

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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### DIVINE VIRTUES DANA—CHARITY

DANA is the key of charity and love immortal. At the very entrance of the spiritual path we are demanded to practise *Dana* or Charity. This emphasis on *Dana* is to be seen in almost all the religious scriptures. The *Gita* advises that one must never abandon acts of *Dana* (charity), *Tapas* (Mortification) and *Yajna* (Sacrifice). Charity or Love is considered to be one of the Theological virtues in Christianity. St. Paul writes in his *Epistle to the Corinthians*: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal....and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”

In one sense it is easy to practise *Dana* as the next step from one's natural goodness. Once we are established in *Dana*, no rules are necessary. A Christian Saint said, “Love and do what you please.” When we have learnt to love others as we love ourselves, we will spontaneously do that which is right and good for all. For instance, a loving mother need not be told what is good for her child. She will give her child extra milk when she thinks he needs it, and will abstain from giving it when that is necessary.

“All human beings have a seed of love and charity, but how few make that seed useful in the right way!” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. Charity or love is sown as a seed, which flowers forth at the end of

the spiritual discipline. Generally, when we see a sage or a spiritually advanced person, what strikes us are his powers and wisdom, but we fail to see that these are there in him because he has goodwill towards all creatures. “Self knowledge is of loving deeds the child.” “Armed with the key of Charity, of love and tender mercy, thou art secure before the gate of *Dana*, the gate that standeth at the entrance of the PATH,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. This is like an elimination test. It seems to suggest that if you cannot be charitable to others, all else is useless. There must be concern for the suffering of others. “Thank god it is not me!” or “it is his karma” should not be our attitude, when we encounter a suffering person. For the cold and the egoist the spiritual path is closed.

The imagery of woods is given in the *Voice of the Silence*. While journeying through the forest, darkness itself is terrifying, and there is the fear of the animals. But walking across dark and dense forest, if one comes across a “sunny glade”—a patch of ground full of light—then one experiences a feeling of great joy and relief. Similarly, our everyday consciousness is muddled, and sorrows and complications of life are like dark forest. But practice of *Dana* brings us to a state of mind which is like a “sunny glade.” We experience this in our lives. We find that so long as we harbour revenge, enmity or anger towards a person our mind remains agitated or turbulent, but the minute we decide to forgive and forget, peace returns. This state of mind has been compared to a spot on earth mirrored from Amitabha’s paradise, *i.e.*, when a human being’s consciousness is in a state of *Dana*, the purity and clarity of Amitabha Buddha’s consciousness is reflected there.

Charity towards infirmities of human nature is the most important form of *Dana*. H.P.B. says that a student of theosophy has no right to believe in the evil of another, especially without undeniable proof. Even when such a proof is given, there should be charity towards weaknesses of human nature. “To err is human, to forgive is divine.” When we genuinely forgive another, we lessen our baggage of karma, and wash away negativity within us. When

we forgive another we heal ourselves. Spiritual growth depends upon our ability to quickly forget and forgive the harm, and on not being judgmental.

In the acquisitive culture of today, our natural human tendency is to take, to grasp and to keep things for ourselves. In fact, over and above, normal desires, *craving* dominates our lives. A sincere seeker, desiring to reach enlightenment has to reverse this tendency and cultivate the virtue of *giving*. Even if the person is not very learned, not very honest or truthful, or unable to meditate long, but even he can hope to lead a spiritual life, if he is generous and ready to *give*. The real “giving” must involve both heart and hands. Walt Whitman says, “I do not give lectures or a little charity, when I give, I give myself.” It is important and necessary to give personally, but it is more important to give whole-heartedly, with one’s whole being.

There are several types of giving—giving of material wealth, time and energy. We must train ourselves and cultivate a habit of giving something—food, money or clothes—every day, so that giving becomes an integral part of our everyday existence. The Buddhist speak about the “gift of fearlessness.” All around us there are people who are worried, stressed, tense and unhappy. We should try to give them strength, encouragement and freedom from fear, by our very presence. Sharing of knowledge is considered to be the highest form of giving. In learning the art of giving it is important to consider, *what* we give, *how* we give, to *whom* we give, *why* we give, and *when* we give.

In fact, the *Gita* classifies charity into *sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. Those who give away things out of place and season or scornfully are the ones in whom *tamas* quality predominates. How many times have we been guilty of *tamasic* giving? Many a times we give away, as wedding or birthday present, things which are useless to us, without bothering to find out if they would be of use to the recipient. We toss a coin to get rid of the pestering beggar. When we give with expectation of return, be it material help or

otherwise, *or*, with the intention of accumulating merit (*punya*), such giving flows from *rajasic* quality. It is only when we give without expectation of return and to the proper person and at a proper time that we indulge in *sattvic* giving.

Easy as it may appear, it is extremely difficult to practice *sattvic* giving and it calls for true discernment. How often we see that through our indiscriminate giving we turn the recipient into a lazy parasite. The more we give the more is expected. True giving must aim towards creating self-dependent individuals. It is our duty to find out if what is given is put to proper use. Does the money reach the needy, when it is given through a third party? When food or money is given through a third person it fails to evoke gratitude in the heart of the receiver. Our giving must not only evoke gratitude but kindle the spirit of giving in the receiver. H.P.B. writes:

The Theosophical ideas of charity mean *personal* exertion for others; *personal* mercy and kindness; *personal* interest in the welfare of those who suffer; *personal* sympathy; forethought and assistance in their troubles or needs.... We believe in giving to the money a thousandfold greater power and effectiveness by our personal contact and sympathy with those who need it. We believe in relieving the starvation of the soul, as much if not more than emptiness of the stomach; for gratitude does more good to the man who feels it, than to him for whom it is felt. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 242)

The best and highest giving involves sacrifice. We are willing to share material things out of the surplus we have. We are willing to lend a sympathetic ear to another as long as we have spare time or are in a happy and comfortable state of mind. But very often circumstances are not so smooth and then our needs come in conflict with the needs of other people. When we are greatly inconvenienced in trying to help, there is sacrificial giving. “There are those who have little and give it all. These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty,” says Kahlil Gibran. *Dana* as the transcendental virtue is taken to be synonymous with

immortal love. God is Love. Charity or love although it begins at home should not stop there, and must spread in ever-expanding circles to include the whole of humanity. All of us ordinarily have a sense of separateness. We want to participate in the prosperity of the people, but when we see misery, squalor or stupidity, we withdraw like a turtle drawing its head and limbs within its shell. If we fail to practise charity, it frustrates the very purpose for which the soul exists.

The foundation of immortal love is the recognition of the unity of life. The “whole” is the “living, dynamic whole,” and by affecting one unit, we affect all. We need to ask, “In what sense the elephant lives in me, and I live in the elephant?” The rationale behind practice of *Dana* is that the same SELF breathes in all. Not the least being can be ignored, condemned, feared or scorned, if one practises this Virtue. It is impersonal love. Desmond Morris points out that *emotional* love can be extended towards only a few people. To expand that love so as to embrace the whole of humanity that love must become impersonal.

In his book, “The Four Loves,” Professor C. S. Lewis, describes four types of love—Affection, Friendship, Eros and Charity. Affection is fondness and it is the most natural love experienced by family members or people who have found themselves together by chance. Friendship is the strong bond existing between people who share common interest. True friendships, like the friendship between David and Jonathan in the Bible, are almost a lost art. He considers Eros to be love in the sense of “being in love” or “loving” someone, as opposed to the raw sexuality. Most of the time human love can be classified as “need-love,” such as the love of a child for parents, or “gift-love,” that of parent for a child. “The highest does not stand without the lowest.” As one learns to become more impersonal, the need-love and gift-love gradually transform into unconditional love or *Agape*.

When one sings a classical song, the *tanpura* (a stringed instrument) is adjusted for various different notes, but the note

“sa” is fixed in the beginning, and whatever *raga* is sung, “sa” need not be adjusted. Our mind must become like the note “sa,” ready to consider the ideas, feelings and opinions of others without getting ruffled. Literature helps us in entering into the feelings and experiences of other people who are different from us. We must be able to sympathize with the wrong-doer and try to understand why he does what he does. Charity also means Generosity, which is the opposite of Avarice, one of the Seven Deadly Sins. *True* Charity cannot be practised by the ego-centric person. So long as there is a feeling of doership or *kartabhav*, such as, “I am helping,” or “I am being kind,” as also, expectation of earning blessing or merit for the charitable deeds, it is not true charity, which can bring about inner transformation.

*Vairagya* or detachment pervades all the virtues. What comes in the way of practising true love is, as the *Gita* says, our “self-identifying attachment” for children, wife and household. To cultivate universal love, Mr. Judge suggests reflection on, “I am not separate from anything...I am my friends...I am my enemies...I am the poor and the wicked. I am the ignorant...All, all is myself.” When one genuinely attempts to feel one with all—good, bad and indifferent, one is prepared to bear desertion and unfaithfulness, as Mr. Judge says, “when a dear friend deserts me and stabs me in the back, I will take heart, knowing that he is myself.”

*Dana* and *Prajna* go hand in hand. *Prajna* is spiritual insight, realization that all conditioned existence is impermanent, but underlying the evanescent there is permanent reality. In reality, there is no such thing as separateness. Such insight makes possible transformation of mere emotional love into compassion, or love combined with knowledge and understanding. On the other hand, it is impersonal love and altruistic feelings which help in developing intuitive perception.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE MASTERMAID

HERE IS a tale from the Norse, representing that stage when the human being passes from exoteric to esoteric life, when instead of mere obedient acceptance of the appearances of life, he demands to know Nature’s secrets. This brings him tests from life itself, whose material aspect challenges him with obstacles, but whose spiritual aspect, as Wisdom, enables him to overcome them.

Once upon a time there was a king with several sons. The youngest one would not rest at home but set out and took service with a Giant. When the Giant went out with his herd of goats, he asked the Prince to clean out the stable. “Then you need do nothing else today, for I am an easy master. But do not go into the rooms beyond the one in which you slept, for if you do, I will kill you.” The Prince could not hold himself, and finally he went into the first one. There was a pot boiling with no fire beneath. The Prince dipped a lock of his hair in it. Out it came as though it were copper. When he dipped a lock of his hair in a similar pot boiling in the second room, he found it shining like silver, and likewise on dipping hair in the pot in the third room, he found that it gleamed all golden. In the fourth room was the loveliest maiden ever seen, seated upon a bench. “Why are you here?” she cried. “I have taken service with the Giant,” the Prince replied, “and he is an easy master. After I have cleaned the stable out, my day’s work is done.”

“If you work in the ordinary way, ten pitch-forkfuls of dirt will come in for every one you throw out. I will teach you the proper way. Turn the pitch-fork upside down and work with the handle, then the dirt will toss itself out,” said the maiden.

“I will do that,” said the Prince, and they sat together like friends and lovers the rest of the day. As evening came, he tossed the dirt with the handle, and out went the dirt in a flash, and the stable looked as though he had scrubbed it. When the Giant found the stable cleaned he growled, “You have been talking to my

Mastermaid; you did not suck that from your own brain.” The Prince pretended that he did not know any Mastermaid.

Next day, the Giant left with the goats, and he said, “Bring home my horse from the hill and then you can rest.” The Prince went straight to the Mastermaid. When she learnt what he had to do that day, she said, “This is not easy, for its nostrils breathe flames that will burn you. But take the bit hanging behind the door and throw it into its mouth, and then it will become tame.” In the evening the Prince set off with the bit, and when he saw the horse breathing out fire he threw the bit into its mouth, and then he was able to ride it back and stable it with ease. When the Giant returned, he found the horse all safe and sound in the stable.

The third day as the Giant went off with his herd he said, “Fetch me fire tax from hell.” In went the Prince to the Mastermaid, and told her his task. “Go to a steep rock under the hill,” said she, “and knock with the club lying there. There will come out a fiery being to whom you must give your message. When he asks how much you will take, say only this: ‘As much as I can carry.’” So, when the fiery being asked, “What is your will?” The Prince replied, “The Giant wants me to take to him his fire tax.” When the Prince was asked how much he will have, his reply was, “As much as I can carry.”

“You are wise,” said the Fire-Being. “You would have been unfortunate had you asked for a cartload. Come into the rock and take it.” The Prince went with him and found heaps of gold and silver piled up high. He took as much as he could carry and went back. The Giant would hardly believe he had brought the tax till the sack was opened and the money rolled out.

“You have talked to my Mastermaid,” he roared. “I will wring your neck for you.” The next day he took the Prince to where the Mastermaid sat and said, “You must cut his throat and boil him in the big pot you know about, and when the soup is ready, call me.”

Then he laid himself down and began to snore like thunder. The Mastermaid took a knife and cut the Prince’s little finger, so

that three drops of blood fell on three-legged stool. Then she took all the rubbish that she could find—old clothes, shoes, etc.—and put them in the pot. She filled a chest with fine gold, took a lump of salt and a flask of water that was hanging behind the door, as also a golden apple and a golden cock and a golden hen. Then she and the Prince set off together, and after a little while they came to the sea, over which they sailed. After the Giant had slept for a while, he stretched himself and called, “Will it be ready soon?”

“Only begun,” said the first drop of blood. So the Giant went off to sleep again, and after a while asked if it was done, and the second drop said, “Half done.” So the Giant went to sleep once again, and on waking asked if it was done. “Quite done” said the third drop. The Giant got up and looked for the Mastermaid and tasted the soup. He found nothing but all rubbish boiled up together, so he ran furiously after the Prince and the Mastermaid till he came to the sea, which he could not cross. So he called on his stream-sucker, who stooped and gulped, till the sea sank down and the Giant saw the Prince and the Mastermaid in their ship.

“Throw out the lump of salt,” said the maiden; and lo! it became a mountain right across the water, so that the Giant could not pass, and the stream-sucker could not drink. The Giant called on his hill-borer to make a hole through the mountain, so that the stream-sucker could drink once more. But just when the hole was bored, the Mastermaid bade the Prince throw out a drop or two from the flask she had brought, and the sea was as full as ever. And before the stream-sucker could gulp again, they had reached the land on the other side and were safe from the Giant.

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The youngest prince may be taken to symbolize the spiritual aspiration that is born only after the human being has tried various fields of experience and failed to be satisfied by them. The Giant is Nature in its material aspect, that of Pan (as the goats clearly indicate). He stands for the world of appearances, in which one

lives ignorantly like animals, without seeking to know its mysteries. It is the world of the exoteric religions, in which one must not question the nature and purpose of divinity. It is the world of social conventions and forms, which the worldly-wise bid us obey, threatening with penalties those who break through the barrier.

All these external influences seek to hold man back from inquiry into the inner side of Nature. Nevertheless, the Prince looks within his own nature and finds the three higher principles “bubbling” there—the copper, the silver and the gold of his higher triune Self—Mind, Soul and Spirit. His life currents are set gleaming by their touch. (The significance of hair as carrier of magnetism is indicated in H. P. Blavatsky’s *Theosophical Glossary*). And then, in the hall beyond, he meets Nature in its spiritual and soul aspect, the Mastermaid of Wisdom, the divine *Sophia*. But, even though a man may have seen the Soul of Life, he is still a servant to the lower material nature and finds that Life itself in its outer activity brings him face to face with certain tasks:

(1) The cleaning of the stables implies the purification of the material nature—the bodily energies, the emotional and mental characteristics. This means giving the *skandhas* (the material life-atoms making up man’s constitution) a different, cleaner, finer set of impressions than those they now have as a result of past misuse of them. (2) The taming and stabling of the fiery horse implies controlling of fiery passions and desires, which unless they are tamed, burn us, and which have to be “stabled” for proper, controlled use. The hidden bridle of the spiritual will alone change their nature. (3) The collecting of the fire tax from hell refers to the reactions of one’s past karmic actions, the precipitation of which is speeded up in one who has been touched by the Higher Wisdom. The wrongs done in the past lives, as in the present one, have to be collected (and atoned for), but the aspirant is warned against letting ambition and greed push him on faster than he merits, for otherwise he will precipitate more karmic troubles from the past than he can cope with. He must only ask for “as much as he can carry.”

When man has passed through these stages of purification, control and adjustment, he is ready for the next stage, when he has to surrender his self-identification with the body and personality. For these are not himself, but only correspond to the old leather and rags in the soup. The real man escapes with the soul of secret Wisdom, leaving behind three drops of blood. Blood is again magnetic, and marks the state of inner development, in contrast to the artificial degrees of exoteric societies. The drops announce the stages of readiness, while the three-legged stool on which they fall is like the threefold body, the support of the soul.

So the soul, having passed its probation with the help of Divine Wisdom, and having yielded up its sense of separateness, its identification with mortality, escapes from the power of the Giant of Matter and Form, to sail on the Ocean of Life Universal. Nevertheless, the material, exoteric and egocentric nature makes two last desperate attempts to swallow up the ocean of divine awareness. The first threat is “pride and satisfaction at thoughts of the great feat achieved,” a personal gratification that tries to suck in the whole for the aggrandizement of self. But Wisdom confronts it with the white mountain of Truth, the salt that gives savour and significance to existence.

The second attempt is that of skeptical doubt, faced with the truth, tries to pick holes in it, according to preconceived interpretations. Yet wisdom is inexhaustible; even a few drops from her flask are able to renew the spiritual flow. By holding fast to that Divine Principle that is the Mastermaid for all, we, each one of us, like the Prince, may come safely to the Shore of Reality.

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I do not doubt it is a great advance if we can in the midst of physical suffering grasp and hold ourselves calm and away from it.

—W. Q. JUDGE

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

## THE BRAHAMANA—IV

26. *Him I call a Brahamana whose speech is truthful, gentle, instructive, which offends no one. (408)*

ASCETICISM includes mortification of body, mind and speech. “Gentle speech which causes no anxiety, which is truthful and friendly, and diligence in the reading of the Scriptures, are said to be austerities of speech,” says Shri Krishna. The Brahamana who has studied the scriptures instructs the householder in the way of life. He uses his power of speech to bless and not to curse or offend anyone.

27. *Him I call a Brahamana who takes nothing that is not given to him, be it long or short, small or large, good or bad. (409)*

To take from others what is not given to him implies presence of greed or covetousness that would cause harm or hurt of another’s feeling or interest and is an act of violation of the law of Karma. The Brahamana respects the law and will take what comes to him lawfully in all matters, because, it is not a question of quality or quantity or size. It is a matter of principle. It applies to all things. Brahamana is a man of few wants and is contented. “Give freely and receive, but take from none, by greed, or force or fraud, what is his own,” is one of the *Panchashila* rules.

28. *Him I call a Brahamana who has no desire pertaining to this world or the next, who has no inclinations and is unshackled. (410)*

29. *Him I call a Brahamana who has no desires, who has destroyed his doubts by knowledge and has plumbed the depth of the Eternal. (411)*

The Brahamana performs his actions because they need to be performed and not for some benefit accruing to him. He has no

personal desires, either of this world or of the next—the heavenly world. But desires of right kind are necessary for any action to be performed. His desires are regulated by “moral fitness.” Free from likes and dislikes, he seeks to attain self-realization which acts as a guiding principle behind all his actions.

The Brahamana has destroyed doubts by the sword of spiritual knowledge. He has plumbed the depth of the Eternal, *i.e.*, he has understood the real nature of the manifested universe and its creatures, and has overcome all delusions. There is no more doubt or wavering. For the worldly man, it is difficult to understand the state when man does not have personal, worldly desires; but it is possible for all men to reach such a state. Jesus said: “Thy will be done on earth, as *it is* in heaven.”

30. *Him I call a Brahamana who here is above the bondage of merit and demerit, who is free from grief, free from passion and who is pure. (412)*

A true Brahamana has risen above the conventional way of treating actions and events as good or bad. He is equal-minded to praise or blame; he is neither elated by success nor is he cast down by failure. He is free from grief because he has cultivated perfect detachment or *viraga*. There is calm acceptance of whatever Karma brings to him. He has philosophic view of life and death. Knowing the immortality of the spirit within, when confronted with death, he is able to say like Krishna: “What in this is there to lament?” His woes are of different nature. He feels helpless pity for men who continue to live in ignorance and sense of separateness. Jesus cried: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!...how often would I have gathered thy children together...and ye would not.” He does not perform actions or refrain from them because they may bring him merit or demerit, but because they must be done—guided by spiritual insight.

31. *Him I call a Brahamana who like the moon is stainless, pure, serene and clear, and who delights not in existence. (413)*

The Moon as we see it in the sky has fascinated all, especially poets. It is clear, calm, cool, beautiful and soothing as against strong rays of sun that burn. In *Isis Unveiled* we are told: “Soft words are better than harsh; the sea is attracted by the cool moon and not by the hot sun.” Poets have compared their beloved’s face with Moon. There are many songs in which moon’s light is praised as cool and radiant. His presence has soothing influence on others. But, moon is a dead planet and so is a Brahamana—he is dead to delights of worldly existence.

32. *Him I call a Brahamana who has gone beyond the miry road of rebirth and delusion difficult to cross and who has reached the other shore; who is meditative, who is without doubt, without attachment, who is calm and content. (414)*

Having attained highest perfection, this is his last birth. He has overcome the delusion that results from false sense perception, faulty basis of thought, false teaching, etc. He possesses spiritual knowledge and hence is able to discern the truth in everything. There is no wavering, doubt or longing for things of the world. He is calm and content. Obviously, this state is culmination of many lives.

33-34. *Him I call a Brahamana who, in this world, giving up sensual pleasures, wanders about without a home, in whom all desire for existence is extinguished. Again, him I call a Brahamana who, in this world, giving up all craving wanders about without a home, in whom all craving for existence is extinguished. (415-416)*

Having cultivated perfect detachment, he has no preferences or likes and dislikes. He has complete faith in the law—he knows that everything is provided for. For an ordinary man, home is where he learns his first lessons of love, care and sacrifice. We say, “Home sweet home!” This is the place on earth where we feel we belong—a place of our own. Thus, for most people, home is the point of attachment, identification. But when one has made the whole world

as his home, no *one* place is necessary. He practises Universal Brotherhood. In him, the desire for existence is extinguished. He lives to fulfil his dharma. He lives so that others can benefit by his presence.

35. *Him I call a Brahamana who has cut off the yoke of attachment to human things, has risen above attachment to heavenly things, has transcended all attachments. (417)*

“From attachment arises grief; from attachment arises fear,” says the Buddha. Attachment leads to restlessness of mind; it clouds our judgment and makes us act in terms of our likes, dislikes and biases. Attachment, even for good things, has the power to bind the man to the chain of births and deaths. The book, *Through the Gates of Gold* points out that “it is as easy to become a gourmand in pure living and high thinking as in the pleasures of taste or sight or sound. Gratification is the aim of the virtuous man as well as of the drunkard; even if his life be a miracle of abstinence and self-sacrifice, a moment’s thought shows that in pursuing this apparently heroic path he does but pursue pleasure.” That is why Krishna asks us to rise above the three qualities of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. When a person desires long stay in heaven, when an ascetic longs to become a *Deva* to enjoy the state of perpetual purity and happiness, they exchange this-worldliness for other-worldliness. Therefore, the Brahamana strives to cut off *all* attachments.

(To be concluded)

IT IS proof of a base and low mind for one to wish, to think with the masses or majority, merely because the majority is the majority. Truth does not change because it is, or is not believed by a majority of the people.

—GIORDANO BRUNO

## THE PYRAMIDS OF EGYPT

### II

HOW old are the pyramids? It is impossible for modern science, by using their scientific methods, to fix the date of the hundreds of pyramids in the Valley of the Nile. “Bunsen allowed the great Pyramid an antiquity of 20,000 years. More modern archæologists will not give it more than 5,000, or at the utmost 6,000 years,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 750)

Earth’s axis seems to sweep out a cone, making a circle in the heavens in approximately 25,868 years. As a result several bright stars by turn become the “North Pole Star” of our earth. At the time when the Egyptians were building pyramids, the North Pole star was Alpha Draconis (Thuban) in the constellation of Draco, in 2170 B.C., and it shone down the central axis of the descending passage of the “Great Pyramid” at the midnight of the autumn equinox. At that same time, Alcyone, a notable star in the Constellation of Pleiades stood exactly on the meridian of the Pyramid, at the point in heavens which is at right angles to the downward inclination of the descending passage. We are told that this relative position of Alpha Draconis and Alcyone being extraordinary one, it could not occur again for a whole sidereal year. Owing to the grand movement in the heavens called precession of equinoxes, the stars move from their original positions relative to our earth and do not reoccupy the same point in the sky until 25,868 years (one sidereal year) have passed. It might therefore be said that the Great Pyramid was built 25,868 years before 2170 B.C., (*i.e.*, 28,038 years) when the Pole Star would again have looked down the axis of the entrance passage.

Moreover, it is also stated that as the first Pyramids were built at the beginning of a Sidereal year, under *Dhruva* (Alpha Polaris), it must have been over 31,000 years ago. (*S.D.*, I, 435)

The Great Pyramid, even now untouched by time is, according to the Denderah zodiac, more than 78,000 years old. This

planisphere on the ceiling of one of the oldest Egyptian temples, with its mysterious three Virgins between Leo and Libra, has found its *Cedipus*, who understood the riddle of its signs and justified the truthfulness of the Egyptian priests who affirmed that ever since their first zodiacal records were commenced, the Poles had been three times within the plane of the ecliptic. This means that three sidereal cycles of 25,868 years each have passed.

The Hindus represent their mythical tree, which they call *Aswattha*, as growing with the branches extending downward and the roots upward; the former typifying the external world of sense, *i.e.*, the visible cosmical universe, and the latter the invisible world of spirit. The Egyptian Pyramid also symbolically represents this idea of the mundane tree. Its apex is the mystic link between heaven and earth, and stands for the root, while the base represents the spreading branches, extending to the four cardinal points of the universe of matter. It conveys the idea that all things had their origin in spirit—evolution having originally begun from above and proceeded downward, writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 153-54)

Pyramid is the grandest of cosmic symbols. There are seven chambers in the Pyramid, and each is known by the name of a planet. The seven chambers represent evolution of seven Root-Races of humanity, each of which is connected with a special planet and planetary god. The apex of the pyramid, lost in the clear blue sky, represents the primordial point, lost in the unseen universe, which represents the source of the first race of spiritual prototypes of man. The mummy was placed inside the pyramid in such way as to aid the exit of the “soul” which had to depart through the seven planetary chambers, and finally exit through the symbolic apex. Each mummy, the moment it was embalmed lost its physical individuality and symbolized the human race. Each planetary chamber represented one of the seven spheres [of earth chain]. It also represented one of the seven higher types of physico-spiritual humanity alleged to be above our own. Thus, the Egyptians believed that after the cycle of 3000 years the soul, representing a human

race, returned to the primal point of departure and would once again undergo evolution through a spiritually and physically more perfect race. (*Isis*, I, 296-97)

*The Secret Doctrine* mentions “*the Serpents whose holes are now under the triangular stones,*” i.e., “the Pyramids, at the four corners of the world.” Here “serpents” refers to Adepts or “Wise” men of the Third, Fourth and the Fifth races, who dwelt in the subterranean habitats, generally under a pyramid or some kind of pyramidal structure. The pyramids were not the exclusive property of the Egyptians, but existed in four corners of the world. They were found to be scattered all over the two Americas. H.P.B. mentions that the early *neolithic caves*, and the colossal triangular and conical *menhirs* in the Morbihan and Brittany are more or less clumsy copies of the geometrically perfect pyramids. Most of these are works of early settlers on the newly-born continent of Europe. These were the races that remained after the submersion of the last Atlantean continents, some 850,000 years ago.

According to Bunsen, who is considered to have made the most exact calculations, the mass of masonry in the great Pyramid of Cheops measures 82,111,000 feet, and would weigh 6,316,000 tons. The immense numbers of squared stones show us the unparalleled skill of the Egyptian quarrymen. Speaking of the great pyramid, Kenrick says: “The joints are scarcely perceptible, not wider than the thickness of silver paper, and the cement is so tenacious, that fragments of the casing-stones still remain in their original position, notwithstanding the lapse of many centuries, and the violence by which they were detached.” (*Isis*, I, 518)

The “King’s Chamber” in the *Pyramid of Cheops* is the Egyptian “Holy of Holies.” Mysteries of initiation were enacted in the Pyramids. On the days of the mysteries of initiation, the candidate representing the solar god had to descend into the Sarcophagus. The sarcophagus is oblong and boat-shaped, representing the female principle, containing the germs of life. The *Argha* was an oblong vessel, used by the high priests as a sacrificial chalice in the worship

of Isis and Venus-Aphrodite, and both are goddesses of generative powers of nature. The candidate for initiation represents the solar god or the energizing ray of the sun that enters the sarcophagus, fecundating the female principle. This represents *spiritual conception*. After remaining there for two days and two nights, and after undergoing most cruel trials on the last night, the candidate for initiation is resurrected. In India, instead of Sarcophagus, it is the “golden” Cow through which the candidate has to pass, in order to become a *DWIJA* or twice-born. The ceremony of passing through the *Holy of Holies* meant *spiritual conception* and *spiritual rebirth* of an individual, and his regeneration. The *Holy of Holies* which was “earlier symbolized by *Hiranyagarbha* or golden egg, and is now symbolized by the cow, is the symbol of universal abstract nature. The stooping man at the entrance of the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, ready to pass through the matrix of mother nature is the physical man ready to re-become the original spiritual Being,” writes H.P.B. The spiritual man is Hermaphrodite, in whom there is a permanent conjunction of *Buddhi* (Hermes) with *Manas* (Venus-Aphrodite). (*S.D.*, II, 462 and 469-70)

In his book *A Search in Secret Egypt* Paul Brunton recounts his experience of a night spent within the Great Pyramid, in King’s Chamber. As he began to deeply concentrate his mind he became aware of the presence of invisible forces. “Shadows began to flit to and fro in the shadowless room; gradually these took more definite shape, and malevolent countenances appeared suddenly quite close to my own face....Age-old spirits seemed to have crept out of the neighbouring necropolis.” But soon these sinister, ghostly invaders disappeared, and he became conscious of the presence of someone friendly and benevolent. There were two beings, who seemed to be the apparitions of the High Priests of an ancient Egyptian cult. He was told that soon he would be led into the “Hall of Learning” and was asked to lie down upon the stone. He was told that in the earlier days it would have been upon a bed of papyrus-reeds, in the coffin-like sarcophagus. Soon he found

himself floating above his body of flesh, and as he gazed at his body, he realized, “I know that I am a soul, that I can exist apart from the body. I shall always believe that, for I have proved it.” Finally, he was led into a secret chamber, and as he wondered about the secret door and a passage leading to the chamber, the voice of the High Priest was heard, “Find but the secret passage within the mind that will lead thee to the hidden chamber within thine own soul, and thou shalt have found something worthy indeed. The mystery of the Great Pyramid is the mystery of thine own self. The secret chambers and ancient records are all contained in thine own nature. The lesson of the Pyramid is that man must turn inward, must venture into the unknown centre of his being to find his soul, even as he must venture to the unknown depths of this fane to find its profoundest secret.”

Pyramidology is a term used to refer to various pseudoscientific speculations regarding pyramids. It includes among other things, “pyramid power,” or the claims that pyramids as geometrical shapes possess supernatural powers. In 1930s, a French hardware-store owner and pendulum-dowsing author, Antoine Bovis developed the idea that models of pyramids can preserve food. In 1949, another person claimed that razors could be sharpened (or have their sharpness maintained) by placing them in the magnetic field in such a way that the sharp edge lies in the direction of the magnetic lines. However, in 2005, in an episode of “MythBusters” aired on the *Discovery Channel*, when test of pyramid power was performed by using pyramids that were built to the specifications found in pyramid power claims, it was found that in most cases there was no appreciable difference between items in the pyramids and items outside.

Today, a pyramid is considered to be a powerful structure and a tool, and is used in *Vastu*, astrology, spiritual meditation and healing. The word “*Vastu*” can be generally translated to mean a “dwelling.” Any kind of structure such as, office, factory, farmhouse, home, temple, hospital is called *Vastu*. There are many similarities between

Feng shui and *Vastu Shastra*, as they are both based on the knowledge of the flow of universal energy called *Prana* in Hindu, and *Chi* in Chinese culture. *Vastu Shastra* or science of *Vastu* was developed for the purpose of generating positive energy within the *Vastu* or the dwelling being used. *Vastu Shastra* aims to bring about a balance between human life and nature, and takes into account the influence of five elements, the eight directions, the electromagnetic and gravitational forces of the earth, as also, the cosmic energy emanating from the planets.

Pyramids are used in *Vastu*. It is believed that a pyramidal structure can gather energy and then process it or transform it. The energy generated as a result of transformation depends upon the shape, size and material used for building the pyramid. *Vastu* and *Pyra-Vastu* practitioners make use of pyramids made of wood, concrete and synthetic sheets. When a pyramid is placed in a negative area, it is supposed to divert inauspicious or negative energies from that area and give it positivity. Pyramid is considered to be a very powerful structure and is used in cases where it is not possible to shift a kitchen or a toilet from the negative area to a positive area because of the expenses involved.

(Concluded)

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EACH second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that will never be again. And what do we teach our children? We teach them that two and two make four and that Paris is the Capital of France... We should say to each of them: Do you know, what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the years that have passed, there has never been another child like you. Your legs, your arms, your clever fingers, the way you move. You may become a Shakespeare, a Michaelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel. And when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel?

—PABLO CASALS, SPANISH CELLIST

## POSITION OF WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY

### I

FREEDOM movements such as the “Women’s Lib” and Feminism, *i.e.*, the struggle for women’s rights, equalities, etc. are rising since the last two centuries. Is there any validity and justification for the same? Any such movements, agitations and demands, if based on the moral principles, and if they are in the general interest of the welfare of humanity, they should have our hearty sympathy on ethical grounds. Freedom itself is a blessing to be deserved, earned and maintained with responsibility, and should be based on the understanding of the higher values of life. This is its prime justification.

The historical context of such feministic agitations is dealt with very well in the article, “Progress and Culture” in *Lucifer* (August 1890). We must first understand the chief causes for the prevailing conditions in the life and the status of women, and the attitude of different societies toward “womanhood” in general. In the first place, womanhood is not just a biological “gender” attribute, nor does it simply characterise femininity. The biologists are so materialistic in outlook that the womanly attributes are considered to be solely the outcome of the hormonal and organic functions of the body! But beyond this we must recognise that the “genius” and the aura of “womanhood” are essentially psychic and spiritual in their origin and purpose. The poets, with their intuitive sensibility, have often captured the expression of its gracious essence.

On the other hand, the same materialistic tendencies in the West, and mainly the influence of the religious doctrines in the East and the West, have contributed to tarnish the image of women. Women are thought to be inferior creatures meant to be tolerated, kept under control, and to be useful to the male-dominated world. This is precisely the origin of Feminism as a reaction to the unjust treatment long suffered by women with humiliation and despair. Ibsen, who has been often quoted by H.P.B., concerning the status of women,

wrote in his play, “A Doll’s House,” a small dialogue, in which the husband tells his wife, “Before all else you are a wife and a mother!” The wife replies, “That I no longer believe! I think, before all else, I am a human being.” Ibsen wrote: “A woman cannot be herself in a society of the present day which is exclusively masculine; with the laws formed by men, and with the judicial system that judges feminine conduct from a masculine point of view.”

All these unjust social schemes are the product of the selfish human nature, which in the position of vested power, is ever ready to exploit any weaker section of the society. For long, women have been dominated, and discriminated against in our society, in law, in the patriarchal system. They have been deprived not only their rightful position in the family, but also the fulfilment of their full potential and growth. There is no “home sweet home” for them to bask under. Such families everywhere have missed the very blessings and the grace of the feminine and motherly presence.

What is the remedy? First, we should recognize and acknowledge the true place of women in the natural order of things. Also, to appreciate how indispensable is the duality, the “pairs of opposites,” present in the very cosmic scheme of things. The whole cosmos comes into existence as a result of the duality of spirit and matter or *purusha* and *prakriti*. Functionally too, the two sides of the human brain exemplify the rule of duality. Male and female, as the inseparable human pairs, are the necessary stage for the present cycle of humanity. The metaphysical interdependence of Spirit and Matter has its lesson for the psychological conduct of man and woman.

From the point of view of general human progress, we must accept that these two—man and woman, are a part of each other. Therefore, they will *need* each other for their completion, progress and fulfilment, at some stage of their evolution. For instance, at the householder stage, an ideal home life can be created only when both would create an atmosphere of union, selflessness and respect. We have on record the great but unknown families in the East,

who have survived even the worse conditions of poverty and privations because of the partnership of silent love and understanding, and where women-folk have been treated and valued as precious equals, nay, as the indispensable source of the “milk of human kindness” that have nurtured and tempered the men-folk. In that strain poet Thomas Otway has something definite to say: “O woman, lovely woman! Nature has made thee to temper men: we had been brutes without thee!”

This brings us to another pleasing image, of Motherhood, stamped on us from infancy. However, it may baffle the understanding of many intuitive poets, such as, Wordsworth, Coleridge and writers like Jane Austen: “How can a man, loved and nurtured under such maternal warmth, forget and refuse to see in his sisters, lovers, classmates and gentle ladies everywhere, the insignia of gracious motherhood or the aura of sweet sisterhood, to be revealed if treated with reciprocal tenderness, respect and trust?”

Lately, there have been changing socio-economic situations which may threaten the male dominance, if the rights of woman’s equality and liberty are universally acknowledged. For, these are already demonstrated by some self-made formidable women of position and power who have thus risen against all odds and resistance. The well-cultivated masculine “ego” gets hurt and there is a feeling of insecurity if some ladies seem to out-shine in his own domain, where he had dominated and enjoyed his status so far. The fault lies in always judging in poor light, a woman’s intelligence, judgment and her capacity to lead. Stuart Chase has rightly said: “There are no proven intellectual inferiority in women, or any evidence for delimiting her activities to a specific sphere.”

And yet, we must admit that the natural constitution and inclinations of womanhood is toward “building a home,” and the “family life” for the purpose of general progress of mankind. But, even if the home is the natural haven for self-fulfilment, the women of gifts and strong inner inclinations need not suffocate themselves

by guilt or by any outside traditional pressure or customs. In the prevailing social and family set up, especially in the East, men have looked down upon the female of the species, as his inferior “lesser-half,” in need of protection, by marriage, meant to be kept subdued so as to serve him under his unchallenged sovereignty! Attitudes of this kind have stunted both men and women, in their individual development, and prevented them from experiencing much soul-satisfaction in togetherness and love. It has been found that great success or achievement, and the inner fulfilment could happen, whenever any two individuals, and especially man and woman, join hands, head and heart, to work for a common objective, be it worldly or of the higher order. After all, men and women are complementary in character.

What are the most serious root causes that have placed such a wedge between the two genders? We may refer to H.P.B.’s article, “Progress and Culture,” (*H.P.B. Series No. 2*), originally appeared in the magazine *Lucifer* (August 1890). H.P.B. goes into the dark period of the history of mediaeval Christianity. It appears that the real culprits are the doctrinal mis-interpretation of the scriptures of orthodox religions, including Judaism and Islam. Curiously, in the holy Koran, men have been clearly warned by the holy prophet, knowing human nature: “O men, respect women who have borne you.” And the Proverb says: “He that speaks ill of his wife dishonours himself.” Likewise, *Laws of Manu* say, “Where women are honoured, there verily the Devas rejoice; where they are not honoured, there indeed all rites are fruitless.” (III, 56)

On the other hand, what have the holy saints of the orthodox Church (3rd century A.D.) to comment on the blessed womanhood, based on the Biblical lore? Like the coward Adam, the blame is on the companion Eve, for the birth of the “evil” (sin) in their offsprings! “Her voice is the hissing of the serpent,” says St. Anthony. “Woman is a daughter of falsehood, a sentinel of hell, the enemy of peace,” says St. Damascene (*H.P.B. Series No. 2*, p. 33). By hearing such invectives, which are still circulated in

religious literature, how can staunch believers ever consider a woman to be an “equal partner” in life and worthy of respect? Even the Christian writers have thoughtlessly degraded in their works the women of all strata. Gregory Thaumaturgus writes: “One man among a thousand may be pure; a woman, never!”

There may be sad instances of despised women who have earned disrepute for the unacceptable behaviour or outbursts. If we go into their unfortunate antecedents, we will always find the horror stories of their humiliations and atrocities. It is their *desperate reaction* that had pushed them to anti-social, unwomanly or shocking behaviour. The families which have consistently shamed these helpless creatures, may not admit of their own hands in building desperation and hatred in their women. The violence and suicide attempts, the dramatics and hysterics are simply psychic aberrations and also the expression of burning spite against men and society.

But why should such deplorable instances be equated with the whole world of womankind? Poet Wordsworth seems to know the feminine soul, which he expresses in his poem “She Was a Phantom of Delight,” thus:

The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength and skill  
A perfect woman, nobly planned  
To warn, to comfort, and command.

A woman’s natural ways “to command,” *i.e.*, to get things done, is the gentle art of genial love and graceful submission. It means glad participation in family duty, out of the warmth, loyalty and trust in her men-folk and family.

*(To be concluded)*

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## 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:** How to demarcate good from bad, moral from immoral?

**Answer:** At a simple level, it is easy to distinguish between good and evil, as also, between moral and immoral by consulting universal ethics which are common to all religions. They are the categorical imperatives. Moral choice is a choice between right and wrong or good and bad. We need to go beyond traditional categories of Right and Wrong, which are based on customs, and are seen to change from place to place. For instance, in India, one covers one’s head, as a mark of respect, while in some of the western countries, like England, a man would remove his hat and bow as a mark of respect to women. Conventional morality is a result of consensus of opinion of the people of the society of a particular time. It may have had some basis of true morality at its beginning, but in the passage of time the original meaning and intention tend to get lost, and sometimes a very corrupt custom comes to prevail as something “moral” in that society.

Moral choices must be made based on eternal, universal moral principles, which are true at all times and all places. Some of the issues and related choices are tricky, for instance, meat-eating or non-vegetarianism. Certain religions of the East, consider meat-eating to be immoral and unethical based on the principle that one has no right to take life because one has no power to give life. But a closer examination shows that there is nothing wrong or immoral about non-vegetarianism. In fact, in certain places where there is no vegetation, one’s survival becomes impossible if one adhered to vegetarianism.

There are actions that are forbidden by the scriptures. There are actions that are recommended to be performed, such as acts of *Dana* (charity), *Tapas* (mortification) and *Yajna* (sacrifice). But a close observation reveals that acts of charity, asceticism and sacrifice are not always wholly good. There is false asceticism, like piercing the cheeks or standing on one leg. One may give out large sums of money to earn merit (*punya*) or with the intention of gaining name and fame. As the *Gita* teaches, all actions are involved in faults, like fire is surrounded by smoke, so that a perfectly good-intentioned action may end up bringing about harm. Thus, it would be a folly to categorize actions as good or bad on appearances, without taking into account the motive, the inner state of the person, the degree of his development and knowledge.

We need to dig deep and go to the base of apparent good and evil actions. For instance, a mother scolds her child and punishes him, but the motive is to bring him up as an upright individual. There are stories which suggest that if our speaking the truth is going to cost a person his life, it may perhaps be wise to remain silent or even tell a falsehood. Hence, it is difficult to compartmentalize and classify a wholly good and a wholly bad act. Mr. Judge points out in *Letters That Have Helped Me* that what seems evil and “painful” may be necessary for the soul’s progress. Again, depending on the degree of development, what is good enough at our level might not be so for the person on a higher rung of the scale.

Though there are books and scriptures with clear statement of moral principles, the *application* of moral principles is not only difficult but puzzling. We should learn to exercise our intuition and consult the “Voice” within. At times, simple reasoning is enough to help us differentiate between right and wrong. For instance, how could I be absolved of my crime of stealing or murder by making a confession to a religious head? We should also watch for heart response. And, yet, whether it is “Voice of Conscience” or heart response, there is no guarantee that we will make morally

“correct” choice. Those who indulged in religious persecutions were sure that they were following their inner voice. But their “inner voice” was coloured by their educational, cultural and religious background, as also, hatred. At times it is the voice of lower desires which guides us, instead of our higher nature. But as we continue to exercise intuition, and to put all problems before it, we will find that we are gradually enabled to make morally correct choice.

Any duty, however, humble, performed with skill and without longing or regret strengthens the neophyte, morally, taking him a step closer to his divine nature. There are daily initiations through daily duties, which pave the way for *Viveka* or spiritual discrimination, “to the knowledge of what is good to do, as to the right discrimination of good from evil.”

**Question:** We are asked never to criticize or condemn (verbally). But if one is sensitive to others’ faults, and cannot help noticing and also mentally resenting them, then, are these two—verbal criticism and mental resentment—the same morally and spiritually?

**Answer:** Every act has a thought at its base. So we say that thoughts are the seeds of Karma. Not only are our actions based on thoughts, but also thoughts are actions on the mental plane. The Law of Karma works on physical, mental, psychic and moral planes. Many times we think but do not translate our thoughts into action. In a sense, the moral consequences for the verbal criticism and unexpressed mental resentment will not be the same, because, after all, words of criticism are most likely to produce feelings of anger and resentment in the person at the receiving end, and he might retaliate in anger and counter-criticism, and thus, we might have started chain reaction.

But even when we mentally condemn another, let us remember that we are judged even for our *thoughts*. Jesus said that he, who looks at a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery. It would be excellent if we cultivated the habit of thinking only good thoughts. Our unwholesome or evil thoughts of revenge, hatred, jealousy, etc., do not vanish but get impressed on the astral

light, and the same could be attracted by another person having similar thoughts, giving him an added impulse in that direction. However, we must take into account the *quality* of thoughts. At times, these thoughts are not intense and powerful. H.P.B. mentions that our still-born (weak) thoughts are not punishable, but we are punished for “silent” but potentially strong and intense thoughts. Likewise, actual verbal criticism may not be done with intense resentment and may only be a statement of fact. But when words of criticism are uttered after spending much thought over them then the effect is thousand times greater. It is therefore, very important to keep our thoughts pure. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge mentions that from the earliest times the teacher was given great reverence by the pupil. “It was among these people a great sin, a thing that did actual harm in his moral being, to be disrespectful to his teacher *even in thought*.”

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 saying that he should be beaten, he should be whipped publicly, etc. In condemning violence, we are ourselves on the verge of becoming violent. Hence Mr. Judge writes in *An Epitome of Theosophy*:

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.”

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

According to a story in *Shrimad Bhagavatam* authored by Ved Vyasa, *gopis* (shepherdesses) had left their clothes on the river bank to bathe in the river. Krishna took the clothes away and refused to give them back to the pleading *gopis* unless the *gopis* came out of the water, naked. The *gopis* tried to cover their bodies, as much as possible, with their hands, but they were told that they had offended Varuna, the god of water, by bathing naked in the river, and hence, they should seek forgiveness by raising their hands and joining their palms, above their heads. When the *gopis* obeyed Krishna they got back their clothes. What are we to make of this story? Is this a semi erotic tale, and Krishna nothing but a debauch, as some critics have suggested? Let us remember that *Shrimad Bhagavatam* was written by Ved Vyasa who is also the author of the Vedas and *Mahabharata*. But even after writing these he was not satisfied, when Narada suggested that Vyasa should write a divine sacred text describing the glory of Krishna suffused with the spirit of *bhakti* or devotion, because the highest goal of knowledge is devotion to the Lord. Hence, Vyasa wrote *Bhagavatam* and experienced perfect peace and happiness.

The story, therefore, is a symbolic expression of what is demanded of the devotee in order to attain the highest rung of devotion, where one loses one’s identity in the intense love for the Lord. To reach the highest form of devotion we must be able to shed *pashas* or bonds of desires and passions. There were eight *gopis* and there are eight bonds, which according to *Tantra Shastra* are: *raga* (attachment), *moha* (delusion), *bhaya* (fear), *lajja* (shame), *ghrina* (disgust), *kula* (family), *sila* (custom) and *varna* (caste). According to Vedanta the eight bonds are: five senses, mind (emotions), intellect and ego. These are the eight bonds by which the soul remains bound to mundane life. Taking away of the clothes denotes removal of bonds arising out of ego, desires, emotions and tribal loyalties. The raising of both the hands above their heads

by the *gopis* and letting go of all body consciousness is the supreme act of surrender without which *bhakti* is incomplete.

In *Mahabharata*, when Draupadi was being disrobed publicly in the court, she pleaded with all those present in the court, which included her five husbands, grandsire, warriors and Teachers, but all were silent. It was only when she stopped struggling to maintain her modesty and with folded hands prayed to Krishna, yards upon yards of cloth seemed to be added to her robes, which became endless. “In real crunch situation, each one is alone....As long as we wrestle and struggle, the Lord would stand aside....To the one who takes refuge in the Lord, to the one who truly surrenders and dares to stand naked, there is redemption and salvation,” writes Narendra Murty. (*Life Positive*, July 2014)

All the scriptures are written allegorically, and hence, instead of dead-letter interpretation, we are expected to exercise intuitive faculty to interpret the symbols. H.P.B. points out that phallic worship only developed with the gradual loss of the keys to the inner meaning of the religious symbols. When the symbology of *lingam* and *yonis* is not understood, it leads to phallic or sexual worship. To practicing Hindus, however, the two together are a reminder that the male and female principles are inseparable and that they represent the totality of all existence. The *lingam* is generally placed in the *Yoni*, and their union represents the abstract form of creation, through spirit and matter.

*Atma-nivedana* or complete surrender of the self is the highest form of devotion, which is misunderstood to imply surrender of responsibilities, but it means surrendering personal will to the divine will. In *Light on the Path* the disciple is advised, “Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest be not thou the warrior.”

There are seven keys to interpret every symbol, *viz.*, metaphysical, geometrical, numerical, psychological, anthropological, etc. Marco Polo learnt from the naked ascetics of India that they were not ashamed to be naked, because “nakedness” represented for them freedom from worldly possessions, as also,

freedom from sins of flesh. In Old Testament we read that Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness after eating the apple. “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God *make coats of skin*, and clothed them,” (*Genesis*, iii, 21) implies that the spiritual man had reached, in the course of evolution, to that point where matter predominating over and conquering spirit, had transformed him into the physical man. Thus, “nakedness” represents ethereal races not yet tainted with materiality.

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In our culture an angry reaction in certain situations, such as, poor customer service, banking errors, unreliable colleagues, display of selfishness by family members, is considered perfectly justifiable. Anger has profoundly negative effect on our own inner peace. There is nobody who lives happily with anger. When we are angered by people or situations, we reinforce the likelihood that we will be angered by them again in the future, and thus create karmic causes for later effect. Besides generating negativity in a person, full-blown anger can be like a form of temporary insanity in which we say and do things that we would never normally contemplate, and which we may later regret. Geshe Loden writes that “anger creates the karma to experience malice, fear, increased ignorance, as well as loneliness and a lack of resources.”

“Increased ignorance” implies specific form of ignorance, in which anger makes us see people and situations as inherently negative—the world around us becomes a darker and unhappier place. It is this tendency to concretise or deepen “world versus me” dualism, which is implied by “increased ignorance,” wherein one feels that one is constantly being persecuted by service providers, tax departments, relatives and other “enemies.” Anger is considered to be primary source of many illnesses, such as, high blood pressure, sleeplessness, upset digestive system and also mental agitation.

It is useful to distinguish between “wrathfulness,” where we

appear to be angry but we are not, and the “anger,” which is a spontaneous expression of the emotion we truly feel. Parents often use *wrathfulness* to discipline children, in which the anger expressed is surface appearance, motivated by compassion. The pictures of ferocious-looking “wrathful” Buddhas, with many heads and limbs, carrying weapons and breathing fire, are manifestations of compassion though having appearance of fury, depicting the psychological truth that threatening emotions can be overcome by even more powerful forces of love and compassion, writes David Michie. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, July 20, 2014)

Anger is a great obstacle to spiritual progress. In the Second Chapter of the *Gita* we are given a whole destructive chain of consequences triggered by anger: “He who attendeth to the inclinations of the senses, in them hath a concern, from this concern is created passion, from passion anger, from anger is produced delusion, from delusion a loss of the memory, from the loss of memory loss of discrimination, and from loss of discrimination loss of all!” There is no such thing as righteous indignation. Anger must be avoided because of its destructive nature. We are not to suppress anger, but get rid of it by finding out the root cause. It is our pride and attachment to name and form, as also, desire to have our way that leads to anger.

In the article, “Culture of Concentration,” Mr. Judge explains the reason why sages dwell upon the need for calmness. After having succeeded in making the astral body coherent, when the aspirant allows anger to arise, it manifests itself in an uncontrollable trembling which begins at the centre and violently pulls apart the hitherto coherent particles. If allowed to go on it will disintegrate the whole mass, which will then reassume its natural place in the body. And each time this happens the result is the same. “There is no such thing as having what is called ‘righteous anger’ in this study and escaping these inevitable consequences. Whether your ‘rights’ have been unjustly and flagrantly invaded or not does not matter. The anger is a force that will work itself out in its appointed

way. Therefore, anger must be strictly avoided, and it cannot be avoided unless charity and love—absolute toleration—are cultivated,” writes Mr. Judge.

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Recently, Jeremy Meeks, a career criminal, aged 30, was arrested on five weapon felonies and one gang-related charge, in Stockton, California. But these charges, along with his six prior felonies, have not stopped both men and women from going gaga over his good looks. One woman expressed that he was “too pretty to go to jail,” while another said she would drink his bath water! Serial killer Charles Shobhraj also elicited a response similar to Meeks. “Your looks definitely help you get away with a lot,” says former Miss World, Diana Hayden.

Do we let beautiful people off the hook easily because we think they are not capable of being bad? We are forced to ask ourselves: “To what extent does beauty influence minds?” Why do good looks make people blind? “Our eyes stop at the best-looking person at a social gathering or in a new office. The first point of attraction is always beauty, the mind is used later,” says Airline executive, Payal Chatterjee. The world of psychology calls it the “Halo effect,” *i.e.*, a cognitive bias, so that a good-looking person is expected to be good at his work and is considered a good person. Likewise, when someone is average or ugly, people are quick to judge them. We assume that physically attractive people possess socially-desirable personality traits.

Actor-director Makrand Deshpande puts it simply, “When someone gives you a beautiful flower and tells you not to smell it because it is poisonous, you will doubt the person. You will wonder how something so stunning can be so dangerous. It is the same thing with people... Their [good-looking people] looks mesmerise us and incapacitate us of rational thought.” A study in the United Kingdom (UK) revealed that good-looking criminals can turn the jury in their favour. Researchers at the Bath Spa University, UK,

told 96 volunteers about (fictitious) mugging case, giving them pictures of an attractive person and an ugly person. Volunteers were ready to acquit the attractive person even though the evidence was not in his favour, while the ugly person was readily believed to be guilty. When we go merely by outward beauty, “handsome, clearly, is not as handsome does,” writes Haimanti Mukherjee. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, July 13, 2014)

In our world “anything that would achieve success has to be built on *appearances, not on reality, on self-assertion, not on intrinsic value,*” writes H.P.B. Our civilization is built up of shams and appearances, and we offer prizes and premiums for every “*best thing*” under the Sun—for the biggest baby and the largest orchid—but offer no encouragement to morality, or give prize for any moral virtue, she adds. Beautiful appearance has almost hypnotizing effect on both children and adults, and advertisers take advantage of it. In an advertisement, when a beautiful girl in silk gown recommends buying soap or toothpaste of a particular brand, we are induced to buy it. Aldous Huxley observes that children should be taught that there is no earthly connection between the merits of the toothpaste and the beautiful girl in the silk gown advertising it.

Beauty of form does not guarantee beauty of character. In some other context, Mr Judge remarks, “We are aware that an unhandsome or deformed body often enshrines a glorious mind and pure soul, and that a beautifully formed exterior—such as in the case of the Borgias—may hide an incarnate devil in character.” And yet, especially in India, boys prefer fair girls, and in arranged marriages it is extremely difficult to get a match for dark-complexioned girls. From the beauty of form, we should learn to appreciate the inner beauty or beauty of the essence. It will enable us to recognize the *soul* within the person we love. Unless our inward eyes open, we are likely to be led astray by false prophets and so-called spiritual teachers, who glamourize people by their charisma and handsome exterior.