

## A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### ON OVERCOMING DESIRE

There is a greater joy in overcoming a desire than in satisfying it.

—LORD BUDDHA

When we desire anything, the thing itself is not what we want, but the feeling that the thing gives us; if the thing gave us no “feeling,” we would not desire it. To do service is also “feeling,” but how different in its effects—beneficial instead of harmful reactions.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

HOW is it that people have knowledge and yet they commit offence, seemingly against their will? What is that unknown force which drives them to such folly? This is the question Arjuna asks Shri Krishna in the *Gita*. Krishna’s reply is, “It is desire which instigates them. It is passion sprung from the quality of *rajas*....As the flame is surrounded by smoke, and a mirror by rust, and as the womb envelopes the foetus, so is the universe surrounded by this passion....Its empire is over the senses and organs, the thinking principle and the discriminating faculty also.” Three illustrations are given to show how our desires delude our rational capacity and cloud our discrimination. These three illustrations cover three *gunas* (qualities) and three kinds of desires. There could be inert (*tamasic*) desires, such as sleep and idleness; active *rajasic* desires for power,

name, fame, wealth, love for gain, etc.; divine or noble (*sattvic*) desires such as for achieving peace, happiness, knowledge and perfection. Fire is enveloped by smoke, but it is only partially veiled by it. Flame could be seen through the smoke, and a whiff of wind clears off the smoke and the flame becomes visible. So, even *sattvic* desires could veil the infinite glory of the Spirit. It is quite possible to be like Mejnour in *Zanoni*, who is pure intellect that has won its wisdom through detachment from the life of the senses. He is not touched by human passions, but also his wisdom is of no benefit to humanity, as he denies his relation with the world. He says, “I live but in knowledge, I have no life in humanity.” Bulwer Lytton describes him by saying, “He asks no charity and gives none—he does no evil and seems to confer no good.”

Likewise, the Spirit or Truth could be obscured by our desire for glory and power. In this case, there is more or less complete obscuration, as in the case of mirror covered by dust. We are unable to see our reflection in the mirror covered by dust and it needs to be wiped with a cloth. Thus, *rajasic* desires are more difficult to overcome, as they are gross, egocentric, passionate and selfish—eradication of *rajasic* desires require consistent efforts.

Foetus enveloped by the womb shows complete obscuration of the divine by *tamasic* desires. It is only after nine months that the foetus develops into a full-grown baby, when it is ready to emerge out of the womb. So also, it is difficult to change *tamasic* nature and unfold the divinity within. All the lower desires—for wealth, comfort, name, fame, drinks and drugs, and all fleshly enjoyments—are composed of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. What we call fleshly appetites or desires of the body have their origin in thought. When the body or flesh is repeatedly impressed with certain impulses through thoughts, it repeats those impulses, mechanically or automatically, and brings back the temptations. Hence, it is not easy for a person who is deeply steeped in evil to undergo a sudden transformation and become equally powerful for good. A barrel that was used for storing herrings would be thoroughly soaked with herring drippings, and we cannot

easily clean it and use it for storing rose perfume. Similarly, it is very difficult to reverse the kamic impulses given to the molecules of the body. If one tries to give the opposite impression, suddenly and violently, then disease, madness or death might result. Hence, the advice is to control thoughts. “Attachment to things or results, comes by thinking about them. You can have no attachment for a thing you do not think about; neither can you have a dislike for a thing you do not think about,” writes Mr. Crosbie.

In Letter X of *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge mentions that lust may be considered a gross symbol or perverted version of love and desire to create. Vanity represents in its one aspect, illusive power of Nature or *Maya*. It is always nearest to us and most insidious. Just as it is difficult to overcome *Maya* or illusion, so it is difficult to overcome Vanity. It is excessive pride of oneself or of one’s possessions. It arises from the self-identifying attachment and the sense of separateness. *Maya* is the perceptive faculty of the Ego which considers itself separate from and independent of eternal SAT. “Anger and lust, have some of the *Rajasika* quality; but it seems to me that Vanity is almost wholly of the *Tamogunam*,” says Mr. Judge. Vanity arises from egoism, and has many strongholds. If we conquer it in its gross form, it arises in subtle form. It is comparatively easy to detect vanity in its grosser aspect, such as, when one is proud of one’s wealth, looks, ability, skills, possessions, etc. We have its antidote in right knowledge and spiritual living. But what is the cure, when one begins to feel proud of one’s spiritual achievements? If food gets stuck in a person’s throat, we could give him water to wash it down with, but if water sticks in his throat, what shall we give him to wash it down with? A person who abstains from meat and drink, observes strict celibacy, understands well Kaballah, understands the subtle difference between Monism and qualified Monism, may soon begin to develop “holier than thou” attitude. He may look down upon other people who eat meat, who accept ready-made conclusions without rationalizing, and so on. He may have conquered appetites of the flesh, but desire has entered him through

*Manas*. It is *tamas*, spiritual darkness.

In the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna shows Arjuna the method of overcoming desire. “In the first place, restrain thy senses.” If we neglect the senses and begin by controlling mind and heart, we gain nothing, because the foe remains undisturbed in the senses. “The tumultuous senses and organs hurry away by force the heart even of the wise man who striveth after perfection.” It is by means of outward senses and their inner counterparts that a great turmoil is set up first in the heart, and “the restless heart snatches away the mind from its steady place.” In other words, we are asked to *begin* with the senses, but not stop there. What happens when we are addicted to eating pizzas? In spite of our great determination, in the beginning, the sight of pizza or the smell of pizza being cooked, is enough to shake our determination. A person who has weakness for pizzas may avoid going near the place where it is cooked, sold, stored, etc. Likewise, a person who is addicted to alcohol, movies, cakes and chocolates may avoid going near a theatre or a beer bar or shop where cakes and chocolates are sold. We restrain the senses by not allowing the eyes to rest too long on tempting sights, or ears to rest on tempting sounds, and so on. Like a tortoise withdraws his feet and head within the shell at the approaching danger, the advice is to draw in all the senses and restrain them from running away in their accustomed directions. The very first verse in the Chapter on *Bhikkhu*, in the *Dhammapada*, says: “Restrain in the eye is good; good is restrain in the ear; restrain in the nose is good; good is restrain in the tongue; in the body restrain is good; good is restrain in speech; in the mind restrain is good; good is restrain in all things.”

There is attachment created also by the data brought through the astral senses. There is an illusion of spiritual progress because one is able to see or hear at a distance. Just as a person gets addicted to sense-objects on the physical plane, so also, it is possible to get addicted to astral visions. It may be comparatively easy to restrain physical senses, but it is extremely difficult to control the astral senses. A person who dabbles in the astral realm begins to live on the astral

plane and to hear and see things of that plane, without his control, and which deludes him into thinking that he has made great spiritual progress. Mr. Judge calls this “astral intoxication.”

Simultaneously with the control of the senses, one must control the mind and heart, lest one becomes a “false pietist of bewildered soul.” At times, we give up the desire outwardly but within there is longing for sweets, cakes, alcohol, movies, etc. As one controls the senses, one must also control the mind and not indulge in mental gratification by fantasizing. It is important to recognize that *ultimately*, it is the *mind*, and not the senses that lead us astray. “The senses, moving toward their appropriate objects, are producers of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, which come and go and are brief and changeable; these do thou endure” (*Gita*, II). Senses and organs produce sensation, when they contact external objects. For instance, when we put ice-cream on the tip of our tongue, the tongue reports that it is cold and sweet, but it is the mind that intervenes and says, “I like it, I want more of it.” We are cautioned in *The Voice of the Silence*, “Thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind.” Our perception must end with perception, *i.e.*, once the sense organ has perceived the sense object, the enjoyment of that sense object is complete. But we find that mind tends to dwell on it and re-live the experience, creating desire and attachment.

There are several instances of “momentary madness,” or a “moment of unbridled passion,” when emotions cloud reason and discrimination. There are several instances of murder, suicide and rape committed in a fit of passion, by normal, well-respected persons. “The libidinal impulse that takes birth in the brain may take over so badly that it demands instant gratification,” says psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Dr. Deepak Raheja. He says it would be unfair to judge a person’s character based on that one moment of weakness since that could have come from sudden clouding of the mind and intelligence due to extreme emotions, which could be rage, jealousy or lust (*Sunday Times of India*, June 28, 2009). However, often, the “moment of madness” is the *last* decision in the chain of events.

Dr. Erich Fromm, a psychoanalyst, writes that, at the point of final decision the freedom to choose has usually vanished, but it may still have been there when the person was not so deeply caught in his own passions. Many a time the passion is slowly building up, while we are not aware and when there is still freedom to act according to reason. Then comes this moment when it is too late to make a decision.

Lord Buddha, the great psychologist, teaches the doctrine of conditioned co-production, which mentions *nidanas*, or chain of causes, that show how birth, old age, disease, death and suffering arise depending upon conditions or causes. Depending upon *sparsha* (contact of the senses with sense-objects), arises *vedana* (feeling or sensation). The sensation produced could be painful or pleasant. Depending upon sensation, arises *trishna* or craving, hunger or thirst for excitement. It is the flame of desire, which burns unsatisfied, birth after birth. The transition from sensation to craving, from passive feeling to active desire is the battlefield of the spiritual life. To win a victory over one's self is to experience the feeling and yet check the desires.

In *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 7*, we are shown how we can purify our desires, step by step, beginning with killing out the desire for the things of matter. The second step is to overcome subtler desires such as those for power, knowledge, love, happiness or fame. How to achieve this? The answer is, "Life itself teaches these lessons," because even when we get what we want, we are likely to lose it, or it may not be what we had expected it to be, or it loses its charm once we have attained it; turning to dust and ashes in the mouth. Gradually, after many such experiences, we begin to intuitively perceive that satisfaction is attainable only in the infinite, so that at last, we begin to use our "Will" to centre all our desires on the Eternal. "Desire only that which is within you...which is beyond you...which is unattainable," says *Light on the Path*.

## ON MAGNETISM

### III

IN *Vernal Blooms*, Mr. Judge mentions that every person has about him a fluid, or plane, or sphere, or energy, in which are constantly found elementals which partake of his nature. By some, the astral substance around every one is called *aura*. But, there are many types of auras, and there are many degrees of its expression. H.P.B. differentiates between "auric fluid" and "auric light." Auric fluid, explains Mr. Judge, is composed partly of the astral substance around every one and partly of the physical atoms in a finely divided state. Auric light is what Reichenbach called *Od*, it is the light which surrounds every animate and inanimate object in nature. It is the astral reflection emanating from objects. The colour or colours in the aura and their combinations, denote the qualities and characteristics of each object and subject. The aura of a human being is the strongest of all. For instance, a good clairvoyant will see in the aura of the person just refreshed by sleep, rhythmic vibrations of life currents—golden, blue and rosy. These are electrical waves of Life. In case of a person just before going to sleep, the clairvoyant will see a mist of intense golden-orange hue, composed of atoms whirling with an almost incredible spasmodic rapidity, showing that the person is too strongly saturated with Life. This is because when we are awake the life energy rushes into the body and we are resisting it, so that we are more full of life energy before going to sleep, than on waking up. During sleep equilibrium is established.

A good clairvoyant could tell of the inner state and inner psychological and moral nature of the person by looking at his aura. For instance, one might refrain from expressing the feelings of anger or hatred but it is not possible to hide it from a trained seer or a clairvoyant. In Bulwer Lytton's, *A Strange Story*, a character called Margrave could fool every one by his very polite and beautiful exterior, but when the adept looked at his aura he knew him to be a depraved soul—a "lost soul."

There are ineffaceable marks in the aura of the adept for those (clairvoyants) who are able to see them, showing his advancement on the Path. Likewise, an adept can see how far progressed a particular person is, by looking at his aura. If a person has progressed only three steps on the Path there will be three marks in his aura. It is no use pretending that he has progressed four steps, because if he had indeed advanced to the higher step there would be a corresponding mark in his aura, as these grow with the being's development. Hence, it is impossible to fool an adept and extract from him occult information or secrets pertaining to higher degree of initiation by obtaining signs and passwords out of a book. (*Echoes From the Orient*, p. 37)

A student, who examines a geographical map, can judge by the differently coloured outlines, the boundaries of various countries. Likewise, the Occultist, seeing (to him) well-distinguishable and well-defined *auric shades and gradations of colour in the inner man*, could unerringly determine to which of the distinct human families and to which particular group and subgroup of that family belongs a person, people or tribe. This will seem hazy and incomprehensible to those who know nothing about ethnic varieties of nerve-aura. (*Five Years of Theosophy*, pp. 327-28)

H.P.B. describes the difference in aura of a medium and an adept. In case of a medium, the aura is constantly subject to fluctuation and disturbances by the surrounding astral influences, like a flame, which loses its pyramidal form when fanned. But in case of an adept, this aura is compact and concentrated, and the same is depicted in the pictures of the Mahatmas, such as Buddha, as pyramidal crown upon their heads (*The Theosophist*, August 1884). "Mediumship is measured by the quality of the aura with which the individual is surrounded. This may be dense, cloudy, noisome, mephitic, nauseating to the pure spirit and attract only those foul beings who delight in it, as the eel in turbid waters, or, it may be pure, crystalline, limpid, opalescent as the morning dew. All depends upon the moral character of the medium," writes H.P.B. Besides the bad elementals,

even the controlling intelligences live and manifest themselves through the aura of the medium. Prof. Crookes' experiments have shown the aura of the medium to be changing day by day and even hour by hour. A medium's moral state determines the kind of spirits that are attracted to his/her aura, and reciprocally, the spirits that come influence the medium, intellectually, physically and morally (*Isis*, I, 487 and 490). Adepts, on the other hand, are described to be temples in which dwells the spirit of the living God. Since they led lives of superhuman morality and sanctity, they gathered about themselves heavenly nimbus, a pure and radiant aura (halo). They radiated around them an atmosphere of such divine beneficence, as to attract to their aura only pure spirits, and repel evil spirits. This is the reason why Jesus, Apollonius and other holy beings could exorcize, and drive away bad spirits from the people who were possessed. (*Isis*, I, 487)

During the period of menstruation, bad elementals are easily attracted towards such women. If the woman moves about freely in the house she would infect every person and thing in the house with the bad magnetic aura, and hence the seclusion of women during menstrual period is the time-honoured custom in several nations (*The Theosophist*, June 1885). The influence of a person's magnetic emanations is especially present in his shadow, his picture or photograph. H.P.B. mentions in *Isis Unveiled* that in India, Russia and some other countries, there is an instinctive aversion to stepping across a person's shadow, especially if that person has red hair. She explains that when a person stands exposed to sun, the magnetism of the sun causes his emanations to be projected towards the shadow, and the increased molecular action develops more electricity. Hence, an individual to whom he is antipathetic, though neither of them might be aware of it, would avoid passing through his shadow (pp. 610-11). *Ramayana* mentions the "*Chhaya grahini*" ("Shadow-Catcher"), a *rakshasi* (female demon) with strange power, who was able to arrest the aerial progress of Hanuman (the monkey-god) by seizing his shadow on the surface of the Sea. (*The Theosophist*,



June 1885). When Hanuman flew across the ocean in order to reach Sita, who was held captive by Ravana in Lanka, he encountered this *rakshasi*, who would drag down those who were flying above the sea by catching hold of their shadows from below and would eat them up later. She is said to have done the same with Hanuman. But Hanuman, on entering her mouth, grew bigger; he then burst open her body and came out.

There is a prevalent belief in some parts of Russia, America and in India that “in case the body of a drowned person cannot be otherwise found, if a garment of his be thrown into the water it will float until directly over the spot, and then sink.” A Pittsburg paper described the finding of the body of a young boy who had drowned, using this method. One of the boy’s shirts was thrown into the river where he had gone down, and, it floated on the surface for a time, and finally settled to the bottom at a certain place, which proved to be the resting-place of the body, and which was then drawn out. (*Isis*, II, 611)

A Black Magician could bring about harm to the person by means of his picture or figure. This is because the photograph retains the magnetism of the person. While describing Salem witchcraft, H.P.B. mentions the case of a group of five girls, being trained for mediumship, who reported of having suffered all kinds of physical torture. One of the girls confessed that she had confederated with the Devil who commanded her to afflict the other girls by pricking pins in the puppets or images of rags, wax, wood and other materials, made in their likeness. The exact time that the images were pricked with pins, the girls reported suffering physical tortures, such as being pinched, stuck with pins or being bruised (*Isis*, I, 361). There seems to be an allusion to such magnetic link between the person and his picture or photograph, in the strange happening in Oscar Wilde’s, “The Picture of Dorian Gray.” Obsessed with preserving his youth, beauty, and immortality, Gray sells his soul so that his portrait can age instead of him. The wish comes true. Over the course of the next eighteen years, Dorian commits every sort of sin. All the while,

he keeps his picture locked in a high room in his London house. But as his life goes on, he slowly realizes the emptiness and evil to which he has succumbed. When he returns to his house in London, and confronts the horrific painting, he finds that his portrait has taken on the ugliness of his own diabolical actions. When he tries to stab his picture in the heart, he feels the knife pierce his own heart and he dies. Now, his face and body quickly transform to reflect the hideous sins he committed, but his painting returns to the pristine state of eighteen years ago.

There is an aura around so-called inanimate objects, too. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge tries to explain the probable connection between our thinking of a particular person and receiving a letter from him on the same day. He observes that in case of some people their “forerunner,” *i.e.*, their fleeting image, arrives at the house or a place they are going to visit, a few days in advance, as if to give warning of the approaching person. The same holds true with letters. The forerunner of the letter is the aura of the letter impressed with the characteristics of the writer, and given a definite impulse and direction through very intense and definite thoughts and ideas of the writer towards the person to whom the letter was written. Certain objects, such as letters, have spheres or aura of their own, which are extensible, and travel on ahead. They impinge on the sensorium of the person to whom the letter was written and produce an impression, image or thought of the writer, because that aura is permeated with the image of the writer. “In some sensitive persons a partial knowledge of the contents of coming letter is gained, though in most cases only in the vaguest manner. I think we have cumulative proof of this in telepathy and mind-reading,” writes Mr. Judge. He observes that such a forerunner reached him one day in advance, once when a letter was to come from five-hundred-mile distance and second time from one thousand miles.

(*Concluded*)

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

## FLOWERS—II

3. *Knowing that this body is like froth, knowing that its nature is that of a mirage and breaking the flowery shafts of Mara, the disciple passes untouched by death. (46)*

4. *Death bears off the man whose mind is intent on plucking the flowers of sense, as a flood sweeps away a sleeping hamlet. (47)*

5. *Death overpowers the man who is gathering the flowers of sense, even before he is satiated in his pleasure. (48)*

MAN is an immortal entity in a mortal body. Included in the term “body” are all those things, which form our personality—name, form, appearance, senses, qualifications, likes and dislikes, tendencies and all our ideas. They undergo change from time to time and are left behind at the threshold of death. Unfortunately, this fact is not appreciated until we approach old age and death. It is then that we realize, to some extent, the evanescent nature of our body. Until then, we run after sense delights as the thirsty man runs after a mirage in the desert. This drama continues from cradle to the grave. Such is the life of man of the world. Man is lost in gathering flowers of sense, which knows no satiation and is carried off by death, like the flood that sweeps away a sleeping hamlet.

He is blinded by the flowery shafts of *Mara*—the tempter, who takes him away from the true purpose of life. *Mara* is also called the god of temptation, the seducer who tried to turn even Buddha away from the PATH. *Mara* tried various techniques to lead Buddha away from attaining enlightenment. *Mara* attacked Buddha with terrible demon hosts, with misshapen figures, which represent anger, aversion, dislike, etc. When Buddha remained unaffected, *Mara* sent his three beautiful daughters, whose names were Lust, Passion and Delight. They represent various aspects of craving and desire. However, they, too, failed to tempt Buddha. “*Mara* himself represents

primordial ignorance, or unawareness, on account of which we take birth again and again,” explains Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher. *Mara* is called the “Destroyer” and “Death” of the soul. One of his names is *Kamadeva*, the god of love, who uses flowery shafts to overcome his victim. They are directed toward our senses. It stands for evil desires, lust and clinging to existence. *Kama* is generally identified with *Mara*. In reality, *Kama* is pre-eminently the divine desire of creating happiness and love, and it is only later as the humankind began to be dogmatic and materialistic by anthropomorphism that *Kama* became the person that gratifies desires on animal plane. The allegory about Siva, the “great *Yogin*” reducing *Kama* to ashes by the fire from his “Third Eye,” for inspiring him with thoughts of his wife, while he was lost in meditation is very suggestive. It is said that he thereby reduced *Kama* to his primeval Spiritual form. *Mara* deludes the man, by making him feel that if he satisfied his desire, it would disappear. This is folly. It is a canker (worm) sitting in the heart of the blossom, which gradually eats up the heart and grows fatter and stronger.

6. *The bee gathers honey without injuring the scent or the colour of the flower. So should a silent one (Muni) live his life. (49)*

How should we live our life? We must live our life like a bee. A bee symbolizes harmlessness and respect for life. It also symbolizes the fact of interdependence, a feeling of gratitude for that which makes life sweet, fragrant and beautiful. A *Muni* is one who practices silence or *maunam*. A wise one is called a *Muni*. In the Second Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna describes a *Muni* thus:

A man is said to be confirmed in spiritual knowledge when he forsaketh every desire which entereth into his heart, and of himself is happy and content in the Self through the Self. His mind is undisturbed in adversity; he is happy and contented in prosperity, and he is a stranger to anxiety, fear, and anger. Such a man is called a *Muni*.

“Give freely and receive, but take from none by greed, or force or fraud, what is his own,” says *Light of Asia*. A wise one accepts what is offered. So should we. We are all the time putting to use other forms of life for our own benefit. When we use lower forms of life, there has to be a feeling of gratitude and reverence. Life elementals in lower forms, those which belong to elemental, mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, look upon us for their progress and evolution. We may extract from them what is useful, but that has to be done with sensitivity and with utmost consideration for their well-being. Our thoughts and attitude create impressions, which either accelerate or hinder their progress. A *Muni* is harmless. He has no fear of men, and men are not afraid of him. Such is the atmosphere about them that even wild animals become gentle in his presence. It represents cultivation of right kind of relationship with other men and with other kingdoms of nature. The bee extracts honey from the flower but in its turn it helps pollination, by carrying pollen grains from one flower to another, which helps the plant to bear fruits. So it is that while we have to use other forms of life, we should impart to them higher impulses for their betterment and progress.

7. *Not the unworthy actions of others, nor their sins of omission and commission, but his own acts of omission and commission should one regard. (50)*

This verse contains a very practical advice for those who want to live a spiritual life. No sooner one starts practising a few virtues than there arises a feeling of superiority. One tends to become intolerant of vices of another and there is a general tendency to criticize others for their shortcomings. A disciple ought not to do that. “Judge not, lest ye be judged,” said Jesus. Mr. Judge writes: “We are all human, and thus weak and sinful. If, in one respect, we are better than others, then, in some other way, they are better than we are...everyone should never think but the very best, no matter what the evidences are. Why, if the Masters were to judge us exactly

as They must know we are, then good-bye at once! We would all be sent packing. But Masters deal kindly with us in the face of greater knowledge of our faults and evil thoughts from which none are yet exempt.” Moreover, “Every time we think that someone else has done wrong we should ask ourselves two questions: (1) Am I the judge in this matter who is entitled to try this person? (2) Am I any better in my way? Do I, or do I not offend in some other way just as much as they do in this? This will settle the matter, I think.” Mr. Judge gives us an occult explanation of how criticism leads to development of the very faults we criticize in others. “Every time you harshly and unmercifully criticize the faults of another, you produce an attraction to yourself of certain quantities of elementals from that person. They fasten themselves upon you and endeavour to find in you a similar state or spot or fault that they have left in the other person. It is as if they left him to serve you at higher wages, so to say.” The best course is to be vigilant about our own faults and try to eradicate them rather than indulge in criticism outside our jurisdiction. Even when it is our duty to judge, H.P.B.’s advice to her students is: “Pity and forbearance, charity and long-suffering, ought to be always there to prompt us to excuse our sinning brethren, and to pass the gentlest sentence possible upon those who err. A Theosophist ought never to forget what is due to the shortcomings and infirmities of human nature.”

8. *Like a flower full of colour but without fragrance are the fair words which bear no fruit in action. (51)*

9. *But like a beautiful flower full of colour and fragrance are the fair words whose fruits are deeds. (52)*

Colour and fragrance are the very essence of flowers. Flowers, full of colour but without fragrance have something vital missing in them. They, as it were, deceive man by their beautiful appearance. So do people who speak fair words but practice them not. Cant or hypocrisy is considered to be one of the cardinal sins.

*(To be concluded)*



## IMPORTANT NOTICE

We apologize for the confusion caused due to sudden change in numbering of the Volume and issue numbers of THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT. Our magazine was originally registered (with the Registrar of Newspapers for India) in Karnataka, as it was then printed in Bangalore. Later it was published and printed in Mumbai and hence it was required to be registered at Mumbai. The procedure of obtaining a fresh Registration Number required our magazine to be treated as fresh publication. Being a legal requirement, we had no choice but to introduce the change with immediate effect. Subsequently, for technical statutory reason we were required to treat May 2009 issue as Volume 1, issue 1, and number the subsequent issues accordingly. Hence Volume 1 will cover the period from May 2009 to April 2010 and subsequent volumes will be counted from May to April (next year).

However, for the purpose of subscription we have decided to adhere to the old pattern, *i.e.*, reckoning a volume from November to October (next year).

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## HEALTH AND DISEASE IN HOMOEOPATHY

### III

AS pathology advances, the constitutional symptoms progressively regress. The scope of homoeopathic application gets more and more limited in proportion to the pathological progression, till the point of irreversibility is reached. Then the case becomes incurable, and homoeopathy has no scope for cure; yet it can palliate in the most gentle manner, so as to enable the patient to slide painlessly and peacefully towards the final dissolution, without in any way affecting the disease-process which goes on relentlessly. Curability or incurability of the case has to be previously assessed by the clinician. This is determined by the stage of the vital derangement at which the patient seeks the physician's aid. Cases which are in the earliest beginnings of disease and before pathology supervenes are ideal for homoeopathic application and cure. With the advent of organic changes, cure will depend on the site and nature of pathology as well as the degree of constitutional symptoms present in the case-record.

The successful management of the sick demands an unhampered evolution of the symptoms. Distortion of this process mostly spells failure. If we twist Nature's language out of its original meaning by our ineptitude, disaster must follow; it is far better to do nothing than to do the wrong thing, especially through being in too great a hurry or not taking enough time for reflection. During the process of recovery, also, symptoms flow from within outwards. A curative response is usually accompanied by a symptomatic shift from vital to less vital organs, and in the reverse order of their appearance. The opposite amounts to repression of the patient's illness rather than cure. Disease is a healing process; it is not wise to hinder it. A disease is no more than a vigorous effort of Nature to throw off the morbid matter and thus give the patient a chance to recover. To suppress symptoms by the violent methods of modern drugs is to hinder the free natural expression of the Vital Force and to push

disease back into the deeper layers instead of allowing it to flow out towards the periphery.

The repercussions of the Vital Dynamis are violent in proportion to its repression. Curing is a mild and gentle process, devoid of suppressive measures. The finer energies of the human economy cannot be manhandled in such a crude way with safety. It reminds one forcibly of blacksmiths attempting to repair watches, and is a relic of the positive, dead-end, soul-destroying materialism of the past century, dying so hard in this; but its break-up is inevitable. (Boger in *Studies in the Philosophy of Healing*)

The removal by surgery of the residual products of pathology or end-organs, after constitutional therapy has done all it can, is, however, consistent with logic and common sense.

The concept of cure in homoeopathy is wide and comprehensive; it is not simply the removal of the most troublesome symptom or the outstanding pathological formation.

The highest ideal of cure is rapid, gentle and permanent restoration of the health, or removal and annihilation of the disease in its whole extent, in the shortest, most reliable, and most harmless way, on easily comprehensible principles ....The totality of the symptoms must be the principal, indeed the only, thing the physician has to take note of in every case of disease and to *remove* by means of his art, in order that it shall be cured and transformed into health. (*Organon of Medicine*, Aphorisms 2, 7)

If the earliest evidences of disease are disorderly vital action, its finality must be an intensification of the same movement, partaking of the same nature, never being transformed into something else. Obviously cure depends upon bringing this movement gently and safely, almost synchronously, back to normal again. (Boger in *Studies in the Philosophy of Healing*)

Cure means restoration of the abnormal susceptibility of the

patient, which has been altered in disease; restoration of harmony, balance, equilibrium within man, and between man and his environment. It means reversal of symptoms to the “no-symptom” state. It is brought about by the stimulation of the vital reaction of the human body by the similar remedy, which is aimed at the host, the soil, and not at the environment, the germs. Improvement of the environmental conditions which precipitate illness is in order; so also the eradication of the causative factors where they exist. In Aphorism 3 of the *Organon*, Hahnemann writes of the “removal of obstacles to recovery, mechanical or otherwise, in each case, so that restoration to health may be permanent.” Homoeopathic therapeutics aims at stimulating the natural defences of the body; it treats individuals with diseases, not merely diseases. The mechanics of cure is the neutralization of the deranged Vital Force by the vital force of the similar remedy, so as to permit the healthy, normal Vital Force to reassert itself, thus restoring health. “The body has its own immunizing power, if left alone” (Crosbie in *The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 297). Any rational therapeutics should aim at strengthening this natural immunity mechanism of the body, not interfering with it. Any measures which depress or suppress the normal susceptibility of the individual simultaneously diminish the natural resistance, and render him vulnerable to further attacks. Such is the case with modern drugs—antibiotics, corticosteroids, sedatives, hypnotics, tranquillizers, etc.

Thus, it is the natural vital reaction to a similar stimulus that heals, not the physician and not the remedy. Healing is spontaneous to all living organisms, and man needs the intelligent aid of the physician in helping Nature’s processes, especially in chronic diseases generated by deep miasmatic influences. Here, Nature unaided fails. Acute illnesses, however, tend to recover spontaneously. They end in either recovery or death. The overwhelmed Vital Force in acute diseases also needs the similar force of greater intensity for rectification. It is Nature at whose feet we should bow and learn in all humility. “Nature, not man, is the true physician. Try to enable

yourself to follow Nature, and she will be your instructor,” said the great Paracelsus. “A physician should be a minister (or servant) and interpreter of Nature,” said the wise Hippocrates.

Nature does not yield her secrets for the asking, nor does she reveal them to their fulness to the grovellers who are entranced by the mirages of disintegrating matter; the very things, which lead to mental blindness and loss of idealism. The real homoeopath is inevitably a biologist and a vitalist, who recognizes that the soul of things struggles upward and not downward, except when travelling toward extinction. (Boger in *Studies in the Philosophy of Healing*)

Homoeopathy works with human vitality and not against it. Cooperation with Nature, not coercion, is the aim of homoeo-therapy. Homoeopathy, thus, is a method of understanding illness and cure, and the healing powers latent in natural substances; a method of ascertaining, understanding and evaluating the individual differences among human beings. A serious study of the psychological and spiritual make-up of the individual is imperative for those interested in the true Art of Healing. Homoeopathy conforms, above all, to Nature and her therapeutic law.

(Concluded)

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IN the light of this thriftless day of spring, my poet, sing of those who pass by and do not linger...who blossom in an hour of unreasoning delight, and fade in a moment without regret.

Do not sit down silently, to tell the beads of your past tears and smiles—do not stop to pick up the dropped petals from the flowers of overnight, do not go to seek things that evade you, to know the meaning that is not plain—leave the gaps in your life where they are, for the music to come out of their depths.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE in *Lover's Gift*

## OTHELLO

### THE TALE OF A HYPNOTISED SOLDIER

#### III

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THROUGHOUT the play he misleads his wife, and in fact makes her also his tool. He uses chance in a truly masterly way, as when he learns from Desdemona's playful reproach to Othello that Cassio had come a-wooing with him. This he carefully cements into his structure of lies. He has no hesitation about stabbing the foolish youth whose wealth he had wasted, because he “ever thus makes his fool his purse.” He says:-

For I mine own gained knowledge should profane,  
If I would time expend with such a snipe  
But for my sport and profit.

This sentence expresses Iago's conscience, his deepest purpose in life—everything is for his own sport and profit. As for women, there is nothing to respect in any of them. Love is nothing but lust, and reputation an idle bubble. Religion, if he ever thought of the subject, would be only a “thing of nothing.” His mind is as limited and one-sided—though at the opposite pole in keenness—as an imbecile's mind is one-sided. He is what is sometimes called a moral idiot.

To theosophists Iago may bring a peculiarly impressive lesson, for he is an example of the soulless being. Said H. P. Blavatsky: “We elbow soulless men and women at every step in life.” Such a being is one in whom the lower mind is so gorged with sin and selfishness that it can neither assimilate instruction from its Higher Manas nor produce any thought or action worthy to be assimilated by that Higher Mind. In this way, the lower portion of Manas, which could have been uplifted, is instead thoroughly animalized and lost

by being separated from the Higher. True, the intellect, working in the lower fields and sharpened for its own self-interest, may play the part of Beneficence; but it is in fact bloody with its immolated victims. This is the theosophical doctrine of soulless beings still embodied in earth-life, and becoming the dwelling-places of the worst Black Magicians. Only this doctrine can really explain Iago.

Othello in the last part of the play is a wounded giant, led into snare after snare, which Iago has purposefully created, yet always trusting that same “honest” Iago to guide him through the tangles. The word “honest” is applied many times to Iago, who certainly used his power of suggestion to create such faith in him. The word thus comes to be an index of the degree of hypnosis effected. Othello has become incapable of using his own judgment and good sense—they are silent and inert under the magnetic fire of Iago’s thoughts and plans and eyes. Iago’s eyes are vibrant with power; Othello’s, though rolling with fury, are inwardly dulled and impotent, without thought. Iago’s mind is all alert and sharp. The mind of Othello is by contrast almost asleep, obeying and acting out with hypnotic passiveness the hints and dictations of Iago. H. P. Blavatsky remarked:

The eye—the chief agent of the Will of the active operator [the subduing agent], but a slave and traitor when this Will is dormant...produces the required unison between [the two personal wills]....unless entirely free from any selfish motive, a suggestion *by thought* is an act of *black magic* still more pregnant with evil consequences than a *spoken* suggestion. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism* pp. 129, 131)

Pitiable indeed is it to watch Othello’s downfall, to compare him now with what he was as the high-minded chivalrous gentleman answering the Duke’s questions and being acquitted concerning the honourableness of his marriage; as the confiding grateful husband; as the one who gained even from Iago the praise of having “a constant, loving, noble nature.”

Scrutiny into his past reveals him as trusted servitor of the city of Venice visiting among the aristocracy, yet as a Moor, however cultivated, remaining socially an alien. He has held his own in the intrigues of the “tented field,” but says he is “little blest with the soft phrase of peace.” As a warrior, he has been either superior, as officer in command; or inferior, as a lower officer. When in command, he could not be a comrade with anybody. Hence he has lacked social contact with his equals, and he is inexperienced in reading others’ minds except as inferior or superior. In his relations with Desdemona, if comradery with her occurred to him, his instincts would be against it. He is her ardent lover, and she is his. But when that love-relationship is disturbed, neither of them knows how to steady and save it. Thus social ignorance renders him helpless against the wiles of such a super-subtle intriguer as Iago.

Besides, military discipline sometimes leads a man to trust a brother officer who is bound to him and has been loyal (as Iago has in the past) almost as much as he trusts his own senses. Also, Othello is not a thinker, he analyzes nothing; but he feels so intensely that his sufferings cause him to fall down in a faint. The cold poison that Iago pours into his mind acts like ice-water in a heated boiler—while the quick manipulator is interested only in catching the energy from the explosion to turn the engines of his own advancement. In the very extremes of his torture Othello shows glimpses of his better self—he would forget about the handkerchief; Iago carefully and three times recalls it to him. He remembers Desdemona’s gentleness, her fine needlework, her beautiful singing, “her high and plenteous wit and invention.” Iago answers merely, “Nay, that’s not your way. She’s the worse for all this.”

In the scene of the actual murder, when bending over his sleeping wife before “putting out the light,”—at that last critical moment he is almost shaken out of his purpose by an inner perception, received from his Higher Self, of her child-like innocence. But he fears her deceptiveness, and decides against the inner monition—so purblind is he through the hypnotic influence, so fixed in his conviction of



the wife's fault, of Iago's being "honest." After she has wakened, he is angered by her protests of innocence, by her tears of helpless pity for herself, for him, for Cassio, and the whole situation; and at last he fears he may turn into murder the death he has been justifying to himself as a "sacrifice, lest she pollute other men." Yet even then an observer, facing in full the terrible moral vanquishment, and because of it, feels the profoundest pity for this man so sinning and so sinned against.

In the powerful closing scene, where Justice balances her scales, where the intrigues are uncovered, where the hypnotizer and his victim are forced to see what they have been and done, then Othello is finally roused out of his trance of blindness, then he is puzzled and indeed "wrought in the extreme" by the why of it all. Too great of soul to make excuses, he tries by the human codes to even things by wounding if not killing his opposer, and then to punish his own deeds by stabbing himself. Meanwhile, there in bonds, stands the arch deceiver, the soulless man, facing the devastation he has caused. For this he cares little; but he is also facing and in grim silence his own self-wrought inner destruction. He is recognizing those who have been "his companions by affinity of evil,"—"companions, alas! no longer; *Masters* now, inhuman, pitiless...the fiends that have all along incited him to laugh at the miseries of his fellow man, and trample under his feet every kindly impulse, every tender sympathy, now make the measureless hells within his own soul resound with their laughter at *him*, the poor deluded fool whose selfish pride and ambition have stifled and at last obliterated his humanity." (W. Q. Judge, "Considerations on Magic," *The Path*, March 1887)

Sex evils, war debasements, and hypnotism were the chief causes of tragedy in Othello's and Iago's lives. Perhaps a few observers of the play, when new and since, have been roused by it to a better perception of the generous true relations of men and women. Also, it may be that the domestic peculiarities of warrior types indicated in it have quickened resistance to the demoralizing

effects of war. As for hypnotism, supposedly rather new, it is at present a popular subject of investigation and a sanctioned mode of practice. But far too little attention is paid to the motives behind it. For by the learned it is handled with their prevalent cool disregard of any moral quality, and by the money seekers it is commercialized as an added source of income.

But the mills of the gods grind on, even if slowly. Perhaps this old play, with its still fresh pictures of life, may yet stir in a few thinkers more seriousness about the intentional selfish manipulation of men's minds and show the need of preventing indiscriminate use of hypnotic methods. Some may even realize the untold possibilities in themselves of wrongly influencing and being influenced; and will perceive that such selfish power as Iago exerted is now called "personality" and "applied psychology." Seeing this, they will reject it as the destructive vicious thing it is, and will do their duty in making this knowledge more general. All men are susceptible to influence. Life is sustained in part by "influences." What men need is to distinguish, for themselves and others, between the life-giving and the death-bringing. If there is aroused some such understanding of the devastating havoc depicted in *Othello*, the Adepts' purpose has not failed.

(Concluded)

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I LEARNT that man does not live by care for himself, but by love for others. I know that God does not desire men to live apart from each other, and therefore has not revealed to them what is needful for each of them to live by himself. He wishes them to live together united, and therefore has revealed to them that they are needful to each other's happiness.

—LEO TOLSTOY in *What Men Live By*



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

**Question:** Can one intellectually comprehend the inner state of a person with addiction, such as in the case of an alcoholic, shopaholic, etc.?

**Answer:** An alcoholic is one who is addicted to alcohol, while a shopaholic is addicted to shopping. Every time a person drinks alcohol he has a choice or option. When one repeatedly chooses to use alcohol it becomes an addiction. People resort to alcohol to escape from boredom or slight depression, or in trying to resolve a stressful, helpless or fearful situation. A shopaholic is a compulsive shopper who suffers from uncontrolled overspending. Research has shown that compulsive buying is linked to materialism, reduced self-esteem, depression, anxiety and stress. We may term addiction to shopping a psychological disorder, and it shows lack of self-control. Drinking and overspending are “coping mechanisms.” Many people drink and all of us have to do shopping. Many people view shopping as a hobby. Some of them are on a shopping-spree and shop for the entire weekend, spending money they do not have, and often regret their purchases the next day. They are not necessarily shopaholic. What distinguishes an alcoholic or shopaholic is his *excessive indulgence*. Sometimes we are asked to take a quiz to find out if we are shopaholic, alcoholic, workaholic or suffering from any such addiction as chain-smoking, etc. On taking the quiz, some of us may discover that one is on the *borderline* of being an alcoholic or a shopaholic or some other addiction. Though we might not suffer from any of these addictions, we all carry *germs* of these addictions. Being part of the race we carry germs of both good and bad qualities

that we might find in the human race. If there is disloyalty, if there is uncharitableness, if there is harshness and unbrotherliness in the race, they exist also in us if only in the germ. Those germs require only the proper personal conditions to make them sprout. Also, it is said that if we do not display these vices or addictions in this life, it is no guarantee that we may not have suffered from them in the past or will not do so in the future. In a small experiment, columnist Vinita Nangia, asked lots of colleagues and friends if they had ever been attracted to same sex people or fantasized about them. To her surprise, almost all of them admitted to gay fantasies and like indulgence (*Sunday Times of India*, July 12, 2009). Hence, we are told not to “turn away in horror,” but exercise sympathy, stretching out a helping hand toward the brother whose boots have become too heavy with mud.

“I am a human being, so nothing human is alien to me,” wrote Terence, the Roman comic dramatist. We could use imaginative sympathy to understand the inner state of the addict. First, we must try to understand what drives them to addiction and then to know how and why it is difficult for them to resist it. What is needed is sensitivity and empathy. Empathy is being in tune with another so as to be able to help that person resolve his problem. It is getting into another’s shoes, and we can do that when we do not wear our own shoes too tightly. It is not enough to step into another’s shoes and then immediately step out, but wear his shoes long enough to know where the shoe pinches. An empathizer is a good listener and is ready to love unconditionally. Good literature helps to develop imaginative sympathy, and good works on psychoanalysis or by those who have tried to help these addicts help us understand the inner state of such persons.

Besides being attuned to the person with addiction, we are helped to understand their state through analogies and metaphors. In addiction there is helpless dependency and also an attempt to escape from dreadful or stressful situation. We all have germs of addiction in us. Some may be addicted to food, some to television, as others

may be addicted to playing certain game, and so on. Those who were addicted to sweets and later suffered from diabetes could easily imagine the condition of those addicted to alcohol or overspending, as also the struggle involved in overcoming that addiction.

In some other context, Mr. Crosbie says: “Each student or disciple carries with him some particular expression of racial defects, which on the surface appear as points of dislike to others, and yet which have similar roots in each student, so much alike that one could not tell them apart.” In other words, we all have germs of all the weaknesses as well as strong points that may be found in our family or race to which we belong. Only their expressions differ.

It is true that by identifying ourselves with the person we come to know something of the inner state of that person, but to completely experience how it feels when one is drunk or craves to spend and buy things, etc., one has to work through the physiology of that person. There is the story of a disciple who felt disgusted when he saw a drunken man. The Guru of this disciple made him work through the brain of a drunken person, *i.e.*, the disciple had to work through the physiology of that man with drunkenness problem. This is possible through *parakayapravesh*—the power of temporarily entering the body of another. The disciple in the story was being tested to see if he could maintain stability under those conditions.

**Question:** What is the meaning of “*Satchitananda*”?

**Answer:** The expression, *Satchidananda* is used in Yoga and other schools of Indian philosophy to describe the nature of Brahman, as experienced by a fully liberated yogi. *Sat* means Beness, also described as *Sada-sthayi* or an ever-present and unchanging Reality or Truth. *Chit* is Mind or Consciousness and *Ananda* is bliss. One of the goals of the yogi is to experience the natural state of the mind, *Satchidananda*, holding back the *vruttis* or modifications of the thinking principle. *Sat* or Beness represents One Reality or *Parabrahm*. *Parabrahm* is One Consciousness, which as differentiated in man, is his Higher Self or *Atman*. In the Vedanta

system man is shown as *duality* comprising two modes of existence—*Atma-dasha* and *Jiva-dasha*. There is normal, natural or true mode of his being, called SVA-RUPA or OWN-FORM. It is *atma-dasha* or SPIRIT-CONDITION. Man is in this SPIRIT-CONDITION in *Turya* State, a state of high spiritual consciousness, and is a state beyond Dreamless Sleep State, or that of highest *Samadhi*. In this state the individualized spirit lives the ecstatic life, where it possesses true knowledge and the universal, eternal, ever-present intuition.

*Atman* is inseparable from *Paramatman*, like sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight. IT is the eternal spectator, the witness of all states of consciousness. As the sun enters the water, *Atman* enters the body, *i.e.*, only showers Its radiance on the inner man. *Chit* is the ultimate source of our consciousness and in man it is Mind, from which arises the “I am I” consciousness. When we are able to transcend the self-identifying attachment to not only family and loved ones, but also to physical form, ideas, desires, emotions, etc., we succeed in merging the personal “I” into individual “I.” But even when we cease to identify ourselves with the personality, union with the divine is not possible. It is only when the universe grows “I,” and there is the realization that “I am verily the Brahman” and when the higher spiritual consciousness of the Initiate is entirely absorbed into One Essence, such that he becomes the ALL, then there arises Bliss or unconditioned happiness or *sahaj-ananda*. This bliss is the very nature of Higher Self. In *The Dream of Ravan*, we find the expression, *Sat-Chit-Ananda-ghana*. Just as we speak of volume in respect of *ghana* or solid, which is obtained by multiplying its three aspects, length, breadth and height, so also, One Reality or the state of True Being (SPIRIT-CONDITION) is the compacted Total Reality (SAT), Total Awareness (CHIT) and Total Bliss (ANANDA).

The other (opposite or reversed) mode of being is called *Jiva-dasha* or LIFE-CONDITION, comprising a subtle inner body or soul, a gross outward body of matter, and a Causal body, which is described as a boundary of oblivion between the SPIRIT-CONDITION and LIFE-CONDITION. It is ignorance of real nature of things or of True Being

which precipitates man from the SPIRIT-CONDITION into the LIFE-CONDITION. *Jiva-dasha* and *Atma-dasha* are depicted as four states of consciousness or four spheres of existence, which could be visualized as four concentric spheres. The innermost sphere depicts the *Turya* state and the Ego arising from this state enters the sphere of transition, which is the boundary of oblivion or dreamless sleep state, where it exists in Causal body, in a state of total unconsciousness. When Ego crosses this boundary it enters the dream-state, and exists in subtle inner body and comes under the influence of illusion. It lives and believes in the universe of light and shadow, and is identified with astral body and the lower mind. In the outermost sphere, the Ego enters waking state and begins to identify itself with the body with its five senses or organs of perception and five organs of action. (*The Dream of Ravan*, pp. 210-18)

As the individual spirit or Ego moves from *Turya* to waking state, the True Being is more and more forgotten and obscured through false identification. The three bodies in which the Ego is clothed in the three states (Waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep) are all known, witnessed and watched by the Spirit or one consciousness, which stands behind and apart from them. “The one consciousness pierces up and down through all the states or planes of Being and serves to uphold the memory—whether complete or incomplete—of each state’s experiences.” All the states of consciousness such as waking consciousness, dreaming consciousness are not different but are *one consciousness*. When mind (*Chit* or Consciousness) recognizes its oneness with SAT (one consciousness), there arises bliss or *Ananda*. When *Chit* or individual consciousness rebecomes of the nature of *Sat* or unconditioned consciousness, it experiences the unconditioned joy or *Ananda*. “The appearing together in full harmony of Sat and Consciousness (*Chit*) is Bliss or *Ananda*. Hence that harmony is called *Satchitananda*.” (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 98-100)

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Dr. Walter Semkiw, the author of two books, *Born Again* and *Origin of the Soul*, propounds the theory of reincarnation, and says it has helped him overcome the fear of death and instilled belief in karma. Initially, a non-believer in Karma and Reincarnation, but as he collected evidence he has come to the conclusion that reincarnation is real. He observes that souls retain facial features, personality, talents and traumas through lifetimes. Dr. Semkiw worked with a trance-medium, Kevin Ryerson, who “channels” a soul-spirit called Ahtun Re, who makes accurate reincarnation matches. Was Dr. Semkiw, a reincarnation of John Adams? In a broad daylight in Hawaii, a booming “voice” told him to study the life of John Adams, the second President of the United States. On studying the same, Dr. Semkiw found that in some of his pictures, he looked like Adams, and that many people that figured in Adams’ life seemed to have reincarnated in his life. Likewise, going by the similarity between life and work of Mahatma Gandhi and Tennessee born lawyer, Van Jones (1968), it is suggested the latter might be reincarnation of Gandhi. During his research he found that the facial structure in proposed reincarnations was very similar. He observes that life is a school and we have to reincarnate to play out our karma till we graduate. We need not be afraid of death, but we must be careful as to how we live our lives, and not hurt people, because our karma will come back to us. His research hints at group reincarnation where we play out our relationships with our friends and family members. His theories find approval in Anne Frank case, where Anne Frank Foundation has recognized the Swedish girl, Barbo Karlen—who claims to have memories of being holocaust victim Anne Frank—to be reincarnation of Anne Frank. Dr. Semkiw observes that individuals can change religion, nationality and ethnic affiliations from one birth to another, writes Mitali Parekh. (*Mumbai Mirror*, June 16, 2009)

Reincarnation means “again in flesh.” The same Ego takes on

different bodies and personalities at every new birth. Those who believe that the *same personality* comes back again and again have erroneous concept of reincarnation. For instance, H.P.B. points out that Allen Kardec School had false teachings on reincarnation. The adherents of this school were French “Spiritists” and their teaching was that man was born not only on this earth but also on other six globes in the planetary chain. They also taught immediate rebirths and rebirth of the *same personality*, without taking into consideration the Karma of the person or *Devachan*. H.P.B. mentions that save in exceptional cases, there are never immediate rebirths. Hence to correct this wrong belief H.P.B. mentions in *Isis Unveiled* that reincarnation of the same *astral monad* was exception and not the rule. She defines “astral monad” as mind plus *Kama* principle. Generally these principles go in the formation of *kamarupic* shell but in exceptional cases, such as “idiocy, abortion and still-born babies,” which are failures of nature, because nature’s original design to produce perfect human being was frustrated, they are reborn. In other words, the *same personality* is not born again on the same planet, but only as an exception. Thus, Ego need not have same nor similar personality in subsequent reincarnation, because it is determined by the combination of *skandhas* chosen by the Ego.

Perhaps only an occultist can make “accurate reincarnation matches.” It is stated in our literature that Napoleon the First was reincarnation of Charlemagne. Likewise, Emperor Fredrick III of Germany was reincarnation of Clovis of France. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 128)

The theosophical teaching is that there is rebirth after an interval of 1000 to 1500 years, which is the average stay of the Ego in *Devachan* or Paradise or *Swarga*, before being reborn. It is true that we are not necessarily born in the same family, community or nation as in our last birth. The Ego follows the law of least resistance. The Ego may be attracted to a family because most of its predominant tendencies and character are similar to and in harmony with those of the family. Thus, following the avenue of entrance into life that

offers least resistance, the Ego is born in such a family.

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A study by Canadian psychologists, which was published in the journal *Psychological Sciences*, shows that self-help mantras could leave you more unhappy instead of raising your self-esteem. It cites popular self-help magazine that advises its readers to: “Try chanting: I am powerful, I am strong and nothing in this world can stop me.” The study points out that this practice does not work for everyone. In the study, conducted by psychologists Joanne Wood and John Lee of the University of Waterloo and Elaine Perunovic of the University of New Brunswick, people with low and high esteem were asked to repeat the phrase: “I am a lovable person.” It was found that individuals with low self-esteem felt worse after repeating the positive self-statements because they might be thinking, “Well, I am not always lovable,” or “I am not lovable in this way,” and these contradictory thoughts might overwhelm the positive thoughts. “It is frustrating to people when they try it and it does not work for them,” said Wood, and urged self-help books, magazines and television shows to stop sending a message that just chanting a positive mantra will raise self-esteem. In a follow-up study it was found that paradoxically, participants with low self-esteem fared better when they were allowed to have negative thoughts, rather than when focussing on affirmative thoughts. (*Sunday Times of India*, July 5, 2009, courtesy AFP)

We may compare the technique of positive self-statements with the method of “affirmations and denials,” used in Christian Science for curing diseases. The healing message to be repeated by the person suffering from disease is: “There is no sickness. I deny that there ever was any sickness. I do not believe in poverty; I know there is no poverty; there never was any poverty; there never will be any poverty. I do not believe in accidents, I know there never were any accidents and there never shall be any,” and so on. Mr. Judge points



out that there is fallacy in these messages of optimism, which constantly ignore relativity of things in manifestation, in their desire to have everything right and *just as they want it*. Sorrow, poverty, disease, and all such negatives are a fact and we cannot wish them away. “The high tone of thought enjoined by some schools of healers has the effect of making the cause of trouble sink deeper in hiding, and probably adds to the concentration. But any thought would do as well, provided concentration is persisted in, for it is the concentration that makes the effect, and not the philosophy. The system of affirming and denying makes concentration easier,” writes Mr. Judge. (*W. Q. J. Series No. 22*, p. 19)

Mere repetition of positive statements might work as self-hypnosis. We should replace negative thoughts of envy by its opposite thoughts of sympathetic joy. One cannot wish away the feeling of low self-esteem. It would be better to undertake self-examination and become aware of one’s *strong points* as well as one’s *weak points*, and resolve to overcome one’s weak points and emphasize strong points, skills, qualities, etc. To bring about positive outcome one not only needs to *think* positive, but also *act* with positive attitude. Moreover, to achieve the desired result, we need to form a clear mental picture of what we want, and dwell on it.

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Kusa grass (*Poa Cynosuroides*) is the grass that is considered to possess occult properties. Kusa grass has long leaves, which grow in pairs and have sharp edges. Hence, Kusa signifies sharpness or acuteness, and is the root for the Sanskrit word for “expert,” *i.e.*, *Kusala*. It symbolizes discernment. When it becomes dry, it is known as *darbha*. It is considered to be a good conductor of phonetic vibrations, so that while performing rituals, the priest holds a bunch of grass in his hand with the tip down pointing to the jar of water below, so that vibrations of the chanted mantras carried by the grass penetrate into the jar and make the water pure and holy. Water is

sprinkled with the tip of Kusa grass where ritual is to be performed, to clean the place. *Darbha* is considered to possess the magnetic quality and an occult power to bring down anything from anywhere and hence is used to get the *pitris* down to receive *Shraddha* offerings. A seat of Kusa grass covered with skin or cloth is the proper seat for meditation. In a fire ritual like *Agni Santana*, *Darbhas* are placed on all the four sides of the *Agni Kundam* (vessel in which fire is lit). During eclipse, *darbha* is used to cover food articles to protect them from the harmful ultraviolet radiation. Since it possesses special properties and is used in holy functions, it is plucked only on the day next to full moon, with chanting of a special *mantra*. The grass grows in brackish salty water near river estuaries. There are various legends associated with kusa grass. According to one legend kusa grass was formed, when the hairs on Kurma (the Cosmic tortoise incarnation of Vishnu) got loosened during the churning of the ocean and were washed away to the shores to become kusa grass, writes G. H. Ananthanarayanan. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, November 15, 2008)

Plants have magical and mystical properties and there are secrets of the herbs of dreams and enchantments, known to every true practitioner of magic, though unknown to our modern botanists. In *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. mentions the adepts, Elijah and Apollonius who wrapped their heads entirely in a woollen mantle to isolate themselves from the disturbing influences of the outer world. This could be because wool is non-conductor of electricity, says H.P.B. (p. xxxvii). Likewise, the Sibyl of Cumae, who made prophecies for Rome, wore on her head a wreath of verbena. “Wild verbena excites and intensifies seership, as to the action of the cultivated plant it is wholly a mystery. Let any woman, who can isolate herself, place upon her head a wreath of wild verbena when writing or doing any other mental work, and she will find herself safe from all bad influences and her faculties will reach their maximum of activity.” (*The Theosophist*, February 1884)

Another plant with mystical properties is soma, and the drink



prepared from it, called “Soma-drink,” possesses the faculty of freeing the astral form from the bonds of matter, writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, II, 117). While explaining *Manticism*, H.P.B. writes that when the initiate drinks (albeit sparingly) of this sacred soma-juice, the Brahma or rather his “spirit,” personified by the god Soma, enters and takes possession of him. Hence, ecstatic vision, clairvoyance and the gift of prophecy (*Isis*, p. xxxv). One of the names of the moon in Sanskrit is Soma, which is also the name of the mystic drinks of the Brahmins. Soma is the mystery god and presides over the mystic and occult nature of man and the universe. A “soma-drinker” attains the power of placing himself in direct rapport with the bright side of the moon, and there is continuous pouring out upon the earth from the bright side of the orb, a certain influence. “The ‘Soma’ plant is the *asclepias acida*, which yields a juice from which that mystic beverage, the Soma drink, is made. Alone the descendants of the *Rishis*, the *Agnihotris* (the fire-priests) of the great mysteries knew all its powers.” (*S.D.*, II, 498-99)

In the Sixth Chapter of the *Gita* a person who wants to meditate is advised to make the seat of kusa grass. Some commentators have said that this is a description of a magnetically arranged seat and that kusa grass is laid on the ground, the skin on the grass and the cloth on the skin. Probably, kusa grass retains the good magnetism generated during meditation and insulates the meditator from evil influences.

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TAKE care of your minutes! And do at least one act of service, every day. I often repeat to myself two lines: *Did I meet him on the road? Did I leave him with the load?* On the road of life leave not him you meet with the load, but be a burden-bearer. Share! Bear! To give is to live.

—SRI T. L. VASWANI