

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 70, No. 10

August 2000

THE MASTERS AND THE WAY TO THEM

[Reprinted from THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, September 1958.]

Of an age-old body of teachings, which we of the present era and generation call Theosophy, exists, then the inquiring mind has no difficulty in arriving at the logical corollary that there must exist those who are its Custodians and Teachers. And once the existence of these Exalted Beings is accepted, not only as ideals but as facts, the next step the aspiring neophyte feels an inner urge to take is to seek the way, the mode, the method, whereby he can reach these Great Ones and ultimately become like unto Them.

How can we find Them? Not by going out in search of Their physical habitat, but by endeavouring to build in our own consciousness the qualities that They fully manifest. Their very lives indicate Their chief characteristics: They are spoken of as the Masters of Wisdom, the Lords of Compassion, the Lords of Light. They are perfect sages who possess the Truth of all truths. They are perfect saints who manifest the power of perfect goodness or compassion. They are also perfect artists in life, so that every word they speak, every gesture They make, is the expression of the beautiful, the dispeller of the darkness of ignorance, the builder of the universal. They embody in Themselves the soul of the true, the good and the beautiful.

They are Masters of Wisdom, so the first step to become worthy of relationship with Them is to "take knowledge." This requires a

well-controlled and alert instrument of the mind which we are able to handle and concentrate on any subject with which we want to be familiar. But we need to differentiate between the knowledge gathered through the activity of the senses and the brain and the knowledge which comes from within. William Cowper has very truly said: "Knowledge dwells in heads replete with thoughts of other men, Wisdom in minds attentive to their own." Let us then develop the power of gaining knowledge from within. For this we need more than the unfoldment of faculties pertaining to the mind. The faculty of intuition, pertaining to Buddhi, has to be awakened. It is the common heritage of man and only needs unselfish effort to develop it. Says *Light on the Path*:

...this positive and certain intuition is the only form of knowledge which enables a man to work rapidly or reach his true and high estate, within the limit of his conscious effort. To obtain knowledge by experiment is too tedious a method for those who aspire to accomplish real work; he who gets it by certain intuition, lays hands on its various forms with supreme rapidity, by fierce effort of will; as a determined workman grasps his tools, indifferent to their weight or any other difficulty which may stand in his way.

So the taking of knowledge implies more than the mere reading of books, and more books, as is the common tendency in our age. It is rather long, earnest and careful thought upon that which is read that is needed. Unfolding our capacity to take wisdom, we come within the sphere of influence of the Masters who embody that Wisdom.

The Masters are also the Lords of Compassion. What is compassion? It is not the ordinary kind of sympathy that is expressed in daily life by all decent men and women, but the ability to feel ourselves one with all that lives and breathes. To understand and help our fellow beings, we must learn to look intelligently into their hearts and study the loves and hates, the likes and dislikes that sway their minds and emotions. We are willing enough to recognize as our brothers the great and good people of the world. Are we equally willing to identify ourselves with the sinners and criminal

of the world so that we get to know them and serve them and recognize them as our "other selves"? Are we willing to admit that the sin and shame of the world are our sin and shame? We think we are tolerant when we say, "I cannot agree with so-and-so, but he can go his way and I shall go my way." There is a higher tolerance which says, "I see differently from my brother, but for the moment let me put aside my point of view and look at the subject as he looks at it; there may be some reason, some seed of truth, in his viewpoint also, which I must find out." This reverence for the true, the good and the divine in each and every being leads to the attitude: "All the world is my country; all mankind my countrymen"—not as a mere lip-profession, but in a very real sense. That is a manifestation of compassion, the mother of all virtues.

The Masters are also the Lords of Light. Shall we not live by the power of the inner light which is beauty? Shall we not make ourselves artists in life, so that we not only admire beautiful pictures in art galleries, beautiful dramas on the stage, beautiful music by great composers, but also express that beauty in all the affairs of daily existence, the beauty which is joy, the beauty which through its power enables us to give the vision of the beautiful to all those who are struggling in the mire of ugliness?

Let us work for the unfoldment of the faculties of the mind, of the heart and of the hands; and thus will the triple qualities of the true, the good and the beautiful make themselves manifest in our lives. And will that life be whole or departmental? We separate business life from home life, labour from recreation. The spiritual life, which is guided by wisdom, mellowed by love and inspired by the sense of the beautiful, has to be lived hour by hour, day by day, year in and year out. That persistent living of the higher altruism brings us to the World of the Masters, the Real World.

If there are Those who have reached perfection and stand on the mountain-tops of purity, bathed in the sunlight of wisdom, we also can do so. Why do we not attempt it? Because we are pursued by a fear that arises out of a materialistic concept of life. The beginning of the Path is to recognize ourselves as human souls. When can we begin? This moment. Where can we begin? Right here. As the *Gita*

points out, he who has resolved rightly must be accounted righteous. It requires an act of will, a resolution of the heart, a vow that is registered in our consciousness, to assert: "Come what may, I shall live by the power of wisdom; I shall act by the power of love; I shall manifest the power of beauty." Poets, philosophers, religious visionaries and mystic seers have from time to time inspired us. In our own moments of inspiration we catch a glimpse of the task to be accomplished. But the will to accomplish it, that we lack. Knowledge we have, as also the power of love, but the will to manifest that power needs to come to birth.

The road that winds uphill all the way can be walked by all, and the Masters from Their mountain heights watch, guide and help all wayfarers by the power of thought and inspiration. We are all energized by that; we are all inspired by that; we all labour for that, once we drop the bondage of the animal in us. The process and the method by which we can scale the heights on which the Great Ones stand can be summed up in these words written by One of Them:

I can come nearer to you, but you must draw me by a purified heart and a gradually developing will. Like the needle the adept follows his attractions.

THOSE who practise their duty towards all, and for duty's own sake, are few; and fewer still are those who perform that duty, remaining content with the satisfaction of their own secret consciousness....Modern ethics are beautiful to read about and hear discussed; but what are words unless converted into actions? Finally: if you ask me how we understand Theosophical duty practically and in view of Karma, I may answer you that our duty is to drink without a murmur to the last drop, whatever contents the cup of life may have in store for us, to pluck the roses of life only for the fragrance they may shed on *others*, and to be ourselves content but with the thorns, if that fragrance cannot be enjoyed without depriving someone else of it.

—*The Key to Theosophy*

AMBITION AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

Lord, grant that I may always desire more than I can accomplish.

—MICHELANGELO

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?

—ROBERT BROWNING

IN the above title, the juxtaposition of ambition with spiritual life appears to bring them on the opposite scale of values, which is a fact of experience of the true seekers and aspirants. Indeed, at a certain stage, as *Light on the Path* indicates, they are truly opposite ways and mutually exclusive. But if we consider the psychological and moral traits behind these two powerful impulses, we may find astonishing resemblance in some character traits of aspirants and ambitious people. However, by definition, as we find them in the dictionary, these two impulses—aspiration and ambition—are truly antagonistic in more ways than one. "Ambition" is an inordinate desire for personal advancement; craving for success, acquisitions, power, etc. In other words, it is an acquisitive impulse as against the creative urge, an act of giving in an aspirant. On the other hand, "Aspiration" is striving after something uplifting, such as excellence, great ideals, an object of devotion. A true "seeker" in the spiritual sense seeks integral transformation through an act of devoted self-giving.

However, the common denominators between striving after the higher life and ambitious pursuits are to be noted. Both the seekers are made of sterner stuff, are highly motivated and truly energetic. The incessant driving force is the will to achieve and to progress in their own fields of endeavour. As R. W. Emerson said: "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." Hence earnest zeal is an important characteristic of a devotee as well as the ambitious person. Both are willing to pay the price in terms of time, money and labour, and if necessary are ready to sacrifice in some way to achieve their objectives. However, since the means and the ends

differ, ambition can tempt a person even to "sell his soul," or to sacrifice his family, peace and values that a wise man considers as precious. The comparison therefore ends here since both the goal and the means employed to succeed differ diametrically, and the psychic and spiritual direction of these two driving impulses are at the opposite ends. Another characteristic of both these dynamic individuals—the seeker and the man of ambition—is the relentlessness, the firm grasp of the objectives pursued as a line of life's meditation. The goal, the objective, the ideal becomes "the single line of intent, intentness, and desire, running through the years" (W. Q. J.). With the one, it may become a lifelong obsession and sometimes an impatient madness to achieve the goal at any cost. But the first condition of aspiration is to trust the divine and merciful Will and to learn to "wait on the Lord" with resignation. For, impatience means lack of faith, and this disturbs the calmness and steadfastness necessary for higher pursuits.

A worldly man of ambition considers himself a "realist" and a "practical person," while sneering at people driven by noble ideals and pursuit of *Dharma*. He calls the latter idealists, dreamers, and thinks of them as unrealistic visionaries. The practical person, being down to earth, is bent on tangible gains and is not satisfied with "lofty hopes" which are intuitively felt as realities by the student-aspirant. The whole basis of life's mission for the true seeker is the reality of the existence of the Supreme Divinity within him and in Nature around. His inner world is more real to him than the fleeting shadows of conditioned existence. In other words, his intuitive faculty of discrimination, *Buddhi*, is active enough to see what is the essential as opposed to the non-essential in his pursuit of a higher life of the Soul. After all, the true life of man is the inner life of the Soul.

The so-called idealist, like a true architect, has an ideal draft, a "blueprint," before his mental perception. And like a practical person he plans to turn into concrete realities what is known to him in his inner sanctuary. There may be nothing tangible pursued or realized, but the reality of the ideal is never lost sight of. A true devotee is not content with mere idealizing, but truly exerts himself

quietly in the right direction by the right means known to him. He has also felt "the deceptive value of earthly hopes and the illusive allurements of external nature," the "shadow" that ambitious men consider as concrete realities. So, while firmly walking on the earth, the seeker's feet are not stuck to *terra firma* nor is his consciousness lost in an impossible paradise.

Another distinguishing mark of an authentic devoted disciple is the unquestioning obedience to the opening rules declared in the Book of Discipline, *Light on the Path*. Rule 20 concerning the seeking of the Way also needs special consideration: "Seek it not by any one road"; and, "The whole nature of man must be used wisely by the one who desires to enter the way." This because the disciple seeks an integral transformation and not a lop-sided development of any one faculty of body, mind or soul. There cannot be true spiritual growth at the expense of the physical, mental, psychic and moral nature which the soul needs to function in the world.

What is the inner condition of one blinded by ambition? There appears conspicuous development of vanity and aggressiveness. In fact, some management gurus extol these "high-voltage performers" as "calculatingly aggressive," "go-getters" who do not hesitate to elbow their way, to rise on the shoulders of others, to prove their mettle. They may pride themselves on being "hard-core professionals," forgetting that to be hard at the core of one's nature is to lose one's humanity and to enter into the jungle where the law of the survival of the fittest applies as in the animal kingdom. This craze for being at the top at any price has percolated not only into the corporate markets or the business fields but even in the noble pursuit of education, and in a "gentleman's game" like cricket and the once sacred Olympic arena.

H.P.B. deplores these characteristics of a materialistic civilization:

Great intellect and too much knowledge are a two-edged weapon in life, and instruments for evil as well as for good. When combined with Selfishness, they will make the whole of

Humanity a footstool for the elevation of him who possesses them, and a means for the attainment of his objects; while, applied to altruistic humanitarian purposes, they may become the means of the salvation of many. (*S.D.*, II, 163)

We must acknowledge the positive and beneficent contribution through hard labour, persistent endeavour and the energy and genius employed to make possible advancements in many fields of human life. Today, as compared to earlier centuries, we do have wider awareness, not only of interdependence among people and nation-states, but also of the value of natural resources of the earth which must be conserved if the harmony between man and nature has to be maintained. There is now freer dialogue and international sharing during crisis management in any part of the globe. Great opportunities for growth in the field of education, medical facilities, etc., have made human life more meaningful and bearable. Indeed, in spite of the atmosphere of conflicts and wars, there is an improved concern, tolerance and openness, thanks to greater interaction and dialogue between contending claims. Information and communication technology, which is sometimes the product of an aggressive urge to earn financial gains and to capture world markets, has indeed contributed to the making of what is now called the "global village."

But all this at what price? The true test of civilization is not economic statistics, gross national product, nor the size of the cities, the number of nuclear warheads and other weapons of destruction, but the kind of men that a country turns out. If a nation can produce a great leader like Gandhiji, a poet of universal vision like Rabindranath Tagore, an erudite mystic like Sri Aurobindo, and true saints and *jivanmuktas*, such a nation, though economically poor, should have a pride of place in the comity of nations. But ambition tempts us to boast of the number of beauty queens, Olympic champions, chess-masters, atomic scientists and the wizards of electronic technology. Some even vie to obtain a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records!* Ambition does not know where to stop. It seeks for more and more, for greed has no end.

The above achievements of modern times may one day create a mighty civilization, but like all the great ancient civilizations there is bound to be a cyclic decline if it is the product of material pursuits at the expense of the worthwhile goals of human aspiration, viz., psycho-spiritual perfection and total transformation into a spiritually advanced civilization and civilized humanity.

Human resourcefulness and enterprise are some of the chief characteristics of the growth of *Manas*, the soul-nature of man. It is to be activated and employed for the higher purposes of existence. Also, the natural fruits of ambitious enterprise and the growth of wealth and prosperity are not to be despised. Sanjaya in the last verse of the *Bhagavad-Gita* speaks with joy about blessings such as "fortune, victory, wealth, and wise action," wherever there is the conjunction of Krishna (the divinity within) and Arjuna (the human soul).

We may now consider individual progress as achieved through "Vigilance" described in Chapter Two of the *Dhammapada*. The qualities and the discipline of an earnest aspirant are outlined. Persevering, ever strenuous in endeavour, the tranquil one who is deliberate, self-controlled, who lives according to Law, and who meditates with earnestness and zeal, attains great joy. He is aptly described as "a charger who outdistances a weak horse." He is like a mountaineer who from his high peak looks with concern and compassion at those dwelling on the plains. His aspiration is like "a fire consuming fetters, small or large."

As a result of progressive development of the higher mental and spiritual nature, there is at first a sense of competence and personal worth, a sense felt with pride and fed by ambition. Nowadays, psychologists speak of self-esteem as an important human need, but mostly fortified by personal achievements and their recognition by society. This kind of seeking for an exaggerated self-image is unlike the self-confidence of a seeker who can walk with his head held high and a calm conscience. His sense of personal worth is tempered by humility in the knowledge that there is a great gulf between a good man and one on the threshold of divinity. William Blake recognized this when he wrote: "No bird soars too high if he

soars with his own wings." Nature supplies it with adequate wind to rise and direct the flight. Such is the case with the aspirant. He has to be self-dependent, but his spiritual flights are not without unseen help when deserved.

Another characteristic that marks out an aspirant is the absence of hurry, and patient endeavour. "No man who is in a hurry is quite civilized" (Will Durant). This is even true of a nation which is anxious about its development and is ambitious to push ahead of other nations in all material acquisitions. "The more rapidly a civilization progresses, the sooner it dies for another to arise in its place," warns Havelock Ellis. There are many reasons for this, but sufficient it is to note the warning given by H.P.B. in her *Five Messages* about the rapid growth of the intellectual and psychic nature of man at the expense of his moral and spiritual growth. An ambitious civilization has its inbuilt complexities which take men away from simplicity and closeness to Nature. It is no use seeking a higher standard of life rather than a higher quality of existence for the common man.

At the individual level, the aspirant is described as *Dhira* (verse 23 of the *Dhammapada*), which means not only a man of tranquillity but also a man of persevering and strenuous endeavour in his will to progress. Comes to our mind the instance of Mr. Judge, who at a young age was left alone to build up the T.S. in America, when H. P. B. and Colonel Olcott left to settle in India in the year 1879. Initially, Mr. Judge felt isolated and left to his own devices. But he rose to the occasion. This is the chief characteristic of all truly great men; they rise to their true stature during adversity. Slowly but surely he developed not only the Organization to which he was devoted as an instrument for Theosophical work, but under well-deserved unseen help he rose to his true stature. This characteristic of patience made him say his last words: "There should be calmness; hold fast, go slow."

Finally, there is what may be called "spiritual ambition." *Light on the Path* sounds a warning:

Ambition is the first curse: the great tempter of the man who

is rising above his fellows. It is the simplest form of looking for reward. Men of intelligence and power are led away from their higher possibilities by it continually. Yet it is a necessary teacher. Its results turn to dust and ashes in the mouth; like death and estrangement it shows the man at last that to work for self is to work for disappointment. But though this first rule seems so simple and easy, do not quickly pass it by. For these vices of the ordinary man pass through a subtle transformation and reappear with changed aspect in the heart of the disciple.

This is the temptation to play the *guru* and to develop the *siddhis* which can give one an edge over the other disciples with whom one may be in secret rivalry for position or for "successorship." Conflicts over succession after the departure of the head of an institution are well-known facts which have disgraced many so-called spiritual centres or sacred *Ashramas*. Even seeking for personal salvation or liberation in the spiritual life is regarded as "seeking for reward," which Lord Krishna denounces in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In the progressive development of higher consciousness, there can be no place even for a subtle form of seeking for "spiritual glory" or *Yasha* (*Dhammapada*, verse 24). It is written: "Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air. So must you press forward to open your soul to the eternal." (*Light on the Path*, p. 3)

WHAT is meant by saying that cultivation of the personal life depends on the rectification of the mind is that when one is affected by wrath to any extent, his mind will not be correct. When one is affected by fear to any extent, his mind will not be correct. When he is affected by fondness to any extent, his mind will not be correct. When the mind is not present, we look but do not see, listen but do not hear, and eat but do not know the taste of food. This is what is meant by saying that the cultivation of the personal life depends on the rectification of the mind.

—*Great Learning*, 7

THE INSTITUTION OF THE TEACHER

The importance of education is not only in knowledge and skill, but it is to help us to live with others. Co-operative and mutually helpful living is what we should be trained for. Moral qualities are of greater value than intellectual accomplishments.

We must note the famous statement that merely by becoming literate without the development of compassion we become demoniac. So no university can regard itself as a true university unless it sends out young men and women who are not only learned but whose hearts are full of compassion for suffering humanity. Unless that is there, the university education must be regarded as incomplete.

—S. RADHAKRISHNAN

THE 5th of September is celebrated throughout India as "Teachers' Day." The purpose is to remind students and the public in general that the teacher should be respected and honoured, and no society can make true progress which does not give its teachers the grateful recognition they deserve. Alas! this ideal is forgotten and in our contemporary civilization teachers are often treated casually.

The celebration of Teachers' Day serves to focus attention on the need to raise the social status of teachers at all levels of education—in kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools; in colleges and universities—and to create the right climate for bringing about all necessary reforms—increases of salaries, adequate school buildings, and other amenities. Such a climate can only be created if not just pupils but all citizens regard with reverence the function of the teacher.

Institutions on earth all have a divine prototype in the realm of the Spirit. Thus the institution of the teacher among mortals has as divine Archetype the Teacher *par excellence*, the Supreme Self of all creatures.

Says *The Voice of the Silence*:

Of teachers there are many; the MASTER-SOUL is one, Alaya,
the Universal Soul. Live in that MASTER as ITS ray in thee. Live
in thy fellows as they live in IT.

Within each one of us is a Ray of the Divine and that Ray is our life-guide, our true Self and our Guru. To the question, "What is the aim of education?" so many different answers are given. Education for what? For earning one's livelihood, for worldly success, for character, for freedom, for service to one's nation, for civic duty, for world-order? Education fulfils its highest aim when it awakens in the consciousness of Man the recognition of the Divine Presence within, and imparts the discipline necessary to become more and more aware of the Inner Ruler, the Spirit in the body.

In the words of Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

The Spirit in the body is called *Maheswara*, the Great Lord, the spectator, the admonisher, the sustainer, the enjoyer, and also the *Paramatma*, the highest soul. (XIII, 22)

Intelligent, willing and cheerful submission to the dictates of that Lord of Light makes one a truly "educated" and cultured individual and enables him to regard all men as brothers. Education for what? Education for Brotherhood, for disinterested service, for the Life of the Spirit.

There is another great spiritual archetype which flows from the first, and it is that of the *Guru*, a Spiritual Teacher, the highest expression of which is that of the Divine Teachers of humanity. While there has been, alas! much degradation of that most sacred concept—a living fact—it continues to inspire and energize the hearts of thousands of real *bhaktas* or devotees. The ordinary teacher of our infancy and childhood is entitled to our respect and gratitude, if for no other reason than that he represents the holy concept of the Spiritual *Guru*. That is one reason why all scriptures enjoin the practice of respect towards the teacher. A line of influence extends from the lowest to the highest, forming an ascending chain, each link of which is a teacher. This is the *Guru-parampara*, the Chain of *Gurus*.

W. Q. Judge writes forcefully on this subject, thus:

So from earliest times, among all but the modern Western people, the teacher was given great reverence by the pupil, and the latter was taught from youth to look upon his preceptor as

only second to his father and mother in dignity. It was among these people a great sin, a thing that did one actual harm in his moral being, to be disrespectful to his teacher even in thought. The reason for this lay then, and no less today does also lie, in the fact that a long chain of influence extends from the highest spiritual guide who may belong to any man, down through vast numbers of spiritual chiefs, ending at last even in the mere teacher of our youth. Or, to restate it in modern reversion of thought, a chain extends up from our teacher or preceptors to the highest spiritual chief in whose ray or descending line one may happen to be. And it makes no difference whatever, in this occult relation, that neither pupil nor final guide may be aware, or admit, that this is the case.

Thus it happens that the child who holds his teacher in reverence and diligently applies himself accordingly with faith, does no violence to this intangible but mighty chain, and is benefited accordingly, whether he knows it or not. Nor again does it matter that a child has a teacher who evidently gives him a bad system. This is his Karma, and by his reverent and diligent attitude he works it out, and transcends that erstwhile teacher.

Fortunate indeed the pupil who respects and honours his teachers! That attitude itself makes him receptive to the highest in his teacher and the highest in him. On the teacher's side also what counts uppermost is his sincerity and devotion to his pupils, his earnest desire to help them, his ardent faith in the highest values. Such a teacher communicates the fire of aspiration and the zest for learning. For, when all is said and done a teacher teaches not what he says, not what he pretends, but what he *is*.

If we all must have respect and gratitude for all teachers, the teachers in their turn must regard their *dharma* or duty as sacred and endeavour to live up to their responsibility. The relationship between teacher and pupil is a bond rooted in mutual love and understanding. Teachers and pupils form a great family, in which all members should trust one another. Teachers can rise to the full status of their position in society if they link themselves up through ideation and aspiration with the Divine Prototypes of whom they are the humble reflections; if they remember the Great Master, Life

itself, the Teacher of all of us, and endeavour to be the channels of its Light; and if they constantly recall the existence of the Great *Gurus* who have constituted themselves the Servants of Humanity. Our reverential salutations to Them!

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THE PATH OF PURITY

ACCORDING to tradition, the sixth day of the first month in the Zoroastrian calendar, which falls this year on August 26, marks the birthday of Lord Zarathushtra, the Prophet of ancient Persia, who taught the Path of *Ashoi* or Purity. It was also on that day that through an inner spiritual vision he received direction to begin his work as a messenger and as a teacher of humanity. On that very day, so tradition narrates, King Gustasp accepted the Religion of Purity. Other events do not refer to the Prophet, but there is a mystical belief that it was on this same day that the first pair—man and woman—was created. And there are other historical events associated with the day, such as, for instance, the retirement, while yet in a living physical body, of King Kaikhushru into a cave.

Be that as it may, the day has a significance for students of comparative religions and philosophies and for those who want to learn at the feet of all the great Teachers down the ages. The emphasis in the *Gita* is on the concept of duty. Similarly, if we want to sum up the message of Zarathushtra, it lies in the word *Ashoi*. The concept of Purity is one which all the great Sages and Seers have always given to humanity. Their teaching does not differ. All the Great Ones are of one mind, one heart, one will, one purpose, and their doctrine is universal, impersonal and applicable to all aspiring souls. Each one has emphasized one aspect of the ethics leading to perfection, more than another aspect, and the aspect emphasized by the Prophet Zarathushtra is that of *Ashoi*—Purity. In the *Vendidad*, the importance of purity is indicated:

For man, purity is the greatest good, even from his birth. Make thyself pure, O righteous man. Anyone in the world here below can win purity for himself, namely, when he cleanses himself with good thoughts, words and deeds.

An identical verse is to be found in the chapter on the Path in the *Dhammapada*, where we are asked to control our mind, to guard our speech, and to do no wrong with the body.

There is the beautiful poem, *Ashem Vohu*: "Purity is the noblest

blessing. Happiness it is; happiness to him who is pure for the sake of purity itself." This purity in Zoroastrian religion and philosophy is the purity of the inner man and the purity of the external world, for man is intimately and indissolubly united with the living universe of which he is a part. Because he is a chooser and has self-consciousness which enables him to determine for himself, he has a grave responsibility in reference to all the living elements he has borrowed to make his own human personality and which he contacts through the avenues of that living personality. Therefore he must so live within himself, in terms of the purity of his mind and his consciousness, as not to taint any of the elements belonging to nature and from which he has borrowed his share.

In Zoroastrian philosophy we have two compartments in reference to purity. There is first the purity of the man himself, the cleansing of his thoughts and the expression of that pure thinking through good and noble words and generous and unselfish actions. But there is also the other compartment very little understood in its occult significance, namely, the purification of the elements. This aspect of purity is linked to the *skandhas*—those attributes present in every human being, which have to be purified. We find a great deal in the Avesta scriptures concerning the purification of the great elements of fire, water, air and earth. The unfortunate thing is that emphasis is now laid on the external observances and the inner significance is lost sight of.

The first important point in the consideration of the Path of Purity is that perhaps never before has it been so urgently necessary to understand the need for purity in our own consciousness. Important as is physical hygiene and sanitation, mental hygiene is even more necessary. Children are taught to wash their hands before they sit down for food, to brush their teeth before they go to bed, and most people will have a bath every day. Good as such practices are for the cleanliness of the physical body, more important still are the rules and practices in reference to the purity of our inner consciousness. How many doctors, how many parents, think of the cleanliness of the mind? We would not give spoilt food to children to eat, yet we think nothing of the trash that the children are

absorbing into their minds through what they read and what they see on TV or in the movies. As for the elders, they too should realize that much of what they see or read is simply unclean food for their mind and their consciousness. What the mind takes in as food is most important, and therefore Theosophy emphasizes the purificatory effect of students coming together for the consideration of great ideas and exalted ethical principles. Our own study of Theosophy acts as a purificatory bath for our mind and our feelings.

So the first principle is that purity must begin within. One of the qualifications for discipleship, for treading the noble path that leads to the feet of the Great Ones is : "Absolute mental and physical purity." This indicates at once that purity which is only external avails nothing from the inner and spiritual point of view. In line with that qualification is what H.P.B. says in *The Key to Theosophy*, that with the help of the Higher Self we have to conquer and discipline the lower self. She adds that our duty is to purify ourselves inwardly and morally. So the first step to follow the Path of Purity is a vision of the need to cleanse our consciousness that the light of our own Higher Self may shine forth. As one of the ancient Upanishads puts it: "The Self is in all creatures, but in all it does not shine forth equally." That Light of all lights is in the consciousness of every single human being, but that which interferes with the shining forth of that light is the dirt that has gathered in the sheaths of the inner man because of our wrong actions, our impure thoughts. No one can purify another; each must recognize that he and he alone is responsible for the impurities of his own lower nature. Because of that responsibility, he also has within him the necessary strength to undertake the work of self-purification, and that work begins with the mind. The triad of ethics of the Zoroastrian religion stresses good thoughts, good words, good deeds. Thoughts come first, because without that basis of purity in the mind, in the consciousness, it is not possible to speak pure and truthful words or to perform acts that are skilful, necessary and beneficent. So we must first and foremost give attention to the inner aspect of purity. Man as a thinker, as a moral being, must begin the needed discipline that will enable him to purify his mental vestures.

"It is in the mind that each one manufactures his own magnetism," states an aphorism. We begin with inner purity. It does not mean that physical purity is not necessary, but it will be of no use to keep the temple clean if the God who is to live in that temple is not allowed to enter therein. So the first thing necessary is to realize the existence of the God within. It is the divine motive within that is of utmost importance. So even before the purification of the mind, let us establish the divine motive of the heart. That should be our basis, our foundation to begin to tackle the mind and to examine for ourselves the quality of our own ideation, of our own thinking; and whenever undesirable thoughts arise, we must reject them instinctively so that we can establish the habit in ourselves of allowing only good and noble thoughts. Then we shall have a good magnetism.

This question of magnetism is very little understood in our modern materialistic world. The knowledge of that inner aspect connected with the emanation of our own life-essence, of our own *Prana*, is not perceived by the modern scientist. Theosophy gives the knowledge concerning the meaning and discipline of magnetic rules and magnetic laws. It will be enough for us to remind ourselves that *Prana* plays a very important part in all the aspects that make up the complex personality of man, and that it is through *Prana* that the radiation of the Immortal Self can be transmitted through the personality, so that the light of that inner magnetic quality will be seen at every gate of the physical body. Wisdom will shine. Wisdom is purity. H. P. B. tells us in *The Secret Doctrine* that the highest stage of purity is identification with the Self, that Self which is permanent. That is the highest attainment of purity. That Higher Self is always pure. Its condition is that of purity eternal. It is we who must attain to that summit of purity through efforts at identifying ourselves more and more with the true and permanent Self. Then only, when that union has been attained, will the higher power of spiritual magnetism become possible.

REFLECTIONS ON THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

AMONG the priceless teachings that one finds in the Great Epic Poem, *Mahabharata*, there is none so rare and precious as the *Bhagavad-Gita*—the Lord's Song, Song Celestial.

Few books have exerted such profound influence on the minds of men as also on the course of modern philosophy as the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Perhaps no other book has been as widely read, discussed—and misunderstood. The *Gita*, along with the *Upanishads* and the *Brahma Sutra*, form the triple canon of Vedantic thought.

The *Gita* is described as the study of Adepts and as the textbook for our *Kali Yuga*. There is hardly any among the psychological books, ancient or modern, which can rival the *Gita* in its depth of inspiration as also in its proven truth offering a sure anodyne to the modern man who is unable to appreciate the divine presence everywhere, being immersed in *Brahnti Darshana*—false perception. The *Bhagavad-Gita* is both metaphysics and ethics, *Brahmavidya* and *Yoga Sashtra*, the knowledge of Reality and its realization. It has metaphysical statements and highly practical ethical teaching. It is the Song of Life's eternal meaning, from the beginning of life upto its final destination—the one unknown. Each one of us is Arjuna and each one can find in the *Gita* a chord appropriate to him with which he should synchronize in order to fulfil his life's goal.

The scene of the poem is the field of battle, where the hostile armies of the Kauravas and Pandavas, the two factions, meet. The story of the *Mahabharata*, though mythological and allegorical, can be taken as that of man undergoing his evolution. It can then be raised from the plane of mere fable.

King Dhritarashtra stands for the human body acquired by the immortal Ego by means of *Tanha* or thirst for life, in order to go through the evolutionary journey. He is blind, because the body is senseless matter and cannot govern. Hence, someone else—Duryodhana—governs the State.

The Kurus represent our lower material nature and the Pandavas stand for our spiritual nature. Arjuna—*Nara*—represents the immortal spark undergoing evolution, which is triple—spiritual, intellectual and physical. The Kurus, our lower nature, obtain the power on this plane temporarily, and Duryodhana, who is one of them, prevails. The

Pandavas, representing our spiritual nature, are banished from the State and from governing Man. The wanderings and the various hardships of the Pandavas are nothing but the wanderings of the soul undergoing evolution before the spiritual element in Man gains control in his evolutionary struggle.

The Poem can be read and understood in many different ways—as applicable to the individual, or to cosmogenesis, or to the moral nature, and so on.

The *Gita* seems to impress upon one's mind basically two things: (1) selflessness, and (2) action—renouncing the fruits of action in the action itself—*Nishkamyā Karma*.

Applying the teachings of the *Gita* will enable us to see that there is but One Self or Spirit, and that there is no such thing as separateness. The central teaching of the *Gita* is that the spiritual Man need not be a recluse, that the union with the Divine Life may be achieved while in a body here, and the obstacles to that union are within us and not outside of us.

The late Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said that "The *Bhagavad-Gita* is more a religious classic than a philosophical treatise. It is not an esoteric work designed for and understood by the specially initiated but a popular poem which helps even those who wander in the region of the many and the variable." However, there is enough Secret Wisdom given in the *Gita*. In fact, in Chapter XVIII Krishna says he has imparted to Arjuna Wisdom that is secret, more secret and most secret—*Guhyam, Guhyataram, Guhyatamam*—the secret being that when one transcends the plane of duality—of mine and thine—and starts functioning on the plane of unity, he becomes one with the divine. "By this devotion to me he knoweth fundamentally who and what I am and having thus discovered me he enters into me without any intermediate condition" (*Gita*, XVIII, 55), *i.e.*, when we act as the Self, for the Self, through the Self, and realize that Krishna is not outside of us but within us, then we can say, "My delusion is destroyed," as Arjuna did.

One must study the *Gita* by the light of that spiritual lamp within us which the Master, *Eshwara-Yogeshwara* Krishna, will feed and increase within us, if we are able to carry out his behests. Although the *Gita* is a book revered by all Hindus, its message is universal. To call it a Hindu book belittles the message of the *Gita*, for it belongs to humanity.

CLEANSING THE MIND

The world is verily the mind; therefore the latter should be purified with all effort. As man's mind is, so he becomes; this is the eternal secret!

—*Maitri Upanishad*

Wisdom fills not the unsteady mind of the man of ruffled serenity; he is ignorant of the true teaching.

Fear there is not for him whose mind is not burning with desires, and which, having risen above likes and dislikes, is serene. He is awakened.

—*Dhammapada*

ANCIENT and honourable China was wise in spiritual matters and gave to the world great sages and enlightened teachers. It is, therefore, both refreshing and stimulating to go back to the treasures of her old scriptures and drink of her Wisdom. To be able to delight in that Wisdom is already a step forward on the path of enlightenment, and such delight brings serenity to the harassed mind and contentment to the anguished heart. Thus calmed in mind and confident in heart, we return to our duties and our problems better equipped to fulfil our mission as human Souls.

Wisdom is spiritual knowledge and teaches divine ethics. It deals with fundamentals. It was the venerable Confucius who enjoined "*Wu Pen*"—Attend to the Fundamentals. So much of our time is spent and our energy frittered away in matters of no consequence, in things inessential, trivial, and irrelevant, while we neglect the things that really matter, the basic things, what Confucius calls "the Fundamentals."

In the treasure-house of old China there is a small Taoist scripture not sufficiently known to our contemporary civilization. That little treatise of Taoism is the *Khing Kang King*, "The Classic of Purity," which contains wise and practical instruction for every aspirant to the Higher Life. The work is ascribed in the original text to the great Chinese Sage, Lao-tzu, the Teacher of the Tao. The Master is the speaker. While the teachings are undoubtedly those

of Lao-tzu, the actual record must be of later date, and this particular work is attributed by scholars to a follower of Lao-tzu, a Taoist, who lived in the third century A.D., while Lao-tzu himself lived about 600 B.C. and was a contemporary of Lord Buddha.

The word *Tao* is untranslatable into the English or any modern Western language. Just as the Sanskrit word *Dharma* cannot be fully rendered by any one word, so with the Chinese *Tao*. It is the Path to enlightenment, a way of life which leads to realization, but it is also that realization itself, and THAT which is to be realized. Lao-tzu, as all great and truly wise ones, teaches that realization is the fruit of virtue and of righteousness. According to the *Tao*, the ideal man is the man of purity, of virtue, and of truth. The *Khing Kang King* stresses purity, and hence its title, "The Classic of Purity." It is reminiscent of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and shows the need of controlling the mind through the restraint of the senses, and the eradication of all sensuous and selfish desires. It analyses and classifies desires in a masterly fashion. It reveals the true nature of man and indicates the means and the way to realize the essential Self. The Real Man is spiritual, but that Spirit is clothed in several garments which we mistake for the Real. We must regain the intuitive perception that our mind and our desires, our body and our senses, are only vehicles or *upadhis* behind which lies the Real. The cleansing of the sheaths of the Spirit reveals the vision of that Spirit, and hence the path of self-realization is fundamentally the path of purity supreme.

The *Khing Kang King* teaches that path of purity, and, proceeding from universals to particulars, it begins with the Spirit, thus: "Now the Spirit of man loves Purity. . . ." Herein an affirmation: the Real in us loves Purity. Let each one ask of himself: "Do I love Purity?" If the answer is in the negative, there is something radically wrong which must be put right. The normal person, however incapable as yet of living a life of purity, should respond to the sublime ideal of inner purity.

But if the Spirit in us loves Purity, why are we not aware of this basic love?

Says the *Khing Kang King*: "... but the mind disturbs it." The

mind must be made calm. Why is it disturbed?

The mind of man loves stillness, but his desires draw it away. If he could always send his desires away, his mind would of itself become still. Let his mind be made clean, and his spirit will of itself assert its purity.

According to our text, there are six desires, those arising from the five senses, and the desire which arises from the idea or the thought and the memory of sense experience. If the senses are controlled and the mind detached from the desires of the senses, desires can be "sent away" and the mind regain its natural condition, which is that of stillness; for "the mind of man loves stillness." When the mind is disturbed and the desires uncontrolled, three poisons arise: greed, anger, and stupidity:

Being attracted towards external things, men begin to seek them greedily. This greedy quest leads to perplexity and annoyance; and these again result in disordered thought, which causes anxiety and trouble to both body and mind.

Taoism recognizes in man the Spirit, the mind, and the body; and the body stands for the desires of the senses. The three poisons arise in a mind enslaved by those desires. The root cause of all troubles thus lies in the mind:

The reason why men are not able to attain the Tao, is because their minds have not been cleansed and their desires have not been sent away.

Let us make haste to cleanse our minds and to send away our impure desires. Nothing so cleanses and strengthens the mind as placing it upon the Spirit. Let us endeavour to ideate upon eternal values that we may attain to the vision of the Real. "The True and abiding *Tao*! They who understand it naturally obtain it. And they who come to understand the *Tao* abide in Purity and Stillness."

THE bane of knowledge is lack of practising it.

—*Maximx of Ali*

THE BASIS OF STUDY

PRESENT-day education has been justly accused of teaching the pupil "subjects" instead of teaching him how to think; of expecting him to pick up detailed knowledge and the power to reason and to express himself, before knowing how to handle the tools of learning.

Is this why, perhaps, students of Theosophy the world over find the study of the same books boring after many years? It may be the reason why the repetition of the Three Fundamentals, the Ancient Source and the Ten Items of Oriental Psychology becomes meaningless to the speaker and to the listener. Maybe we fail to *practise* the knowledge of reincarnation, the knowledge that we are personality *and* individuality, focused in the Universal Spirit, and therefore we fail to note the value of so many hints in the Philosophy of Theosophy as to ordinary day-to-day life.

For example, the Third Fundamental speaks of what apparently arrests the force of our will. And yet will is all-powerful! To understand this, let us think of the ramifications of the phrase "checked by Karma" and ask ourselves in what way Karma can "check" us. Difficulties are not checks, for we can learn from them; what appears to be bad Karma is not really bad, for we can learn through suffering and lack of opportunities. In what way then are we checked?

As we think along these lines and try to understand, one thought arises. Does it mean that we cannot always accomplish all that we attempt because we have not developed in the past the right kind of instrument to obey our will? Is this what is meant by the words attributed to Jesus: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (flesh standing for the bodily instrument)?

If this is so, it may help us to try to see the right relationship between the actual physical-astral body and our spiritual will. We shall discover that the food we eat not only affects the health of the body but may act as a "check" on our future evolution. H.P.B. wrote in *The Key to Theosophy* that she would advise really earnest students to eat "such food as will least clog and weight their brains and bodies, and will have the smallest effect in hampering and

retarding the development of their intuition, their inner faculties and powers." Will not, therefore, indulgence in the wrong food to satisfy our sense of taste hinder the body's receptivity and check our progress?

In present-day life, we meet with various forms of compulsion, such as having to be vaccinated; we meet with propaganda as to family planning, with the racket in drugs, etc. Noise in various forms is forced on our ears and affects us so that the inner listening becomes well-nigh impossible. We inhale willy-nilly impurities from the air. The food we eat is adulterated and the water we drink medicated. Frequent TV-viewing, as also reading of a certain kind, leaves its impress on our astral body and affects our dream state. All these things leave their impress and check our growth in the future because our bodily organs (including the astral counterparts) become less able to respond to our mental growth and aspirations.

With regard to "compulsion," if for whatsoever reason we accept a thing just because it is compulsory and even though we know it to be wrong or bad, we have weakened our will. We have allowed our weak will to decide on the easier path of acceptance of the compulsion. This is the way to spiritual death. We shall be "checked" by our Karma for this in future lives when we have begun to see the absolute necessity for individual decision in terms of conscience, for we shall find the "circumstances" (Karmic reaction to our decision) too much for us, and we shall either be unable again to do what is right, or suffer immensely.

This kind of thought alone is of worth to us in daily life, in practical Theosophy.

To take another point: H.P.B. scatters references to various subjects throughout *The Secret Doctrine*. We must gather them together. At first she gives the fundamental basis of the knowledge of any one subject, the outline, so to say. If we first learn and think about that, then as we study further we shall find passages relating to that subject which illuminate what we have already learnt. But, if we do not learn, do not think about what we have already read, the later references will not bring illumination, but will only seem to us to be further ideas, isolated from one another.

We are asked to develop logical thinking. The value of logic is that it gives us a potent instrument for the detection and exposure of false reasoning. By applying it to our own thinking we can learn much more easily what is false and what is true. Therefore has it been said that we should believe nothing unless it agrees with logic and common sense.

The basis of study is to think, to reason, to meditate and to establish logical conclusions. In this way, the Three Fundamentals will become the basis of our daily living. They will show us the value of the number "three," "two" being inconclusive, so that we see that the choice is never just between "to do or not to do"; there is always another way, not a compromise, but a synthesis of the good in the "to do" and in the "not to do." Sometimes it is best to wait before acting, for there is a right time for everything, and the teaching of cycles is helpful in all things.

The Ancient Source teaches us that we should always seek for "credentials" before accepting anything, *i.e.*, we should never take the word of anyone as "dogma." This is an excellent approach towards modern advertising—whether of goods, drugs, or courses of action such as family planning, vaccination, etc. Secondly, we note that it is necessary to *learn* before passing on to others what we think we know. Thirdly, our own word is not sufficient; so in talking to people we must give them the views of others to back up our own statements. Thus did the Wise Men before anything was accepted or given out by them.

The Ten Items from *Isis Unveiled* give us an insight not only into our own nature and the oneness of all, but also show us that it is our will that is all-important in evolution. There is but One Will throughout Nature. Only by adapting our will to the Universal Will can we progress. Only by looking upon Nature and our fellow men as our friends and helpers can we attain a recognition of that oneness of will, so that our will becomes the Universal Will, and the Universal Will becomes our will. Only then can we become a part of the workings of Nature.

If we take our devotional books we see that they all deal with the training of our instruments to obey us in terms of our mental

understanding. Patanjali tells us how to observe, how to develop right cognition, among other things. *Light on the Path* shows us the way to *listen*—the training of the ear. *The Voice of the Silence* shows us how to develop Compassion, which is the mother-virtue and forms the basis for the practice of the *Paramitas*. To practise these glorious virtues we must study them and find out just what they mean, and where can we practise them but in our day-to-day lives? If we train our instruments in this life, they will not act as "checks" in future lives.

Above all it is important for us to learn to *think* for ourselves.

WHY H.P.B. and others well known in the Society lay so much stress on doctrines like Karma and Reincarnation is not alone because these doctrines are easily apprehended and beneficent to individuals, not only because they furnish, as they necessarily do, a solid foundation for ethics, or all human conduct, but because they are the very key-notes of the higher evolution of man. Without Karma and Reincarnation evolution is but a fragment; a process whose beginnings are unknown, and whose outcome cannot be discerned; a glimpse of what might be; a hope of what should be. But in the light of Karma and Reincarnation evolution becomes the logic of what *must* be. The links in the chain of being are all filled in, and the circles of reason and of life are complete. Karma gives the eternal law of action, and Reincarnation furnishes the boundless field for its display. Thousands of persons can understand these two principles, apply them as a basis of conduct, and weave them into the fabric of their lives, who may not be able to grasp the complete synthesis of that endless evolution of which these doctrines form so important a part. In thus affording even the superficial thinker and the weak or illogical reasoner a perfect basis for ethics and an unerring guide in life, Theosophy is building toward the future realization of the Universal Brotherhood and the higher evolution of man.

—W. Q. JUDGE

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The 20th century has been an age of science. Since H.P.B. wrote *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* in the latter part of the 19th century, there have been major revisions in nearly all departments of modern science. Though the time-tested Occult teachings remain the same, modern science is in a state of flux. It is important for students of Theosophy to know in what direction the race-mind is tending and how the leaven of Theosophy has been working, transforming the world of thought. In this column, a small attempt is being made to acquaint readers with what the scientists and thinkers of today are saying and doing.

The Natural Science section in the journal *The World and I* keeps nonspecialist readers abreast of developments in the field of science. In its May issue, the essay "Milestones of Twentieth-Century Science and Technology" offers a schematic overview of some of the important advances made during the past century and their impact on our lives. V. V. Raman, emeritus professor of physics at Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York, dwells on the idea that knowledge of and control over nature that humanity has gained can have profound consequences for both benefit and harm:

The twentieth century will be remembered for consciousness-raising and scientific/technological breakthroughs. This century made racism a shameful practice; recognized gender oppression as a social evil; proclaimed human rights as transcending race, caste, and religion; pleaded for international economic justice; began to celebrate diversity and to care for the disabled; and condemned exploitation of the young. It released millions from colonial shackles and established world organizations in which free nations join to solve problems of food and health, promote trade and education, and resolve political differences through discussion.

The twentieth century also made more scientific discoveries, introduced more technologies, and launched more assaults on the environment than all previous time spans combined.

The author's bird's-eye view of some of the milestones in science and technology include: changing concepts of space and time, of matter and energy; the undisputable evidence of multiple billions of stars strewn throughout the vastness of space; understanding DNA and the secrets of the gene, which has opened up undreamed-of possibilities for manipulating organisms; penetrating the innermost depths of matter and coming upon a whole new microcosmic world of atoms, electrons, quarks and the like; identifying the specific roles of different parts of the brain; seeking to unscramble the mystery of consciousness. So much for pure science. Milestones of science in action include not only the use of countless cars and trucks and jets, but also the development of rocketry and missions both to distant planets and beyond our solar system. Advances in telecommunication made possible telegraphy, radio, TV, videos, computers, artificial satellites, lasers, etc. Efforts to prevent and cure diseases have led to the discovery of new drugs. Harnessing of nuclear energy has proved a double-edged sword. Computers and the Internet have transformed civilization.

With all this, the twentieth century has also created stupendous problems and a perilous passage lies ahead, warns the author:

A population explosion in the face of diminishing oil reserves and farmable land, environmental pollution through automobiles and industrial effluents, perilous nuclear wastes, depletion of the rain forests: These are challenges of great magnitude. Then there are social and human problems, ranging from ethnic hatred and religious bigotry to poverty and malnutrition. So, though there is much to look forward to in terms of new technologies, increasing economic opportunities, interplanetary adventures, and possible cures for deadly diseases, we will be living in a fool's paradise if we are indifferent to the problems that will face mankind in the decades ahead.

The possibilities are immense and unpredictable, for the good and the bad....Recognizing these possibilities, let us join hands in our efforts to induce the positive and snub the negative potentials. Now, as never before in human history, we feel we are all passengers in the only spaceship we have. Fortified by the

knowledge and power that come from the sciences, we may build on the finer values and wisdom of the ages and make our planet an even more rewarding place to be.

Knowledge and power wisely used can prove beneficial to humankind; misapplied, they can bring destruction and misery in their wake. Only the future will reveal what direction it will take.

The philosophy of Epictetus, as presented in his *Manual*, is simple and direct—*e.g.*, his psycho-spiritual analysis of the nature of happiness and the way to attain it. Arvind Nagarkar writes in *The Times of India* (May 23):

Is true happiness attainable in this world of strife? Yes, says Epictetus, provided the mind is trained by rigorous discipline to adhere to certain basic spiritual principles.

According to Epictetus, happiness is the "ongoing dynamic performance of worthy deeds." The secret of happiness lies in having an enlightened attitude and response to external events and people's behaviour. The springs of happiness are, therefore, not outside of us but lie within us.

Happiness is built on the fundamental knowledge of what is within our control and what is not. On analytical reflection we find that the mind alone can be brought under our control. Everything else, the world of events and people's behaviour, is beyond the scope of our control. Any confusion between the two results in misery. We will be less miserable if we learn to come to terms with the truth that what is beyond our control will happen, whether we like it or not—so it is better to recognize this and remain unperturbed, fully cognizant that there are certain things in this world that we cannot exercise control over.

It then becomes our paramount duty to control the mind and practise total unconcern to externals. "When something happens," says Epictetus, "the only thing in your power is your attitude toward it; you can either accept it or resent it." To accept an event is to rise above it; to resent is to be overpowered by it. With acceptance comes happiness; with resentment, misery.

Acceptance of an event is not to be mistaken for a life of passivity or submission to fatalism characterized by laziness and a sense of helplessness. "Simply doing nothing does not avoid risk, but heightens it." Epictetus exhorts us, therefore, to brave the storms of life with planned action born of clear thinking....

We are advised to look for lessons even in painful events. We have inner wells of strength from which we can freely draw to meet any adverse situation, and thereby turn a negative happening to a positive character-building experience. Epictetus says, "You will needn't be affected by an incident unless you let it. Remember this with everything that happens to you."

No man is an island. No one can live in isolation, and social interaction is unavoidable. But no matter how others behave, we have to maintain our inner tranquillity, with unwavering attention on keeping to our own higher purpose. For, we are told:

The way of inward peace is in all things to conform to the pleasure and disposition of the Divine Will. Such as would have all things succeed and come to pass according to their own fancy, are not come to know this way; and therefore lead a harsh and bitter life; always restless and out of humour, without treading the way of peace. ("Musings on the True Theosophist's Path": *U. L. T. Pamphlet No. 36*, p. 1)

In *New York Times Magazine* (May 7) Andrew Delbanco presents another way of defining and attaining happiness. In our times, he says, pursuit of happiness has become an overwhelmingly private and personal undertaking. Personal growth is for many the aim, while terms like commonweal, public good and private obligation are considered archaic.

The surest way to promote one's private happiness is "to do publicly useful actions." It was believed at one time that

happiness could be attained only if and when one could look back on one's life and see that it had had good effects on the lives

of others. To believe this was not merely to wish that virtue should be its own reward. It was to make a universal claim that human beings are born with a "moral sense," an impulse to altruism that atrophies if it is not exercised. People, as the cybernetic metaphor now has it, are "hard wired" to do good in order to enhance their own happiness. In its 18th-century version, this theory about the inner life paralleled emerging scientific theories about the outer world: it said that a happy person existing alone without exchanging the energy of benevolence with other people is inconceivable, like a celestial body orbiting around nothing.

Even today not all are self-seekers. That happiness can best be found in selfless service remains a driving motive in many lives. "When people spin faster and faster in the pursuit of merely personal happiness," observes Delbanco, "they become exhausted in the futile effort of chasing themselves."

The year 2000 has been declared as the International Year of the Culture of Peace. But what is peace? There can be no lasting peace in the outside world unless individuals are at peace within themselves. It is said that "wars begin in the minds of men." So each one has first to work in and on himself. As stated in *Purity* (June 2000):

The original state of the inner self is peace. However, individual peace gets disturbed when actions become motivated by negative values, attitudes and emotions, such as anger, greed, ego, jealousy, prejudice and selfishness. The statement applies to the individual, the community and the state. The manifestation of these practices is conflict, violence, abuse, crime, discrimination, exploitation, war, destruction and moral degradation. Human beings affected by these conditions start living under severe stress, with constant tension. Stress-related diseases and conflict in relationship create unhappiness in the family and the neighbourhood, whether they are materially well provided for or are poor. In these circumstances, people lose their peace of

mind and cannot find their way back. On the other hand actions which are based on positivity and motivated by such values as humanity, love, understanding, respect, tolerance, co-operation, simplicity, humility, generosity and non-violence, lead to solidarity, equanimity, contentment, wisdom, fairness and altruism. In this way, one is able to sustain peace and stability. If one's actions are sometimes negative and sometimes positive, then both the depth of peace and its stability would be reduced. Thus the promotion and development of a culture of peace must encourage individuals to live by positive values in their thoughts, words, deeds, attitudes and relationships.

The attainment of a lasting peace will depend on how much the individual is prepared to accept shortcomings and be dedicated to reform and change. The best way by which we can remove the ills of society and bring about reform for a culture of peace, is by reforming our own thinking, speaking, doing, looking and relating to others. This would then attract others to follow similar reforms, to change their lives and move towards a more peaceful and contented state of mind. The examples of personal reform of leaders and the institutions which they control along with the positive changes of betterment and wellness would be the greatest catalyst towards the establishment of a culture of peace....

It is said that there were more wars and acts of violence in the twentieth century than in the previous 19 centuries put together. With the rapid advancement in science, technology and information systems, it should be possible to change from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence in 20-30 years, provided there is enough global will and determination....A culture of peace is not a dream; it will become a reality.

Nalin Nirula, a practitioner of alternative medicine, believes in understanding the whole gamut of events in a patient's life, his relationships and beliefs, his struggles and aspirations, before attempting to heal him. In an interview with him reported in *The*

Times of India (June 2), he said:

Our inner universe manifests itself outwardly in sickness and health, in joy and sorrow, and in peace and stress. If we want to change externally, it must first take place within us. Otherwise it is only a mechanical patch-up job. External repair is also needed, but it is more important to bring about radical inner change. The desire for change should come from within....

Much of modern medicine involves correcting the chemical conditions within the body. This approach is of limited use because before any chemical or pathological changes take place, there is a mental or emotional condition bringing about these conditions causing organic disorder or disease pathology....

As we think, emotions are generated within us and as we feel certain emotions they filter down to the body and affect it. If the emotion is negative, for example, arising out of anger, hatred, etc., then some corresponding biochemicals are released into the body. These biochemicals convey the quality of that particular emotion to the body and if the emotion is of a negative nature, then the quality is embodied in those biochemicals and conveyed to the various body parts. These elements accumulate in our bodies and are not digested, eliminated or discharged. Accumulation of toxic biochemicals originating from unhappy negative thoughts then leads to disease.

Medical drugs that have a potency to heal can also harm if taken indiscriminately. Doctors and health officials have been warning for years that disease-causing bacteria are developing resistance to even the strongest antibiotics. A World Health Organization (WHO) report on infectious diseases states: "If people do not stop misusing antibiotics, new 'superbugs' that resist all drugs could take the world back to the time when minor infections killed." Dr. David Heymann, executive director for communicable diseases at WHO, called on the world "to mobilize a massive effort to make better use of these powerful weapons before the window of opportunity closes and before we move further towards the pre-antibiotic age."

If people use antibiotics when they do not need them, as, for instance, to treat a viral infection such as influenza, the bacteria naturally present in their bodies develop resistance and can spread. In some countries, patients have strains resistant to the most powerful medicines used to treat diseases like tuberculosis.

This is disturbing news. "Of the so-called exact sciences," said H.P.B., "medicine, confessedly, least deserves the name." New drugs are not going to solve the problems raised by the old drugs. Are medical practices being resorted to that will perhaps affect the bodies of the race in such a way that the future generations will suffer? Our responsibility is great. The fixation on drugs is so strong that the severe limitations of drug therapy are often overlooked. We may remind ourselves that if it were within man's power to remove all the illness in the world today, the root of illness would not be affected. The whole man, including his mental and emotional nature, has to be taken into consideration and treated.

PROponents of holistic health believe that the time has come to give serious consideration to the spiritual dimension and to the role this plays in health and disease. Spiritual health, in this context, refers to that part of the individual which reaches out and strives for meaning and purpose in life....It includes integrity, principles and ethics, commitment to something higher, and belief in concepts that are not subject to "state of the art" explanations.

For a discipline that has in recent time promoted, in theory and practice, an excessively gross and physical view of human health and thus, of the human being himself, this realization of the importance of the spiritual dimension in modern medicine is indeed a welcome change. However, this is only a small beginning and there is a long way to go.

—*World Health Forum* (Vol. 17, No. 4)
(International Journal of the W.H.O.)