

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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UNDERSTANDING KRISHNA CELEBRATING KRISHNA JAYANTI

JANAMASHTAMI or *Krishna jayanti*, the anniversary of Shri Krishna’s birth, is celebrated on the eighth day in the dark fortnight in the lunar month of *Shravan*, which falls this year on August 28. Lord Krishna is considered an ideal teacher, and in *Krishna Divinity* was made manifest for the helping of mortals. Krishna taught by precept and example how not to belong to this world while Karma kept us still in the world. Krishna came to close *Dwapara Yuga* and to open *Kaliyuga*—the Age of Iron. We may notice that Krishna was a solar being who incarnated in the Race of Yadus or Yadavas. Krishna was born divine, *i.e.*, he began showing his divinity, at once, as a babe.

Let us begin by naming several of the aspects of Krishna—(1) Absolute Deity, (2) the One Life manifested everywhere, (3) Basis of every human soul, (4) the Guru or Teacher, (5) the symbol representing the great lodge of the Masters and Rishis on this earth, (6) the Great Sacrifice or Renouncer, who took birth as an *Avatara*, and, (7) a Living Power in our lives, *i.e.*, a power by which we can and should live.

In his Deity-Aspect, He is Transcendent and Unmanifested, or *Parabrahman*, also known as *Nirguna Brahman*, which can neither emanate nor be divided, because it is eternal and immutable. He is

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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also, Immanent and manifested, called *Saguna Brahman*, which can emanate and be divided. Both these aspects are hinted at in Shri Krishna's words, "I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself, and remain separate." (*Gita*, X)

It is through the description of his *vibhutis*—divine excellencies, and *viswarupa* or "divine form as including all forms," that we become aware of Krishna as the mysterious, invisible Life in every form, from the atom to the cosmos. "I am the Ego which is seated in the hearts of all beings" (*Gita*, X). It is very important for us to remember today that the Lord is present in the heart of every savage, sinner, saint or sage. In the Tenth and Eleventh Chapters of the *Gita*, there is a detailed and scientific classification of all the kingdoms of Nature linked in the one great Life. It is the eternally persisting something in us, which is the witness and perceiver of every passing change, but is itself unchangeable. This Self must be recognized as being within, pondered over, understood, if we are to gain any true knowledge. *Atmanastu kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati, i.e.*, everything becomes dear because the SELF shines in all, says *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

Shri Krishna is the guru, the Teacher, the Perfected man, the emancipated soul for Arjuna who is *Nara* or man, the fighter of sham and vice. A teacher or Guru could be in the physical body, but as Mr. Judge puts it, "The best and the most important teacher is one's seventh principle centred in the sixth. The more you divest yourself of the illusionary sense of personal isolation, and the more you are devoted to the service of others, the more Maya disappears and the nearer you approach to Divinity." Each one of us is Arjuna. Arjuna represents the individual who resolves upon the task of developing his better nature. He is the man in the world of sense and matter, and hence, he is either in the battle or about to begin one, and is therefore, always in the need of advice. His success or failure in the battle will depend upon how much attention he pays to the advice given by the Krishna within, who speaks and guides as the "voice of conscience."

When we study the guru-aspect of Shri Krishna we cannot fail to appreciate that Krishna is the symbol of the great White Lodge of Adepts, and recognize the existence of Living Mahatmas, called Elder Brothers in Theosophy. Theosophy affirms that the most intelligent being in the universe, man, has never been without a friend. There has been a long line of elder brothers who continually watch over the progress of humanity, preserving and imparting knowledge when the cyclic law permits it. When the mind of man was lighted up or activated, the divine instructors burnt into the imperishable centre of man's consciousness, certain divine ideas, and taught humanity arts and sciences, which remain with us as *inherent ideas*. Are these ideas lost? In one sense, as described in the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*, the mighty art was lost. But there is also an inner line of transmission, where the wisdom is transmitted in an unbroken continuity from the guru to his disciples. Hence, when the outer transmission is garbled, a great being from the inner line incarnates and restarts the chain.

Shri Krishna says in the opening verses of the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*, "I taught this exhaustless doctrine of Yoga to Vivasvat, Viwasvat communicated it to Manu, and Manu made it known unto Ikshawaku...in the course of time the mighty art was lost." Mr. Judge remarks that in the early part of new *manvantara* a being descends among men and imparts certain ideas and aspirations which reverberate through all the succeeding ages until the time of general dissolution. This "Being" represents first manifestation of divine wisdom at the beginning of evolution, and that is why said to be taught by the Supreme Spirit or Krishna. After this Being retires, he leaves spiritual succession to Manu and his son Ikshawaku, who founded the line of Solar kings. These Solar kings were men of supreme knowledge, who ruled humanity as Adept-kings.

Shri Krishna is also an *Avatar*. What is an *Avatar*? "An *Avatar* is Divine Incarnation. The descent of a god or some exalted Being, who has progressed beyond the necessity of rebirths, into the body of a simple mortal. Krishna was an *Avatar* of Vishnu" (*The*

Theosophical Glossary). Vishnu [or Narayana] represents the first or Unmanifested Logos, and Brahma, the second or manifested logos (*S.D.*, I, 381 fn.). *Avatars* are aspects of the Logos—the Word made flesh. The Logos contains within itself seven other creative rays or powers. Hence it is said:

Men will *know* then, that there never yet was a great World-reformer, whose name has passed into our generation, who (*a*) was not a direct emanation of the Logos...*i.e.*, an essential incarnation of one of “the seven,” of the “divine Spirit who is sevenfold” (*b*) who had not appeared before, during the past Cycles. (*S.D.*, II, 358)

Krishna is said to be “*Purna Avatar*,” as the potency of all the seven creative rays manifested through him. The *Avatars* or Saviours come on earth, periodically, from age to age, for the preservation of the just and establishment of righteousness, as also for the destruction of the wicked. Mr. Judge explains it thus:

Krishna comes when wickedness has reached a maximum development. The real meaning of this is that the bad Karma of the world goes on increasing with the lapse of the ages, producing at last a creature who is, so to say, the very flower of all the wickedness of the past, counting from the last preceding Avatar. He is not only wicked, but also wise, with magic power of awful scope....His [Avatar’s] power is as great as the evil one, but he has on his side what the others have not—spirit, preservative, conservative forces [the general will of nature]....The result is a victory for the good and destruction for the wicked. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 107-8)

There are other aspects of Krishna which must be understood metaphorically. For instance, metaphysically, Radha-Krishna pair, may be taken to represent, among other things, *Purusha* and *Prakriti* or Spirit and Matter, which reminds us that the Manifested Universe is pervaded by duality. Spirit without matter, or matter without spirit would only be an empty abstraction. In the article, “The Future

Occultist,” H.P.B. points out that the union of *Siva* and *Sakti* is a purely allegorical account. *Buddhi* or Spiritual Soul in man (is *Prakriti* in the Universe), represented as “female,” because it is passive vehicle of *Atman* or Spirit. In relation to the entire Universe, *Atman* is referred to as *Purusha*, active “male,” for it is the CENTRE OF ENERGY, acting through and upon its female vehicle. The union of the two produces the phenomenal creation. The pining of Radha for Krishna may perhaps be looked upon as the ardent turning of the soul of a devotee towards the divine. Explaining the correct relationship between Krishna and the Gopis, H.P.B. says that Krishna represents the Seventh Principle or Spirit, while the Gopis represent innumerable powers of that principle, manifested through its vehicle.

Shri Krishna is the Living Power, the divine energy, the cause of all actions, yet not involved or affected by any action. *Tena vina trinayam api na chalati*, *i.e.*, without It not even a blade of grass can move. Light from a projector causes projection of all the pictures on the screen, and yet it remains unaffected by various scenes of comedies or tragedies appearing on the screen. So also, the Self is the cause of all actions, and yet, it is neither affected by, nor involved in these acts. A self-realized person, or a *Jnani*, who is identified with the Self within, takes up the position of a witness or an observer. Thus, even in ordinary activities like sleeping, breathing, speaking, etc., the attitude of a sage is, “I” am doing nothing, “the qualities act in the qualities,” and the Self within is not the actor.

“*Adhiyajna* is myself in this body,” say Shri Krishna (*Gita*, VIII). The whole universe has come into existence because of sacrifice. The descent of Spirit into matter is an act of sacrifice. The *Gita* speaks of the wheel of sacrifice, which was set into motion by Krishna himself. “He who, sinfully delighting in the gratification of his passions, doth not cause this wheel thus already set in motion to continue revolving, liveth in vain” (*Gita*, III). We are able to survive due to sacrifice of many people. In return, we must also contribute our mite. Spiritual growth involves sacrificing of the lower desires, as also, the interest in the *fruits* of our actions. “All actions performed

other than as sacrifice unto God make the actor bound by action.”
(*Gita*, III)

In the process of spiritual development, help and guidance come from the inner planes of being, and to avail of it we must stop inner and outer chatter. One who aspires to live the spiritual life recognizes that the mood swings and mental afflictions are tests of our mental and moral vigour. Loneliness, depression, “blues,” feeling of dullness, and the like, are, in the ultimate analysis, indicators that we have moved away from the “source.” If we are connected with our divine nature, which is indeed, the Asylum and the Friend, we would never feel lonely. Shri Krishnas says, “I am the goal, the Comforter, the Lord, the Witness, the resting-place, the asylum and the Friend” (*Gita*, IX). The one who has complete faith and devotion in his Higher Self can never be alone. Devotion is defined as intense love of God. When this singleness of attachment is towards a personal god or a particular idol, then it degenerates into fanaticism. Let us not dwarf the concept of Krishna, and think of Him as the idol sitting in some temple, who could be prayed to and propitiated by ceremonies and offerings. Such concept is mainly believed in by those who are not ready to accept the responsibility of their own actions, and prefer to fall back upon some temporary makeshift creator. Human beings like to thrust on this creator, not only the responsibility of their sins and misdeeds, but also the possibility of their salvation. The arbitrary and cruel Creator who inflicts pain and pleasure at will, must disappear, “for he is indeed unnecessary character, and, worse still, is a mere creature of straw, who cannot even strut upon the boards without being upheld on all sides by dogmatists,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*. Let us carry in our hearts the encouraging and enlightening words of the *Gita*: “There dwelleth in the heart of every creature, O Arjuna, the Master—*Ishwara*... Take sanctuary with him alone... with all thy soul; by his grace thou shalt obtain supreme happiness, the eternal place.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE LOOM OF LIFE

“THE ROOM in the little village looked pleasant and cheery. Half a dozen girls were busy at their work on their large looms, weaving nice silk sarees, and little Lila looked around with joy and surprise. The ground was strewn with silk strands of various hues and lengths, which were quickly picked up by eager hands, matched and selected, before they were woven into beautiful patterns. On this quiet scene of village life Lila looked with calm delight for some time, when suddenly her eyes fell on a huddled figure in a remote corner where a little girl with flushed face and hurried hands was busy at her work. She looked worried and distressed and Lila drew her mother there, eager to know what ailed that sad figure on the ground.

The mother inquired in a gentle voice, “Can I help you in any way?”

“No, sister,” was the quiet answer, while the sad face bent lower and lower. “This pattern is very difficult and these threads get so mixed up, but I must finish it somehow.”

“But, child, there is some mistake somewhere and how do you expect to bring it right out of this mess?”

“A mistake? And how did you know it? Who told you there was a mistake?” And she tried to cover up the loom.

Lila’s questioning eyes looked from the one to the other as the mother squatted on the floor, coaxing the little weaver to show her the work. Reluctantly she unfolded the yards of woven cloth on the ground and the mother’s trained eyes detected where threads were caught and pulled awry, and the inexperienced hands had tried to hide the mistake with patches and to cover them with a cloth.

The soft eyes of the enquirer gave Anjali fresh hopes. “Sister, can you help me? Oh, I feel so tired and I cannot bring this pattern right. But please tell me, how did you know there was a mistake? I was afraid the teacher would see it on his visit next week and so I tried to patch and cover it up. But how did you find it out?”

“Ah, child,” answered Lila’s mother, “no words told me, but the pattern, which was nice and straight at the commencement, has gone crooked and, do what you will, you will not bring it right until you undo all this later work.”

“What, undo all this?” cried Anjali in alarm. “It is the work of almost a month. How can I do it? What will my teacher say? I have to finish it before he comes. It is cruel to ask me to undo my work and I will not undo my work and I will not do it.”

“The young are inexperienced,” said the mother calmly. “You are a weaver and know not the law of weaving! No amount of colours and threads will bring a wrong right unless you undo the mistake and set it right, hard though it seems. Try, child. Take the words of one who would willingly help you, both in your work and in your despair. But undo you must. Until the mistake is corrected, and until the patterns are nicely and correctly balanced, thread by thread, nothing will be of any avail.”

The tears flowed fast down the sad face. “And oh, how I have prayed every night and morning since last week,” she said, “that my mistake might not be found out and that the pattern and the weaving might come straight. Nay, I even promised myself to go to the temple every day for a week if my prayers came true,” and the young heart sobbed aloud.

The whole room was disturbed and all the laughing, working girls left their looms to help and comfort their friend and fellow-comrade. Everyone thought it was hard that the poor girl had to undo the work of nearly a month and wondered if nothing could be done to cancel the mistake, and go on weaving further.

“My young friends,” said the mother softly to the girls who surrounded her, “as an elder sister of yours, as a friend and a well-wisher, as one who has gone through many more experiences than you all have, as one who has seen and known and learnt much from life, may I say a few words to you?”

“You, my little friends, are weavers of these nice things, but do you know that every one of us is a weaver—a weaver of our own

life—our own destiny in this world? Just as you choose your own material and colour pattern, your own threads, fine or coarse, so too we choose our own threads for the loom. Our thoughts and our words, our acts and our feelings, are the materials with which we weave our destiny, refined or rough, pure or impure. We, ignorant of the working of the Great Law, make mistakes often in weaving. We try to hide, to conceal them from our teacher—the Great Law—and in our pride and stubbornness will not be brave enough to repair the wrongs but go on involving ourselves more and more in the disordered pattern. Of the Law it has been said:

It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter true
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs.

In despair and sorrow we seek refuge in selfish prayers for forgiveness. We try to bribe the gods. Says the Great Buddha:

Pray not! the Darkness will not brighten! Ask
Nought from the Silence, for it cannot speak!

The Eternal Immutable Law is Peace and Equilibrium, because its threads are Love and Life. Any selfish or wicked act on our part will be mathematically and accurately depicted on this Great Loom, and undo and repair we must. For the Master—the Great Law—will notice and record every breath we breathe, every heart throb, every thought. The only way out of our difficulty is to undo the wrong, the mistakes, and begin afresh. Try, little girl, for

Such is the Law which moves to righteousness
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;
The heart of it is Love, the end of it
Is Peace and Consummation sweet. Obey!

Lila quietly left the room with her mother, pondering on what she had heard about each of us weaving our destiny, knowingly, deliberately. At the end of the street she saw an open spot where a potter was at his work and Lila paused to watch him. It was a new experience and most interesting. Out of the lump of clay the potter

moulded materials of various shapes and sizes. There were the earthen pots and pans, a small pitcher, and with her mother's lesson fresh in her mind she observed that the potter too was a chooser. He was free to choose—the clay and the objects—but when the clay had passed through the process of moulding, the things were there, crude or refined, as his own free-will or choice had made them. And Lila learnt and understood that man was the Weaver of his own Destiny—the Moulder of his own Life.

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STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

THE ELEPHANT—II

8. *Rejoice in wakefulness. Guard well your thoughts.
Draw yourself out of evil, like an elephant sunk in the mud.*
(327)

THE GRAPHIC imagery of elephant sunk in the mud, struggling and pulling itself out of the mud encourages us to struggle and draw ourselves out of evil. The elephant being heavy has to struggle for itself to come out of the viscous mud in the wilderness. So also, it is said that no one else can draw us out of mire and put us into sunshine. “You yourself must strive; Buddhas are but signposts.” The way to freedom lies within oneself. *Light on the Path* tells us that the disciple must put the bit into his own mouth. When one chooses to walk the path, certain painful restrictions have to be adopted by the disciple which may be as painful as the “bit” put into the mouth of a horse to restrain him. It requires vigilance, perseverance and patience. The process of self-purification is a long one. The more evil one generates, the more difficult it will be to extricate oneself from the evil. No ceremony, no ritual, no outward worship or lip prayer can pull us out of evil. The Buddha said:

Ah! Brothers, Sisters! seek
Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruit and cakes;
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought;
Each man his prison makes.

9. *If you find a prudent companion, upright and self-possessed, walk with him, joyfully and mindfully, overcoming all dangers.* (328)

10. *If you do not find a prudent companion, upright and self-possessed, then walk alone like a king who has renounced his kingdom and his conquests. Be like a free elephant in the forest.* (329)

11. *It is better to live alone. There is no companionship with a fool. Let a man advance alone, committing no sin, like an elephant in the forest. (330)*

In these verses we are told about right companionship. The prudent companion is one who is upright and self-possessed. He is wise. He detects faults and blames what is blameworthy. He instructs and forbids what is improper. With such a companion, one experiences inner joy and gains strength to overcome all the difficulties. But the company of fools is like company of enemies—productive of pain, says the Buddha. It is better to live alone rather than be in the company of a foolish person. A fool is the one who does not have any place for spiritual things in life. This advice is particularly important for a beginner who is still unsure of himself and the path he has chosen. In the initial stage, it is easy to get swayed, especially when one encounters difficulties in walking the spiritual path. Till one is firmly established in spiritual living, it is better to avoid company of fools. At such times, *Satsang* is recommended. *Satsang* involves coming together of like-minded people to study scriptures and to extend mutual help. However, the disciple is expected to cultivate self-reliance. This requires faith in one's higher Self and trust in the law. When one has cultivated inner detachment, one is able to walk alone like a king who has renounced his kingdom and his conquests. There is no struggle involved in letting go.

12. *Companions are pleasant in times of need. Enjoyment is pleasant when shared by others. Merit is pleasant in the hour of death. Giving up of all sorrow is pleasant. (331)*

To the worldly man, the Buddha appears to give too much importance to the sorrows and sufferings as realities of life. But this is not true. The Buddha is keenly aware of *both* joys and sorrows of life. The happiness he describes may not be considered of much value by a worldly man, but worldly things bring joy while they last. An occultist does not shun them nor longs for them when they

are gone. He gives up all sorrows by becoming equal-minded. Equal-mindedness is called Yoga, the union with the Spirit within—the state of *ananda* or unconditional happiness.

It is a good thing to have companions who stand by our side in the hour of need; who are willing to share both our joys and sorrows. To have someone who rejoices in our happiness is indeed fortunate. These things show the presence of brotherly feeling and a sense of solidarity that bring happiness to the earnest disciple.

Merit in the hour of death is the fruition of proper living. Those who have enjoyed the pleasures of life, unmindful of the suffering caused to others for obtaining them, when old age approaches, they think of death and the fate after death. People then try to accumulate merit by visiting the places of pilgrimage, giving charity, studying the scriptures, performing ceremonies, praying to god, meditating and trying to live what they consider as spiritual life. But it is better to pay attention to this important aspect of life throughout our life rather than postponing it to old age, because, in old age, we may not have stamina, physical or mental, to perform good works. Merit is the soul-wealth gathered during life which brings happiness at the time of death. “The virtuous rejoices in this world and rejoices in the next; he rejoices, rejoices exceedingly in the visualization of his pure deeds. The righteous man is happy here, he is happy hereafter. “I have done well,” he soliloquizes. Greater is his delight in the blissful place,” says the Buddha.

13. *To have a mother in the world is happiness; to have a father in the world is happiness. To have a recluse in the world is happiness; to have a sage in the world is happiness. (332)*

The presence of mother and father brings happiness. Presence of recluse, a Bhikkhu, who follows *Dhamma* brings happiness. To have a sage in the world is happiness. Their presence creates happiness by their loving thoughts, beneficent influence and guidance. Their life shows us the importance of sacrifice. The love

of the mother and the father is so pure that even after death it works as a protecting shield for the child. On the other hand, motherhood or fatherhood itself brings happiness. It brings the experience of joy of creation, joy of bringing a soul into the world; and giving to the society a worthy and contributing member and thus fulfilling *Grihastha-dharma*, the duty of a householder. A householder has the opportunity to bring up his children with right views and high purposes. He renders service to humanity, by leaving behind him children, who could follow the example of his altruistic life.

However, while it is good to have mother, father, wise people, it is possible for a person to be joyful even in solitude. One must cultivate that inner peace which is not shaken by the sorrows that life brings to us. It is a state in which one experiences spontaneous happiness, *sahaj-anand*, whether someone or something is present or absent. In the long run, the disciple learns that it is not good to always want someone's company. He begins to appreciate the life of a recluse.

14. *Virtue lasting in old age is happiness. Faith firmly rooted is happiness. Attainment of Wisdom is happiness. Avoidance of sins is happiness. (333)*

This verse points to the slippery nature of virtue. "Fair virtues waste with time," says *The Light of Asia*. After practising virtue for some time one tends to become complacent, especially, if the moral standard of the society is not very high. One starts making allowances for lapses, thinking that one is not "all that bad." Through lack of vigilance, one can become full of evil, little by little, even as a water pot gets filled by constant falling of drops of water. Moreover, it is easy to be virtuous when things are going well for us. But to resist all temptations and live a virtuous life right till the old age, through tests and trials that the disciple is bound to face, is to have triumphed over evil. "Virtue lasting in old age" shows that it was not a man who practised the virtue half-heartedly or now and then. It means that he has maintained good and noble character throughout life.

Faith firmly rooted is happiness. In *Bible*, in more than one place we find Jesus addressing doubters as "Ye of little faith." When his disciples failed to cure a lunatic he told them that they failed because of their unbelief. He said that if you have faith as little as a grain of mustard seed, and if you ask this mountain to move from here and be cast into the sea, it will happen. "Faith is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. For it is the covenant or engagement between man's divine part and his lesser self." Without this faith a disciple would be worse than wreckage or driftwood on the tides of ocean. In Christianity, doubt is considered to be one of the cardinal sins. It is not that one is expected to accept anything and everything. But, having chosen the Path after mature deliberation, it is foolish to fall again into doubt and uncertainty. The reasoned faith that has stood the test is a source of tremendous strength and happiness. It gives the man courage and conviction to face every obstacle or opposition. Wisdom comes from the application of spiritual knowledge in life. This knowledge prevents him from committing sin. Each time a man succeeds in overcoming sin, there is inner rejoicing.

(Concluded)

To be ambitious for wealth, and yet always expecting to be poor; to be always doubting your ability to get what you long for, is like trying to reach east by travelling west. There is no philosophy which will help a man to succeed when he is always doubting his ability to do so, and thus attracting failure. No matter how hard you work for success, if your thought is saturated with the fear of failure, it will kill your efforts, neutralize your endeavours and make success impossible.

— CHARLES BAUDOUIN

OVERCOMING BIAS

PREJUDICE and bias are deeply rooted formidable defects of human nature. They stand ever in the way of human progress and happiness. These are defects of the mind, so subtle and elusive, that we are scarcely aware of their presence in us and are constantly deluded and led astray by them. The Buddha, the greatest psychologist of all times, teaches that there are four biases which involve us in error: bias in favour of sensuous living; bias for continuing with life; bias in favour of one's own views; and bias arising out of ignorance.

These arise and take root in our minds due to our ignorance of the truth of our real self and being. This is primordial ignorance common to all mankind. It gives rise to the notion that this body of ours and the personal self, or the personality, with which we identify ourselves, is our Real Self, separate from others. From this delusion of self arises intense selfishness, and from selfishness arises bias in favour of sensuous living, which grows into insatiable thirst for life or *Tanha*. Thirst for life and more life, which we all instinctively crave and cling to, is a powerful and blind creative force which thrusts us into an unceasing stream of conditioned existence in cycles of reincarnations, and we are borne along in this flow of life, like a driftwood in a flood, till we are able to overcome the primordial ignorance, and the biases which it gives rise to, and gain self-mastery. One who overcomes the four biases, with their numerous ramifications, stands clear-sighted in the light of truth, master of himself, and thus is able to see things aright and do things aright, wholly impartial, just and wise. He is called the one who has crossed over the flood of biases—*oghatinna*. Such an one is a benefactor of humanity. This is the path of true progress and it is the ultimate goal of human life. Education is true and worthy only if it leads men to this end.

Creating oneself anew, self-regeneration, is a duty every human being owes to himself and to humanity. It is not, however, easy to

root-out the dominating influence of selfishness, superstition and prejudice which pervade our lives. Prevailing ideas derived from religious beliefs and secular education, social customs, clichés and superstitions have a powerful hold on men's minds, and are led on by them, as if under a hypnotic spell. Speaking of how this infection of superstition and prejudice are caught by us, H.P.B. says:

The latter [superstition and prejudice] is far different from what we commonly term *antipathy* or *sympathy*. We are at first irresistibly or unwittingly drawn within its dark circle by that peculiar influence, that powerful current of magnetism which emanates from ideas as well as from physical bodies. By this we are surrounded, and finally prevented through moral cowardice—fear of public opinion—from stepping out of it. It is rare that men regard a thing in either its true or false light, accepting the conclusion by the free action of their own judgment. Quite the reverse. The conclusion is more commonly reached by blindly adopting the opinion current at the hour among those with whom they associate. (*Isis*, I, 39)

Historically, as well as, in the contemporary events can be seen instances of martyrdom of innovators and reformers who are perceived by conservative society as a threat to prevailing prejudices and preconceptions, and are often persecuted. The defect being common to human nature, the negative fallout of bias and prejudice, and the harm they do, can be seen in every aspect of our individual and family lives, as well as in every domain of social life. Bias in favour of our own individual views and opinions, plainly evident everywhere, makes us blind to the truth of things, beclouds our judgment, and leads us into error and folly, with all its undesirable consequences. Biased views and actions are intrinsically unjust which cannot but be hurtful to many through infraction of harmony of life.

Every religious sect assumes itself to be the sole possessor and interpreter of truth, and other sects to be in the clutches of error. Religious bigotry, fanaticism and conflicts darken human mind and

have wrought in every age untold suffering everywhere in the world. Men of science, who are supposed to be impartial champions of truth and fact, barring very few honourable exceptions, are by no means free from it. A few examples can be cited. Historically, when the extraordinary mediumistic phenomena, then called “Spiritualism,” broke out all over the Western World like an epidemic in the closing part of the 19th century, it offered the then scientists an opportunity to investigate them and discover some of the occult forces of nature and psychological powers of man, and thus enlarge the field of scientific knowledge. Scientists, on the contrary, refused to investigate, prejudging, without any basis, these phenomena to be fraudulent and unworthy of their attention. A few brave and honest scientists, however, like Professor Crookes, took up investigation, and pronounced the phenomena to be genuine, which science was unable to explain with the prevailing knowledge of natural laws. The investigators ran into a wall of prejudice and preconception of their colleagues and were denounced and attacked, because it challenged the then prevailing beliefs and assumptions of science. True scientific spirit is loyal to truth and fact and would make any sacrifice to obtain it. But prejudice stands in the way and prevents truth from prevailing. Professor Crookes, in his report, speaks of this peculiar trait of human nature, thus: “It was taken for granted that the results of my experiments would be in accordance with their preconceptions. What they really desired was *not the truth*, but an additional witness in favour of their own foregone conclusions” (*Isis*, I. 45). Thus, a valuable opportunity to science for making significant progress in the occult and psychological truths of nature and man was lost.

Human nature is the same now as then. It is not the truth that men really seek but reinforcement of their preconceived ideas and views. Annals of science are full of such instances. New discoveries and theories, which clash with the prevailing notions, are opposed only to be accepted later on when evidence overwhelmingly weighs in favour of the former as to be undeniable. For instance, discovery

by Barbara McClintock (1984), who was awarded Nobel Prize, that genes jump from one place to another within a cell was unacceptable to the scientific community, and was rejected by biologists and geneticists as impossibility. Thirty years later it was admitted as a fact. A classic example of the force of bias and prejudice is cited by Francisco J. Varela, a renowned biologist from Harvard University: Using scientific articles that had been published in reputed scientific journals, which obviously contained facts which had been admitted by scientific community, contributors changed the names of the authors, mentioning the place of origination of papers to be what were considered as backward, as Chile or Tibet, sent the same articles to the same journals. The result was that eighty per cent of the articles were rejected on the grounds that they were not good science or that their method or interpretation was bad, and so on.

H.P.B., with her remarkable insight into human psychology, points out that the pendulum of thought swings between two extremes. Having emancipated herself from the shackles of dogmatic theology, which had imprisoned free thought for over a millennium in the Western world, science has now swung to the other extreme—the opposite fallacy of interpreting Nature on purely materialistic lines; and, on the basis of such one-sided view of Nature science has concluded that man is a descendant of the brutish Ape. The remarkable fact is that though the idea of descent of man from Ape is only an unproved hypothesis, which has been found wrong on irrefutable grounds by eminent men of science, yet it has been taken as an established truth by the general public, and scientists in general are strongly biased in favour of it. Much of the materialism, the intense individualism and national selfishness that prevail in the world, are a direct outcome of such fallacious ideas as brute origin of man. So deep-rooted is this fallacy in the minds of men that the Teacher says that it takes herculean efforts to root it out. Challenging the belief of some of the influential scientific thinkers of her times that there is no third alternative to the two contending opposite views

regarding the origin of man—exoteric Biblical account of Genesis and the scientific Evolutionary theory—H.P.B. shows that the ancient Esoteric Philosophical doctrine of Cosmic and Anthropological evolution is the best alternative which perfectly reconciles them, and fills up the otherwise unbridgeable gaps and missing links in their theories. In her monumental work, *The Secret Doctrine*, she gives an extensive exposition of it for the consideration of thoughtful people and seekers after truth.

Though Theosophical ideas expounded have made a remarkable influence on the thought of the age, yet materialistic bias stands in the way of the full recognition of the merit of, and impartial hearing to, the ancient teachings—ancient, but new revelation to the modern minds, and far in advance of the times. The historian, H.T. Buckle, is quoted by H.P.B.: “If either a religion or philosophy is too much in advance of a nation it can do no present service but must bide its time until the minds of men are ripe for its reception.” (*S.D.*, I, 298)

That the mind of the race is in the throes of a change is all too evident everywhere. Shaken by the enormous social injustice and ecological disasters wrought all over the globe by the modern idea of progress based on the materialistic ideas, there can be seen everywhere clear signs of conscientious protest against the modern politico-economic theories, and a demand for a more just and compassionate world order. Having reached the limits of exploration by Empirical methods, and driven by the logic of her own discoveries in quantum physics and psychology, science has clearly crossed over into the occult world, and intuitive scientists are looking for metaphysical insights and inspiration by delving deep into the ancient philosophical and mystical traditions as never before.

In this flux of a transition period Companions have a responsible role to play in the general spread of the seminal ideas of Esoteric Philosophy, and by its light, help minds to recognize and overcome popular biases and prejudices, which are keeping us all back from advancing to higher progress and a worthier World Ideal.

THE WORLD OF THE ELEMENTALS

II

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. This sphere, as we know, is also called aura. H.P.B. describes the difference in aura of a medium and an adept. “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 that the aura of the medium changes day by day and even hour by hour. A medium’s moral state determines the kind of (elemental) spirits that are attracted to his/her aura, and reciprocally, the spirits that come to the aura influence the medium, intellectually, physically and morally. (*Isis*, I, 487 and 490)

On the other hand, Adepts are described to be the temples in which dwells the spirit of the living God. Since their souls were in close union with the God within, and also because 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 that they caused evil spirits to flee before them. 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 to the woman. 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 was the time-honoured custom in several nations.

What brings about the movement (attraction and repulsion) of elementals is magnetism of people, change in magnetism, change in polarities, change in vibrations caused by sound and colour. Anything that a person wears on his body is connected with the elementals. The clothes we wear, as also, the little objects made of brass, bone, silver and other substances, such as rings, bangles, etc., are soaked with our magnetism. By means of this magnetic fluid, the elementals are connected with what is worn on our person. When any of these things worn, a ring, say, is dropped, the elementals follow it and at times, completely envelope it and hide it. This happens because when a thing is worn it is full of our magnetism, but when it is dropped, the magnetic relation of that thing with our body is disturbed and that disturbance causes the movement of elementals. Elementals carry impressions of our thoughts and desires. Perhaps on the same basis we might explain why a spiritually advanced person avoids going to public places of worship or crowded places. The public places of worship are mostly crowded by those who go there with the intention of asking favours, and the atmosphere is full of lower, bad elementals. When we are in sympathy with the crowd, we are not likely to be affected by the bad elementals. However, when we are *not in sympathy* with the crowd, we do not partake of the magnetic atmosphere, and our presence disturbs the magnetic relation, so that the elementals in that atmosphere begin to precipitate on us. Probably, that is why there is a tradition of wearing clothes or jewels of certain colour to repel the bad elementals. Because elementals could be attracted, repelled or communicated through vibrations of sound and colour.

In the article, “Practical Occultism,” H.P.B. mentions that before the disciples (Upasakas) sit for receiving instructions, in the place selected for this purpose, five “sacred colours” must be arranged in certain way, as these colours are very magnetic. When a *mantram* is pronounced, depending upon the number of syllables in the *mantram* and whether it is pronounced slowly and in one rhythm, or fast and in another rhythm, good or bad elementals can be

attracted. The blowing of conch shell or ringing of the bell made of certain metal, before *puja* (worship) or any auspicious ceremony, appears to be with the view to attracting good elementals and repelling the bad ones. *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 307) mentions that sound and rhythm are closely related to the four Elements; and because such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken corresponding (elemental) powers, union with which produces good or bad results, as the case may be. We are asked not to repeatedly speak about any disastrous incidents, such as accident, crime, murder, etc., in so many unmistakable words, because then the elementals associated with that incident may once again be attracted and the same disaster may occur again.

In the article, “Can Stones Carry a Curse?” (*The Theosophical Movement*, January 1959), mention is made of the 44½-carat blue Hope diamond, which was taken to France, in 1642, by a French Adventurer, Jean Tavernier, from Krishna river mines in India. Some say that it was dislodged from the forehead of an idol. Whatever may be the truth, tragedy or great misfortune has befallen many of its possessors. These disasters have included being torn to pieces by wild dogs (Tavernier’s fate), murder, suicide, fatal accident, destitution, and, in the case of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, death on the guillotine. One of the explanations is to be found in the power of human will, which is described as the greatest of all magnets. H.P.B. points out that by a determined concentration of the will, an inert object, such as stone or paper or cloth could be imbued with protective or destructive power. Another explanation for the disaster befalling the possessors of precious stones, gold or money is in terms of property of inert objects to retain the impressions of the events. In the case of the blue Hope diamond, every time the person who possessed the diamond met with a calamity, the diamond would retain the impressions of those occurrences. Such impressions or vibrations draw in their turn corresponding (elemental) powers from the invisible atmosphere, union with which produces good or bad results.

A current of electricity passes through a hard piece of copper wire, while it cannot pass through unresisting space of air. Similarly, a hard and dense object is no obstacle for the movement of certain class of elementals, but their movement could be obstructed by certain vibrations created by sound, colour, figure or metal. Thus, for instance, in one of the Arabian Nights stories, an air elemental caught in a pot, could not escape because of the talismanic Solomon's Seal (sign of double triangle) on the cover of the pot. Moreover, because of the metal pot, the air elemental could not make magnetic connection for escape.

The "lives" or elementals are the "carriers," or "messengers" of Karma, because they are the means or instruments through which the law of Karma brings reaction for our action. We may think that it does not matter if we throw our book down in anger. The fact is that besides physically damaging the book, we also affect the "lives" in the book. It is as if even without our speaking, our anger "talks to" these "lives," and leaves an impression of anger. Continually, there are atoms rushing out of the body and being replaced by new atoms. This is true of every material body. Hence, the atoms and therefore, the "lives" which constitute the book would be released from the form of book to build some other form. Wherever these "lives" are, when we come in contact with them again, they would tend to arouse our anger.

The air and space about us are not empty, they are filled with "lives," which carry the message throughout the universe, and they will bring back the effect of our thoughts, feelings and actions—good or bad, quick or slow. This is because these "lives" are inseparably and magnetically connected with the individuals who used them. The highest of the Masters are not exempt from this Law. However, these Great Beings, through their compassion, charge the atmosphere with entities which have the power to produce only good effects. These congeries of "lives," impressed with our thoughts, feelings and actions, constitute *skandhas* or *samskaras* or attributes. There are five *skandhas* or attributes which determine

the nature of the body, mental and emotional make-up, and moral nature of the personality that the Ego takes birth into.

These "lives" or elementals seem to function under higher agents called *Chitra-gupta* or *Lipikas*, who are agents in karmic dispensation. The word *Lipi-ka* is derived from the word *lipi*, meaning "writing." They are the Divine Beings, connected with Karma, for they are the Recorders or Scribes. They impress on the "invisible tablets of the Astral Light, 'the great picture-gallery of eternity' a faithful record of every act, and even thought, of man, of all that was, is, or ever will be, in the phenomenal Universe."

Mr. Judge tries to explain the *rationale* of the operation of the Moral Law of Compensation, in one particular case, of an idiot boy, born of wealthy parents, but with malicious nature. He mutilated flowers and killed insects, in his state of idiocy. The insects and flowers, not knowing his state of idiocy, turned their eyes upon him with pain, as he tortured them. In dying, his spiritual picture, together with that pain and the desire for revenge, were photographed, so to speak, upon their spirits (elementals). These elemental spirits thus impressed with his image kept a link with him and when he was born again, these elementals precipitated down his glance, when he directed his glance on any object or person. They saw what he looked upon, and brought about disaster. But gradually the old impressions wore off and he found success in all that he did.

When we criticize another person, even mentally, the elementals get coalesced with that thought, creating an entity. By condemning, we create a focus in ourselves so that the elementals will carry that very fault to us. After a while, we would find ourselves doing that very thing for which we had criticized another person. For instance, when a person has committed violence, we hear people say that he should be beaten, he should be whipped publicly, etc. In condemning violence, we are ourselves on the edge of becoming violent. Hence Mr. Judge writes:

If you fix your thoughts upon a person in anger, or in critical, uncharitable judgment, you attract to yourself a

number of those elementals that belong to, generate, and are generated by this particular fault or failing, and they precipitate themselves upon you. Hence, through the injustice of your merely human condemnation, which cannot know the source and causes of the action of another, you at once become a sharer of his fault or failing by your own act, and the spirit expelled returns “with seven devils worse than himself.”

Among the Irish, just as much as among the people of India, there is a deep-seated belief in the supernatural. In the country districts, people believe that the devil would stay in the house after it is vacated, and hence they break the windowpanes to make way for the devil to escape. The “devil” is the group of elementals impressed by the thoughts of the people who occupied the house. Hence it is advised that one must bless the house before leaving it.

Being unconscious, automatic and photographic, the elementals take the same colouring as the thoughts of human family. So long as mankind does not cultivate brotherly feeling and charity towards the whole of creation, just so long the elementals will be without the impulse to act for our benefit. We may look upon earthquakes, tidal waves and tsunamis to be like a sickness of the earth. Mr. Judge describes physical illness as discharge of the inner sickness of the inner being on the physical plane. Similarly, “the ‘lives’ of the earth that have been impressed by the harmful thoughts—the selfish thoughts—of millions of men [and women] have reached a point of explosion, which comes about just as naturally in its own order and cycle, as day follows night. Those...who suffer most from such events have earned the suffering...Man *is* a part of Nature, and if he makes Nature suffer, he will suffer through Nature.” (“*Because—For the Children Who Ask Why*”)

(Concluded)

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: We get what we deserve and not what we desire. What is the hidden meaning behind this saying?

Answer: The dictionary meaning of “deserve” is, to show conduct or qualities for becoming worthy of—a thing, position, reward or punishment. In this sense, we may desire to be rich, to become President of America, say, to be loved by all, to attain to knowledge, peace, or *moksha* (liberation). But, if we have not cultivated the qualities necessary to achieve worldly or other-worldly possessions, we will not receive them. The same thing is applicable to an outcome or a result. We may desire a particular result after making efforts in a particular direction, but if the efforts are not enough we may not get the desired result, and to that extent, we still do not “deserve.”

In the context of the Law of Karma, we “deserve,” reward or punishment through causes sown by us in this life or in some past life. Our observation shows that often we or others seem to get what is clearly not deserved. When good people suffer and the wicked go scot free, it becomes extremely difficult to accept that “we get what we deserve.” When a person is unjustly punished, when there are national calamities, when there are crimes committed in a society, it sounds very harsh to say that we “deserved” these things. Even when we are unable to understand or explain, it is true that we get what we deserve. We get the government we deserve. We get the police-force we deserve. The key word in the above sentence is “deserve.” All of us “deserve” the good and the bad things that happen to us, individually and collectively, because it is the just reward or punishment for our actions in this life or in some

prior life. It is precisely because we are unable to see the actions done in the past lives that we feel that we have received the punishment or suffering, unjustly or undeservedly. It is possible to suffer in this life as a result of our action in some prior life. Thus, a good man who suffers now must have been guilty of disturbing the harmony by some wrong action in one of his past lives. Likewise, the bad person who *appears* to go scot-free *now*, will reap the consequences and suffer in some subsequent life.

However, since most of us have no recollection of the wrong actions in previous lives, our suffering appears to us as undeserved or “unmerited.” Moreover, every person and every being is a karmic agent, affecting others through their thoughts, feelings and actions. More often than not they are only “agents” or “instruments” in bringing us the consequences of our past actions, but as H.P.B. points out, “men often suffer from the effects of the actions done by others, effects, which thus do not strictly belong to their own Karma—and for these sufferings they of course deserve compensation,” which we might say is by virtue of his association with other beings. For such “unmerited” misery he experiences perfect bliss after death, in the state of *devachan*, *swarga* or paradise. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 158-59)

We may wish and may even work hard to fulfil that wish, but if the causes sown in the past are not favourable then they might put obstacle in the path. All the adversities in life are “deserved” because they come to us as karmic debt, or to prepare us for the future because through those very adversities we get the opportunity to cultivate the qualities we lack. Tests and trials are necessary for gaining moral strength and depth of character. We must look upon the law of Karma as Eternal Justice, wherein there is restoring of disturbed harmony. When that harmony is restored by awarding reward or punishment we experience pleasure or pain. We create the karmic debt by breaking the harmony in nature through downright wicked or unwholesome thoughts, feelings and actions. We create karmic debt by not making proper use of the resources and capabilities. There

could be possession of wide, rapidly-acting brain stored with knowledge. One could use it properly or improperly. These days we increasingly find misuse of knowledge and intellect in terrorist activities. More often than not the “master-mind” behind the terrorist attack is some brilliant young man well-versed in modern technology. The one thus misusing mental powers might be punished by a life of stupidity in one of his subsequent lives. Similarly, if a wealthy man misuses his wealth or becomes selfish and tyrannical, oppressing and ill-treating the down-trodden, or he is indifferent to misery of the poor, then he might be punished in the future with the life of poverty. If we fail to use our wealth and favourable circumstances for the welfare of humanity, then in the eyes of the Law we cease to “deserve” them in the subsequent life.

We do not always get what we desire, in spite of our exertions. However, aspiration is a form of desire tempered by thoughtfulness, integrity and a deep concern for the interests of others. Aspiration is necessary to achieve anything in spiritual life. One has to keep up the aspiration while one tries to fit himself to become a disciple. When desire nature (*kama*) is completely purified, so that there is no conflict between what “I ought to do” and what “I like to do,” then its energy is left as a motor power, and that energy is directed by the Will, and such a person can get what he desires.

Question: Sometimes from our personal experience, we become aware that some people suffer because of their *peculiar* temperament. To what extent our sympathy can be of use in overcoming his/her sorrow? In what way could such a person be helped?

Answer: At the level of personality, each one of us is different from the other. Each one of us has his own idiosyncrasies. What we call “peculiar” temperament is really defects and faults in the personal nature. In one case, it could be extreme pride and feeling of self-sufficiency, such that any attempt to help is discouraged. In another case, it could be self-centred nature with a knack of extracting work from other people, but always dodging to help others, making some

excuse or the other. While we are extremely reluctant to accept our faults, we are only too eager to point out faults of others. And others, like us, are unwilling to accept their faults and weaknesses. The first step would be that of acceptance—we must learn to accept people as they are, because we do not know the forces that have contributed in making the person what he is today. Epictetus writes: “When people do not act as you would wish them to, exercise the muscle of your good nature by shrugging your shoulders and saying to yourself ‘Oh Well.’ Then let the incident go.” That would prove to be a good discipline for us. The fact that we cannot tolerate that particular peculiarity of temperament shows that we have something to learn. If that person has come in our contact, and especially if he has come seeking for help, it is our duty to help.

Mr. Judge suggests, “The indissoluble unity of the race demands that we should consider every man’s troubles as partly due to ourselves, because we have been always units in the race and helped to make the conditions which cause suffering” (*“Forum” Answers*, p. 55). Besides individual karma there is also collective and distributive Karma. We have contributed in making the humanity as we find it today. Once we recognize this it would be easier to accept the other person, with his idiosyncrasies. It requires great discrimination to help a person in the right way, so that as we help, we can also make him aware of the peculiarities of his nature. This calls for building that kind of relationship with that person through brotherliness. If a lazy person who has been unable to keep a steady job, happens to be our employee, we might gradually inculcate in him/her love for work. To help another in a right way, without making him our dependent, calls for a lot of wisdom and patience. If we have genuine concern for human beings in general, and if we have been paying heed to the voice within, whenever it prompts us to help another, then right method and right way of helping every person will present itself to us. We will be guided from within, provided we nurture feelings of charity and good-will for all.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What is in a word? In trying to understand the nuances of words, selfish, self-centredness and selflessness, Chitra Jha, a healer, writer and trainer had many insights. She had an eye-opening experience, as she equated the word selfless with self-sacrifice. Every time she went for an ice-cream with her husband and two sons, she declined to have ice-cream, because as a selfless person, who was too much in love with her family to deny them any pleasure, she always chose to sacrifice her excesses. However, she was made to realize the folly of such sacrifice when her husband told her that often, too much sacrifice eventually leads to bitterness and victim-mentality. In her case, it could easily happen that the children would stop asking her if she cared for an ice-cream, assuming that she did not want it, and then she would feel thoroughly miserable and unimportant. She was reminded of her mother and other women who always complained, “I did so much for so and so but today they do not even care for me.” And then the children would turn back and say, “Who asked you to be so self-sacrificing? You did it because it made you happy.” Such thoughts made her less inclined to equate the word selfless with self-sacrificing.

In spirituality, it is necessary to distinguish between self with small “s” which is our ego-personality, and Self with a capital “S” which is the *atman*. The entire journey is from self to Self, where the small self expands into the Self. When we arrange the three words with small “s,”—selfish, self-centred and selfless, in the *ascending order of Spirit*, we find that self-centred implies completely enmeshed with the ego-personality; selfish means something like ego-personality, and self-less means no trace of ego-personality. On the other hand, when these words are arranged in the *descending order of Spirit*, Self-less would come at the bottom, because it means no trace of Self or *Atman*, followed by Selfish, which implies being somewhat like the Self, and finally Self-centred, meaning completely abiding in the Self. However, “the real lesson is that it is best not to

be stuck in words, and their supposed meanings, because while the words make us understand a lot of stuff, they also colour our vision and make us judgemental,” writes Chitra Jha. Tejguru Sirshree says that words are like the stick of an ice-cream. You hold onto the stick only while you are experiencing the enjoyment of eating the ice-cream. Similarly, once you have experienced the truth, you do not need to hold on to the words that were carrying the truth. (*Life Positive*, June 2013)

It is beneficial to know the meaning of words. Mr. Judge’s advice to a student is, “I am constantly in the habit of consulting the dictionary and of thinking out the meanings and the correlations of words. Do the same. It is good.” In spiritual, especially metaphysical, writing a lot of confusion and misunderstanding could arise if precise terms are not used. For instance, it is necessary to differentiate between “Higher Self” and “Higher Ego,” in theosophical writings, so that in *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. is at pains to give definite words for definite things, explaining that Higher Self is *Atman*, Spiritual Soul is *Buddhi*, while Higher Ego is *Manas* independent of *Buddhi*, and becomes Spiritual Ego in conjunction with *Buddhi*. Words could be traps when two people interpret them in two different ways.

Often, it is important to see the context in which the word is used. In reading of the scriptures, it is important that we do not stick to the literal meaning of the words. One should strive to go beyond the “disclosed word,” advises Mr. Judge. The Vedas themselves say that what we see of them, is only the *disclosed* Veda, and there is a need to go beyond them, implying that the *undisclosed* Vedas must be hidden or contained in that which is apparent to our senses. “This valuable privilege of looking for the inner sense, while not straining after impossible meanings in the text, is permitted to all sincere students of any holy Scriptures, Christian or Pagan.” (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 5-6)

Drawing our attention to the potency of spoken words, Mr. Judge says that Words are things, but upon the lower plane of social

intercourse, they are “soulless and dead” things, because used as a matter of convention. It is only when we step away from that conventionality that they become alive, depending upon the purity of thoughts behind them. Let us use with care those living messengers called words.

The book, *Lightning as a ‘Photographer’: Revisiting a Forgotten Phenomenon of Nature*, (Published by Partridge India) seeks to explain the curious phenomenon of nature, wherein there is spontaneous appearance of ghostly images occasionally found on window panes, as also, the appearance of exact impressions of nearby objects or persons, on the bodies of men and animals that have been struck by lightning. The imprint is so accurate, reproducing in the image the exact colours of the original object, that it makes any common observer believe it to be a photographic replica. While searching for instances of spontaneous appearance of photograph-like images in Nature, the author of this book, Chidambaram Ramesh, a freelance researcher, came across an article, “*Keraunography: Notes on the photographic effects of lightning as reported in 19th century journals*,” (first published in *The British Journal of Photography* on July 13, 1981), written by Bill Jay. The word *Keraunography* is derived from the combination of Greek words, which suggest, “writing or drawing with lightning or thunder.” An entire chapter is devoted to record freakish action of lightning, such as, its selectivity in killing or destroying something while sparing another object or person in the vicinity. There is also a mention of therapeutic and beneficial effects of lightning.

Among several cases of *imprints made by lightning*, one finds the case mentioned by H. P. Blavatsky, of a boy killed by a stroke of lightning. Imprinted on his chest was the image of a tree which he had been looking at when the lightning bolt struck (*Isis*, I, 394-95). Similar cases have been observed in the recent past. For instance,

on November 20, 2012, an image resembling the Virgin Mary at a Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, on the outskirts of Kaula Lumpur appeared on a window pane, located on the seventh floor of a Malaysian hospital.

The author points out that this phenomenon has attracted the attention of scientists, but unfortunately, they conclude that lightning *per se* has no photographic qualities, and that the lightning imprints are nothing but “Lichtenberg figures” named after the German physicist Georg Lichtenberg, who first identified the root-like dendritic patterns of electric discharges. “The scientists advanced the theory that the floral impressions occasionally made by lightning were not the photographic reproduction of the trees or leaves, but the pattern of electric discharge produced by lightning. Though the advocates of the theory were right in their argument, they failed to distinguish between the tree-like images and other photographic reproduction of images (un-tree-like images).”

A whole chapter is devoted to discussing mental stigmata, wherein the human mind, in some extreme conditions, creates hologram-like field patterns of thought-forms, which in turn gets impressed on the body. In a similar way, human body is susceptible to imprint of images brought by the electromagnetic waves emitted by lightning. The author concludes by drawing our attention to Teratological phenomena explained by H. P. Blavatsky, wherein the extraordinary effects are produced on the unborn child by the sudden powerful emotion of the mother. She says that when an object makes violent impression on the mother’s mind, its image is instantly projected into the astral light, which is the repository of the spiritual images of all forms and even human thoughts. The magnetic emanations from the pores of her body attract and unite themselves with the descending currents of astral light which bear the image upon it, and rebounds, and repercussing more or less violently, impresses itself upon the foetus. On this basis, the author explains that the child is a subsystem of the mother-child matrix, where there is transfer of impressions from the mother to the child, so are the

human beings subsystem, to the universe as a system.

In fact, after citing the example of the boy who was killed by lightning, on whose body there was imprint of the tree, H.P.B. writes, “Now this electrical photography, which was accomplished by the blind forces of nature, furnishes an analogy by which we may understand how the mental images of the mother are transmitted to the unborn child.” (*Isis*, I, 395)

The author closes with the remark that these extraordinary phenomena have opened up a new field of research for investigation by the modern scientists.

In some of the oldest Pali texts, Gautama the Buddha has been described as having a clean-shaven head. But in the images of Buddha of the recent past, there is a curly hair bun on top of his head. Art historians speculate that in ancient India, hair was closely associated with fertility. The growth of hair was equated with the germination of crops. Ascetics known as *tapasvis* matted their hair with banyan tree juice to indicate control over the forces of fertility. For the common man, shaven head was the sign of inauspiciousness. For instance, people shave their heads in times of mourning, and a widow is asked to shave her head. A Brahmin with shaven head leaves a tuft of hair to show that he was still linked to material matters. Hence, completely shaven heads of the Buddha and his monks, showed their perfect detachment from material matters. However, artists of Gandhara and Mathura began making human images of the Buddha, and showing the Buddha with the topknot. Later, the topknot of the Buddha was given metaphysical meaning, and it was interpreted to represent superhuman thinking and perception abilities which made him the Wise One. But then the images of the Buddha travelled through Central Asia to China and Japan, where the Taoist priests tonsured their heads, and there shaven head was associated with wise sages. Hence, in China there

are images of laughing and bald Buddhas, writes Devdutt Pattanaik. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India, June 30, 2013*)

Occult philosophy considers the hair (whether human or animal) as the natural receptacle and *retainer* of the vital essence. It is closely connected with memory. Samson wore his hair long, and the biblical allegory shows that health and strength and the very life are connected with the length of the hair. If a cat is shaved it will die in nine cases out of ten. A dog whose coat is not interfered with lives longer and is more intelligent than one whose coat is shaven (*The Theosophical Glossary*). “In Europe, the Greek and Russian clergy alone, along with their monks, have preserved the wise habit, and the longevity of some of the last named is *proverbial*,” says H.P.B.

The Nazarite was ordered to let his hair and beard grow, and never to permit a razor to touch them. With the Egyptians and Buddhists it was only the initiated priest or ascetic, who shaved, because to them material life was burden. The Buddha, after shaving his hair when he first became a mendicant, let it grow again and is always represented with the top-knot of a Yogi. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

Magnetic and psychic force resides in the hair; hence the myth of Samson and others like him in antiquity. H.P.B. mentions that cutting seven locks of Samson deprived him of his physical strength, *i.e.*, it killed the material man, leaving only the spiritual. “To this day the High Lamas cut off during public consecrations a lock of hair of the candidate for the religious life, repeating a formula to the effect that the six others will follow, when the ‘upasaka’ is READY. The lock of hair or tonsure of the Roman Catholic priests is a relic of the same mystery-idea.” The seven locks are symbolical of the seven cardinal sins to be overcome and the seven cardinal virtues to be gained by the aspirant for spiritual rebirth and those could be attained only through severe trial and suffering. (*H.P.B. Series No. 20, p. 41*)