics and career politics, with consequent distrust and frayed tempers, can hardly bring peace. Men must be at peace at heart in family and social life before they can talk of peace abroad....

Any movement for world peace must proceed from two ends. Those who are in an advantageous position now must give up all sense and expression of superiority and must serve those who have fallen behind in order to attain a common level of civilization. At the same time a belief in the basic equality, nay, divinity, of all men must be engendered in every heart, so that no race or nation may suffer from an inferiority complex. When ideas of superiority and inferiority are eliminated and men begin to work freely and equally in love and are prompted by a spirit of service and inspired by an urge to transcend present limitations, world peace will follow as a matter of course, as day follows night.

To sum up, world peace presupposes first a higher estimation of human worth and a belief in a higher common destiny. Secondly, variety must be clearly recognized and respected and at the same time unity believed in and emphasized. Thirdly, ways and means must be found for giving expression to these noble sentiments, side by side with the spiritualization of everyday life. Fourthly, India must come out of her shell and show the way to others by perfecting her own life at home and spreading the message of Vedanta unstintingly everywhere.
