

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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PERFECTING HUMAN NATURE

THE *Dharma* (duty) of fire is to burn and that of water is to flow. What is *Manushya Dharma* (duty of man)? It is to fulfil his *svabhava* (own true nature), and that in turn is to manifest charity, justice, generosity—qualities that specifically belong to the human kingdom and hence can be natural to man when he has developed qualities of a human being. But that is not the whole of the story. Perfect human development involves perfection of human nature so that “human man” can become divine man so that there is a perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human. “Not only is man more than an animal because there is a god in him, but he is more than a god because there is the animal in him.” Spiritual progress depends upon right relation of these two forces—animal and divine. We have allowed the animal to usurp the place of the god. Once we allow the god to rule the animal, we will be in possession of great force and power hitherto unknown to us, says *Through the Gates of Gold*.

But altruism is an integral part of self-development. “Self-knowledge is of loving deeds the child.” Hence, the *dharma* of self-development is to “live to benefit mankind,” “to be the better able to help and teach others.” In other words, the goal of human development is to become an occultist, which means acquiring discrimination of good from evil and gaining that power “through

which he can do the good he desires, often without even apparently lifting a finger.” Gnosticism speaks of keeping the image of the highest before us and imitating the highest Parents or “Fathers” (the divine Creators), and actualizing what is potential in us. But what do we know of these highest “Fathers”? And yet, keeping them before us as role models, we are reminded of the ever-growing perfectibility. It is also with the view that just as the arrow is to be aimed high to allow for the trajectory, so also we must have high mental and spiritual aim, allowing for the limitations of our nature. But, for taking practical steps, we take the “Mahatmas” as our Ideals. In the *Gita*, Arjuna asks for the description of the *Sthitaprajna*—the wise and devoted man, who is fixed in contemplation and confirmed in spiritual knowledge. It is by ideating on the real nature of the Mahatmas that we get the direction for our own progress. We see the necessity of cultivating the spirit of absolute self-sacrifice and compassion.

However, one thing is certain, that the process of human development is from within without. We are asked to keep the ideal before us, because all of us have the “germs” of powers and qualities that a Mahatma has developed through training and experience. Each one of us is a masked wonder. Anshul Chaturvedi refers to a poignant moment in the movie *Spider-Man2*, where the superhero, exhausted after the exertions in holding a train back from hurtling to disaster, was gently brought inside by the passengers. His patent mask had come off, exposing the innocent face of a young boy. There is an ordinary person behind the mask of every superhero. We all have it in us to rise above our limitations.

Theosophy can be made a living power within us only by applying the teachings from moment to moment, so that they can help us in the form of “voice of conscience.” The more we heed this “voice,” the more guidance it gives. It takes us by the scruff and makes us do a thing we may not desire. In a similar manner, we are asked to think of “the Master as a living man within” us. He is an actual, living guide, not outside but within us. So that the first

step in taking the Masters as Ideals is to have a firm belief in their existence coupled with devotion and faith—for it will be a long time before we can see any Master in flesh and blood. A Master of Wisdom himself says that where the belief in the *Mahatmas* was lacking or was half-hearted, Their power to help was for some reason inhibited. Mr. Judge writes:

If the channel through which the water is meant to flow is stopped up, the water will not run there, but if a clear channel is provided the current will pass forward. Occult help from Masters requires a channel just as much as any other help does, and the fact that the currents to be used are occult makes the need for a channel greater. The persons to be acted on must take part in making the channel or line for the force to act. (*The Heart Doctrine*, pp. 9-10)

But *Letters That Have Helped Me* reminds us that the Masters are the connecting *bridge*. It says that since meditation on the Higher Self is difficult, seek, then, the bridge—the Masters. Mr. Judge mentions in *An Epitome of Theosophy* that the process of spiritual development takes place entirely within the individual himself, but that, however interior and personal, this process is not unaided, being possible, in fact, only through close communion with the supreme source of all strength. That is because, as H.P.B. mentions in the article “Spiritual Progress,” the process of human development is a process of growth in which there is disruption: the inner being must continually burst through its confining shell or encasement and such disruption is accompanied by pain—mental, psychic and intellectual. Hence the need to turn within, as the power to make, to unmake and to re-make—which are the powers of divinity—are all within us. It is the creative will, the divine power of the spirit within. The force of Spirit is infinite and exhaustless and it can become available to us only when we acquire universal ideas, because the action of the will is through the ideas.

Then again, since the process involves destruction and pain, if we are not to be thrown off-balance, we have to learn to lean on

the ocean of life, our higher nature. Where shall we look for help? “To your Karma and to your Higher Self,” answers Theosophy. We need to make this divinity our psychological base of support, centring our sense of self or “I” in that seventh principle. *Light on the Path* asks us to enlist the help of Krishna within, in our battle with our lower nature. “Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest be not thou the warrior. Look for the warrior and let him fight in thee....He is eternal and is sure.” The warrior is one’s Higher Self, the gentle but fierce Krishna. The help and guidance for spiritual living comes from inner planes of being. It is only when we are ready to efface the personality and are prepared to surrender our personal will to the divine will that we can get this help. Mr. Judge suggests the following meditation:

Here is advice given by many Adepts: every day and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake—think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain, or astral man, but that you are THAT, and “THAT” is the Supreme Soul....By persistence in this, by submitting your daily thoughts each night to the judgement of your Higher Self, you will at last gain light. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

There has to be perfection in all departments of nature—mental, psychic, moral and physical. How does one purify the “sheaths of the soul” so that they can reflect the light within, like the alabaster vase? Purifying the “sheaths” involves the control of mind and purification of thoughts and desires. A little reflection shows that all that we are is made up of our thoughts and is founded on our thoughts. Since thought precedes desire, purification of thoughts leads to purification of desire. It is very important to purify desires. We are told that both Will and Desire are absolute creators, and man makes himself in the image of his desires, and he has to create himself in the likeness of the Divine, through his Will. We need to purify the desire and make “Will” the ruler. Our desire must be only for the purely abstract, devoid of the tinge of “self,” *i.e.*, we must cease to desire things of matter and so also, power, knowledge,

love, happiness, etc. In other words, we have to *set our heart on the Divine*, and see in THAT our guide, friend, asylum, witness, etc. Hence *Light on the Path* advises:

Desire only that which is within you....For within you is the light of the world—the only light that can be shed upon the Path....If you are unable to perceive it within you, it is useless to look for it elsewhere.

The automatism of body itself is owing to thoughts. To make the body pure and tractable, we have to concentrate on purifying thoughts. If we proceed along right lines, and inculcate right motive, right ideation and right imagination we can change the quality of *prana* and make purer quality of *prana* to flow into us. The perfection of human nature hinges around mind control and thought purification. Hence the importance of meditation, conscious and cautious, upon the lower in the light of the Higher Self. It is necessary to devote certain time of the day or night to meditation on noble ideas and themes, and to self-examination. It is only through this daily meditation that one can acquire the power of concentrating one’s mind and will. It also aids in making our brain-consciousness receptive so that impressions from the Divine can reach it and can be retained.

The whole process of purification and perfection is gradual, stretching over a series of lifetimes. Thus:

From strength to strength, from the beauty and perfection of one plane to the greater beauty and perfection of another, with accessions of new glory, of fresh knowledge and power in each cycle, such is the destiny of every Ego, which thus becomes its own Saviour in each world and incarnation. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 152-53)

I SAW the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free.

—MICHELANGELO

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS

TWO of the contributions made by Theosophy towards the enlightenment of the race-mind concern the significance of cycles and the meaning of festivals.

Theosophy teaches that the involution-evolution of spirit-matter proceeds all the time, necessitating birth, death and rebirth for all forms, in an endless series. This Cycle of Incarnation or “Necessity,” which is interrelated with the law of Karma—causes producing effects which become the causes of further effects—can be seen throughout a manifested universe and in the vast background of “numberless universes incessantly appearing and disappearing,” as the Second Fundamental of the Ancient Wisdom states. The heavenly bodies in their courses take similar positions in ever-recurring cycles, and so does the Earth. Man’s cycle includes birth, death and rebirth. What is gained by these changes is ever-increasing experience or knowledge—cohesion leading to sensation and then to instinct in the lower kingdoms of Nature, and to self-consciousness in man. Hence we have to view the cyclic progress as a spiral motion, leading to continuous growth.

Theosophy gives us a clue as to why, throughout all known ages, many festivals have been associated with the cyclic events in Nature, and sometimes also with religious events. Some festivals have at their basis the keeping alive in man’s mind of the memory of those Great Souls who, by their life and teachings, have helped the spiritual growth of mankind. Also we have festivals to keep alive the memory of historical figures, such as great statesmen, warriors, literary giants and martyrs. Though some may think that there is nothing to be gained by remembering these giants among men and their deeds, whether of bravery on the battlefield, of sagacity in the political field, of compassion for all on the part of the philanthropists, or of martyrdom suffered for any great cause, yet without these memories humanity would be much poorer than

it is today. Longfellow spoke truly:

Lives of great men all remind us
 We can make our lives sublime,
 And, departing, leave behind us
 Footprints on the sands of time;
 Footprints, that perhaps another,
 Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
 A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
 Seeing, shall take heart again.

Feasting and merrymaking are associated with festivals, but the true meaning of the exchange of gifts and the serving of food at festivals has now been lost, and what can only be called “orgies” take the place of remembrance of the sacrifice involved in the production of food for our sustenance, and of the recognition of the unity of all life. The good Christian gives thanks to his “God” for the food he receives every day; the Hindu is advised to think of Vishnu while eating; food is blessed by the priest, etc. The idea of serving food at festivals has its source in charity to the poor—not to one’s own rich relations and friends!

When our thoughts are turned to the Christmas festival, the event it celebrates should be known. The tendency is to look upon it as a special birth, of the “only son of God,” or as a psychological event. Sometimes to ignore the events traditionally associated with the birth of the infant Jesus and to centre on the concept of the birth of the Christ-Spirit in us takes away much of the value of the lesson to be learnt.

Who was Jesus the Christ? H.P.B. wrote that “we revere him as a man”; he “gave us a glorious example”; he was “one of the greatest reformers”; “one of the grandest and most clearly defined figures on the panorama of human history”; “he was an Adept.” It is the birth of this Adept that is celebrated at Christmas, and unless we bear this in mind much of the celebration ceases to mean anything of value to us. His coming to birth was to help mankind, not merely

the Jews, and he is said to have told his followers: “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.”

Remembering the Theosophical teaching about the birth of Jesus, we can understand more of the story given in the Gospels. We are told that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was visited by the Angel Gabriel—standing for the Higher Ego—and told: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Can we not see here that the descending Ego overshadowed the woman who was to give him his physical body and flooded her heart with joy? We know that she was chosen because she was pure and suitable enough to bear such a child; she was “blessed among women.” We know she visited the mother of John the Baptist—he who was to be the forerunner of Jesus. And we know that she bore the child in the manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

The signs of the birth were being watched for by wise men from the East, and when they saw the star which showed them where the child was born, they visited the babe with their gifts of gold (a suitable gift for a king or ruler), frankincense (used for countless ages as an incense in temples and having a healing quality), and myrrh (also having a healing quality to protect him). News of the event was also imparted to the shepherds by “the angel of the Lord,” and to Herod, the king, who wanted to destroy the child. Is this just an exaggerated myth? If we turn our minds to the present day, do we not, as students of Theosophy, find ourselves watching for “signs”? Do not astrologers see signs portending a great event? The shepherds, surely, can be compared to ourselves, for they were able to “hear” the good tidings and to respond. Though we do not have any historically accurate account of the birth and life of Jesus, we should remember that there *was* an Adept born around 100 B.C.

Can we not see in the old man Simeon, who beheld the child

Jesus and knew him as the Christ to be, those who will recognize the new Messenger and will repeat with Simeon, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace....for mine eyes have seen thy salvation”? Anna, too, a prophetess of 84 years, recognized the child as the future saviour and redeemer.

The slaughter of the “Innocents” by King Herod, who hoped the child Jesus, too, would be slain along with the rest, means not merely the slaughter of innocent children but of Initiates, for Initiates were called “Innocents” on account of their holiness. Herod is the type of Kansa, the maternal uncle of Krishna; and just as the latter was taken out of harm’s way, so was Jesus. On his return to Jerusalem he astounded the teachers in the Temple—as Buddha astounded his teachers; and Krishna, his mother.

We read (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 23*, p. 8) that on the day Jesus was born, all Nature rejoiced and carried to the feet of the Babe her best and holiest gifts. Near the place where the birth took place, there grew three trees—an olive, a palm and a pine. The olive tree brought forth its golden fruit; the palm offered to the Christ-child its green and shadowy vault, as a protection against heat and storm; but the pine tree had nothing to offer, and so it wept bitterly. The stars, however, took pity on it and hosts of shooting stars fell down on it, twinkling and shining from every needle, from top to bottom. Legend has it that from that time on men have adopted the habit of ornamenting the pine tree with numberless little lights at Christmas time.

Lest we smile at this as an absurdity, let us remember the water that miraculously appeared to give the first bath to the babe Siddhartha, the Bo tree which spread its branches to give shade to the meditating Buddha, and the rocks that came together to prevent the stone hurled down by Devadatta from killing the Buddha. Let us also remember what *The Voice of the Silence* tells us about all Nature thrilling “with joyous awe,” and the effect on it of a Buddha’s triumph. If Nature is sevenfold, then spiritual events affect the inner side of it, and the essential kinship of all makes it thrill in response

to these mighty events.

If we take the psychological or spiritual significance behind the story of the birth of Jesus, we could say that the manger stands for our heart in which the Christ principle is born; the domesticated beasts represent the animal passions which have been tamed and turned to use. Mary or the mother aspect in us is the matter side which has become pure enough to “find favour;” that is, to have the good Karma to serve as the vehicle for the descent of the Christ-Ego. The slaughter of the “Innocents” reminds us that those who follow the path of higher integrity are always persecuted and have to suffer.

We should remember also the final crucifixion story and the burst of praise which came from the dying lips at the final moment of realization: “My God, how thou hast glorified me!” There comes a moment when all that has been suffered is seen as worth while.

The life story of each one of us from birth—brought about by the Christ in us, the Ego, through life to death—also brought about by the Ego—ends in triumph or sadness in proportion as we have lived for the Ego’s experience, or grabbed the passing joys for the satisfaction of the animal man. Such stories as the Christmas story should warm our hearts and be a source of inspiration all through the year. Between Christmas and Easter, we are told, “the astral life of the earth is young and strong.” We may inscribe it “with the history of noble deeds, days well spent,” if we will “seize the diamond-pen” and fill up the “innumerable pages of our life record.” It is up to us. “None else compels.”

MAN himself is the source of all his troubles, for the light of God pours over him eternally. But through his all-too-bodily existence man comes to cast a shadow, so that the light cannot reach him.

—MARTIN BUBER

PLATO AND HIS IDEAS

I

H. P. BLAVATSKY, in her monumental work, *Isis Unveiled*, sums up her comments on Plato and his philosophy, thus:

Such is Platonism. “Out of Plato,” says Ralph Waldo Emerson, “come all things that are still written and debated among men of thought.” He absorbed the learning of his times—of Greece from Philolaus to Socrates; then of Pythagoras in Italy; then what he could procure from Egypt and the East. He was so broad that all philosophy, European and Asiatic, was in his doctrines; and to culture and contemplation he added the nature and qualities of the poet. (p. xv)

Chapter XV of the *Bhagavad-Gita* is entitled *Purushottama-Yoga*, i.e., devotion or the method of union with the spirit by realizing the nature of the highest spiritual element or *Purushottama*. Plato is one of those who have indicated to us, partly by rational argument and partly by the poetic quality, what the presence of that spiritual element in this world is like. In the ordinary sense he was not an orthodox or pious, religious man. In fact, he was the greatest disciple of Socrates, whom Athens put to death as heretic, as one who was upsetting all their inherited sense of religion and piety among the youth and misleading them. One of the most wonderful writings of Plato is a dialogue called “The Apology,” which is about the life and death of Socrates. Plato’s manner of writing is to be linked with this tremendous relationship in his life—his relationship to Socrates.

When we read the actual dialogues, we hardly ever find Plato saying, “I think so” or “This is my view.” It is as if he were writing a play in which a number of people, usually young, bright inquirers who hold all kinds of views, are discussing things with Socrates. Socrates deals with them not by laying down the law, but with what has been traditionally called the “Socratic irony.” In other

words, Plato seems to say: “I don’t know what the truth about the thing is, but let us see if we can find out.” Many of the dialogues are named after the people with whom Socrates was discussing something. So “Theaetetus” is a dialogue of Socrates with Theaetetus.

In one dialogue, there is a man who is about to go and denounce his own father to the authorities, because the father has thrashed a slave unmercifully and injured him, and the son considers it to be an act of non-integrity and non-piety. In the dialogue, Socrates makes him sit down and says that if he was going to denounce his own father then he must be very sure indeed of what is the right thing to do and what is integrity and piety. Then, in a typical Socratic way, he urges this man to tell him the meaning of integrity and piety. Socrates did not say he was wrong, he simply put a further question to make him think for himself and adjust his own statements. Pointing out the implications of the statements made, bit by bit, Socrates led him on to discover the truth. This was not just a *habit*. Socrates is traditionally said to have announced that the un-criticized life is not worth living. “Un-criticized” does not mean that which is blamed or censored; it means that which is not critically examined with the highest reason. In life we may do many things—sometimes out of sheer habit or impulse. But such a life is likely to be inconsistent, as, what we do today may not be consistent with what we are going to do tomorrow. It may also be inconsistent with our own permanent character, if we have one. Socrates would have been perfectly willing to discuss at great length whether you have or have not got a permanent character, etc. This is “Socratic irony.” This is what is called “dialectic”—the Socratic technique of exposing false beliefs and eliciting truth. *Or* we might call it the Platonic investigation of the Eternal Ideas. In this respect, Plato is very much like the great *Acharyas* (Teachers) of Indian tradition—whatever they taught, they expressed as a comment on the traditional works and claimed no originality. For instance, almost all the great works of *Shankaracharya* are in the form of

commentaries, upon *Upanishads*, *Brahmasutra* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. So also Plato conveys his teachings as that which his teacher Socrates taught.

To the student of Theosophy there is another side to Plato. What the Encyclopedic dictionary says about him is that he lived about 428-348 B.C. He lived in Athens after its Golden Age under Pericles. Athens had begun to decline when Plato lived. Plato was the great Philosopher, pupil of Socrates, and author of dialogues based on the teachings of Socrates and the doctrines of Pythagoras. This fact is important because Plato had assimilated the great Pythagorean tradition, which was simultaneously scientific, philosophical and mystical. Pythagoras thought that at least a little knowledge of mathematics and music was essential before one could begin the study of philosophy. A beginner in the Pythagorean School was called *Akoustikoi* and was not allowed even to ask questions, but only listen. After a period he became *Asketai* or Practitioner. This is but an echo of the Indian *Shravakas* and *Shramanas*. To Pythagoras is attributed the wonderful key ideas and mystical feelings, such as “the music of the spheres.” Plato had assimilated all these teachings.

The Theosophical Glossary describes Plato as an “Initiate into the Mysteries.” His teacher, Socrates, was not initiated into the Mysteries. Plato was certainly an Initiate. It is quite a challenge to even begin to approach the wonderful mind of Plato. He was not only the greatest of the Greek philosophers, but has greatly influenced the Western mind. Unfortunately Plato and all that Greece had to give was lost during the Dark Ages for some time. Medieval Europe first salvaged the teachings of Aristotle, but they had only a few fragments of Plato. It was only gradually that the rest of Plato’s teachings became available. Aristotle, the pupil of Plato, was called the master of “Those who know.” However, he diverged in one important respect from Plato—in his ways of thought. Plato’s thinking was not only rational, but he had a way of always trying to find a basis in some universal principle relating

to the subject in hand. From the universal he tried to work towards the particulars—work towards implications. He distrusted the collection of a few particulars. The Aristotelian habit of mind, of moving from particulars towards generalization of the universals, is the other great choice for rational thinkers. Since Plato was not given heed during those crucial centuries, the Aristotelian way of thinking took hold of the Christian world and of the Western mind. So much so that when it was restated by Francis Bacon, at the time of awakening of the scientific period of the 17th century, he actually spoke of “putting Nature to question,” which had ugly implications in those days. Putting somebody to question meant to make him give whatever evidence he had in a legal or a criminal case by torturing him! We find here a faint echo of disrespect for Nature—of treating Nature as an unwilling witness who could be compelled into telling us what we want. This habit of exploiting nature has dominated modern civilization since the 17th century until now. It is now beginning to be slowly reversed by the ecological movement and our awareness of it. The blotting out of Plato has been tragic for the whole development of western philosophical and social thinking. But once he was re-discovered, he had an enormous influence.

Professor Alfred North Whitehead, in his book *Process and Reality*, describes the whole European philosophical tradition as consisting of a series of “footnotes to Plato.” Every great philosopher has important ideas to present, but in Plato’s case, the *central* teaching was *Ideas*. He used a Greek word for it, which can be translated differently as “Ideas” or “Forms.” Plato says that when we see something we call it beautiful or good or triangular or red and so on. But these things that we observe are not all alike. Perhaps no two of them are quite like each other. What is this universal thing called beauty or goodness or squareness or redness or triangularity, that is present in innumerable examples of beautiful things or red things or triangles, but which we never find by itself? There are equilateral triangles, isosceles triangles, large triangles

and small ones. Have we ever seen triangularity? And yet there is a universal nature of triangles to which any triangle must conform, otherwise it is not a triangle at all. Redness is only a name to Nominalists, but for Realists it is a real thing. Plato made it clear that the Universal is not just a word, or a label—it exists. In Greek philosophical history two great things were said: (1) Everything that we can observe is constantly changing. The great Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that we could not bathe in the same river twice, because the second time we take a dip, the river would have undergone change. (2) There was another great man called Parmenides, also a Greek philosopher, who pointed out that nothing that exists can simply vanish out of existence, *i.e.*, if there is no permanence, you cannot deal with Reality. He held that the multiplicity of existing things, their changing forms and motion, are but an appearance of a single Eternal Reality, thus giving rise to the Parmedian principle that “all is one.” Plato put these two together and made a lucid statement that anything that we see, which keeps changing, in a sense does not have total reality. We cannot *know* it, because to *know* something is to be aware of it in all its aspects. Any such awareness that we form becomes invalid the next day, if the thing itself changes. Hence Plato states that about such things you can have *opinions*, but you cannot have *knowledge*. Behind these arguments, we can sense his passion or devotion, that we must have *real knowledge* and that the life of a person is not worth anything if it is not devoted to real knowledge. The opinion regarding coldness or warmness of water, expressed by someone depending on whether he has emerged from a hot bath or a cold shower is not knowledge. One may call it warm and another may call it cold, but things must have their own real nature. Of course, this nature has to work through what Heraclitus calls, continually changing world of form—the visible world or the world of matter.

(To be concluded)

SENSING THE SWEET SIDE OF LIFE

For practical purposes: if we are developing the child-heart; if we are learning to love things beautiful; if we are becoming more honest and plain and simple; if we are *beginning to sense the sweet side of life*: if we are getting to like our friends better and extending the circle; if we feel ourselves expanding in sympathy; if we love to work for Theosophy and do not ask for position as a reward; if we are not bothering too much about whether we are personal or impersonal—this is traveling on the path of impersonality....It is to become less doctrinal and more *human*.

—*The Friendly Philosopher*

ROBERT Crosbie had reasons for correcting wrong notions about *Impersonality*, as the above quotation promotes its true nature. It is not a cold negation of things human, but an outgoing love for our fellow-human beings that warms the heart, one which naturally forgets one's *personal self* in the process. Simply put, impersonality begins with self-forgetfulness and has at the heart universal concern for others all the time.

It also implies a *perceptive faculty*, a process of developing the heart of a child, the awareness of a poet, sweetness of temper and optimistic faith in mankind and its destiny. It requires an ability to enjoy the rainbow and the heart-warming colour of the earth; to laugh with spontaneous wit and wisdom; to appreciate and rejoice at the excellence in others; feel happy when others are happy.

When the self or personal ego is ignored and recognized to be a nonentity, then there is the chance for opening up the higher regions of the mind—where great and noble faculties are awaiting to flower forth. Hence, certain pre-conditions and appropriate predisposition is required before all the noble senses and faculties mentioned by Robert Crosbie, might come to the fore.

One of the foremost talents required of the soul is, “sensing the sweet side of life.” It means having the *perceptive faculty* or

“sense”—both intellectual and intuitive—a sort of enlarging awareness and heightened sensibility to insignificant-looking, small but precious things around us, which escape our care and appreciation. Most of the time we are so preoccupied with our personal concerns that we miss the poetic vision and philosophical insight of the moment.

Some Japanese homes are interiorly decorated with *ordinary*-looking stones. To the Japanese, there is a beauty of form in that stone, and a meaning to its place in the universe! A sculptor may already “see” a carved figure in a block of wood before him, with the eye of an artist. Can we exclaim, like a child, with Wordsworth: “My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky”? Do we say with Robert Browning: “I find earth not grey but rosy. Heavens, not grim but fair of hue!”? When the first Astronauts were rushing in their jet-propelled vehicle toward the Moon, one of them looked back at our “grey” earth and felt a pinch of home-sickness on seeing the greenish-blue globe! “My earth” is so beautiful, why can't we live in peace on this earth, with which the whole of humanity and others are hurtling forward to their great, unknown destination!

Such an insight suddenly wells up in minds that are not lost in the matter-of-fact world of grim reality of personal existence. It needs *optimism* such as that expressed by Robert Browning: “God's in his heaven, All's right with the world!”, and the faith of Samuel Smiles who says: “Order is heaven's first Law; a place for everything, and everything in place.”

A secure *Faith in the Law* that rules our life and destiny, the Law (*Dharma*) that supports or holds together, cohesively, all within the Universe, is necessary to permit a joyful living and freedom from anxiety, and an ability to *see* things differently, even in the face of “grim reality.” This faculty, this robust disposition, which makes us willing to see so much of good, delightful and pleasing things around us, needs also an ability to see the same within us. For, within us is the Law of our Being, which moves to righteousness, a law which prevails and which is finally sovereign.

Those who maintain a calm reliance on the goodness and justice of the Law within, which brings events and people in our life, can cheerfully endure life's unpleasant experiences. The Wisdom of the ages states that this is an orderly universe of Law and everything therein adjusts toward central Harmony, which adjustment is pivotal to our own spiritual nature. When we fall back on this certainty, we gain a disposition that maintains equanimity and peace with others and with the self.

Besides faith in the Law, one needs faith in the inner potentialities of man and in the intrinsic goodness of human nature. The same age-old Wisdom asserts that man as a human spirit-soul, is a potential god in the making. Humanistic psychologist Erich Fromm states: "Man is here to evolve and finally to succeed himself; that is, to become what he *is* potentially." If man has an exalted origin in Divinity Itself—like a ray emanating from the Sun—then he must have the same luminous nature of his Parent. Hence the *faith* in man's great future possibilities becomes the source of optimistic tenor of one's life and a buoyant outlook necessary for "sensing the sweet side of life." "If we could *see* our true destiny, as Mr. Judge puts it, we could not consider the events of life as anything but opportunities. Not one thing comes amiss to those who so see." (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 170)

Why is it that we are unable to see things rosy and bright and sweet? Why is it that we seem to be Saturnine (gloomy) instead of being Jovial (Jove-Jupiter)? Why have we become so hard, rough, unfeeling, matter-of-fact individuals? It is because we have developed the cynical outlook of some academics, who see only "the hole when shown a dough-nut!" We keep company with morbid newspaper stories and books of sordid fiction; we expose ourselves to the bombardment of horror pictures and "grim realities" of the day on the television screen.

An antidote to these can be found in *St. Paul's Epistle IV to the Philippians*:

Whatever things *are* true, Whatever things *are* honest,

Whatever things *are* just, Whatever things *are* pure,
 Whatever things *are* lovely, Whatever things *are* of good
 report,
 If *there be* any virtue, If *there be* any praise,
 Think on these things.

For, by habitual *dwelling* on the sunnier side of life and on concepts such as Truth, Goodness and Beauty, we make them a part of ourselves. For such is the law of mental dynamics. We become that on which we consistently dwell.

There is also the law of mental affinity—"like attracts like." Our thoughts "of good or evil import" attract similar natures and forces toward us (*S.D.*, I, 181). Negative thoughts of anxiety, ill-will, etc., have an affinity toward unwholesome things, which get attracted toward us, *as well as others*. Herein lies our responsibility for the quality of our mental atmosphere. Just as "the company of the wise brings happiness," because their presence has a healing and harmonizing beneficence, its opposite also is true. Unknowingly, we help or hinder those who come in contact with us through the disposition we entertain and the quality of our inner life.

We are all on our way back to Divinity and to regain the child-state we have lost. We have lost ourselves on the way by the glamour of the false knowledge of earthly existence. We will, as a Race, shed the illusive attractions some day, and claim our true sunny Destiny. Then everything will be Sweetness and Light.

THE person who tries to live alone will not succeed as a human being. His heart withers if it does not answer heart. His mind shrinks away if he hears only the echoes of his own thoughts and finds no other inspiration.

— PEARL BUCK

TRUE SERVICE OF HUMANITY

A CLAUSE in the Declaration of the United Lodge of Theosophists reads thus:

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization.

What works we may undertake for the benefit of others qualify to be called “true” service? One of the criteria of “true” service is mentioned in the clause itself as that which is rendered without distinctions based on race, creed and such other considerations. There are other very vital principles as well which we should take into consideration and put into practice if the works we might do for the good of others are to be really beneficial.

Philanthropic works undertaken selectively with a view to benefit those belonging to one’s own sect or creed or community is a common phenomenon. In such cases the ideas and the motive of the philanthropist being narrow and selfish may offset the good which is intended, and may result in general harm, for selfish action, whether of an individual or a community or a nation, cannot but be unjust in this universe of essential oneness and absolute justice.

Works of a philanthropic nature, or gifts bestowed for a cause or given to individuals or organizations with a motive of gaining religious merit, or with a view to public acclaim, reward and recognition on the part of the benefactor, stain the benefit that flows from him with his impure desire, and reduce its value and worth. For charitable works to be beneficial, they should be free from the taint of selfish intent, and not be motivated by mere emotional impulse, but be unselfish and guided by wisdom. Many sincere and dedicated philanthropists have realized this truth in their own long experience. Not a few who have been engaged for years in the work of relieving individuals, or even sections of society living in conditions of wretchedness, morally and physically, have

confessed that many among those whom they reached out with a helping hand not only did not benefit, but the help and relief extended brought out in some of them ingratitude and in others latent vices, as though the miserable condition in which they were, which kept them low, was best for them. It is not uncommon experience among philanthropic workers that some of their beneficiaries were beyond all help, and seemed to love the very conditions of vice and misery from which they were sought to be relieved.

True benefactors of the human race tell us that mere change of external conditions of misery and poverty is not productive of any lasting good, these being but the external manifestation of the state of mind and inner character of the people, which should be well understood and addressed. This calls for a deep knowledge of what man is in truth, and a spiritual insight into the Karmic inheritance of those whom one seeks to help, and into the needs of their souls, on the one hand, and purity of motive, intelligence and wisdom on the part of the philanthropist, on the other.

Therefore, to do good works productive of real benefit to all we require spiritual knowledge. Good motive alone will not do. It is an old adage that the road to hell is often paved with good intentions. Good motive should go hand in hand with wisdom if the works we undertake are to be of real and lasting benefit. *Knowledge, wisdom and purity of motive* are vital factors without which the gifts we may give, the charity that we may do, or the help or service that we may render often turn out to be more harmful than good, as is clearly expounded in the Seventeenth Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the book of spiritual psychology *par excellence*:

Those gifts which are bestowed at the proper time to the proper person, and by men who are not desirous of a return, are of the *sattva* quality, good and of the nature of truth.

Purity of motive comes from spiritual knowledge by which one knows whom, when and how to help, and who are to be left in the

situation in which they are which is their best teacher. For, life is a school and life's experiences that come to us as Karmic effects of our actions in the past have implicit lessons for us to learn and progress.

But that gift which is given with the expectation of a return from the beneficiary or with a view to spiritual benefit flowing therefrom or with reluctance, is of the *Rajas* quality, bad and partaketh of untruth. Gifts given out of place and season and to unworthy persons, without proper attention and scornfully, are of the *Tamas* quality, wholly bad and of the nature of darkness. (*Gita*, XVII)

The attitude of mind, motive, and inner purity of a person have potent effect, for good or ill, on whatever he does. Where there is selfish desire, even unconsciously to the benefactor, for reward, recognition, or expectation of a return benefit from the beneficiary, or a seeming good is done with reluctance, indifference and carelessness, much harm is produced to the beneficiary as to the benefactor, as also to the society at large.

Wise is the person who will not rashly enter into works of charity lest he cause greater harm than the evils sought to be cured, but endeavours to acquire right knowledge, and fits himself, "by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others." This does not imply that we must wait till we acquire spiritual knowledge before entering into good works. It is not possible to make any spiritual progress without selfless service of fellow-beings. Mere study and contemplation would be futile without living a life of altruism. The devotional book, *The Voice of the Silence*, teaches: "To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practise the six glorious virtues is the second."

As he learns the Eternal Verities of life, as the conviction of the truer nature of the Self and of Universal Brotherhood deepens in him, he begins to see more and more clearly that the only way open to true human happiness and progress is through spiritual enlightenment of mankind. He is filled with a desire to let this

Soul-knowledge touch as many of his fellow-men as he can reach out to, and begins, however imperfectly, his first labour of love for the benefit of humanity.

For it is a pure desire, this which comes upon him; he can gain no credit, no glory, no personal reward by fulfilling it. And therefore he obtains the power to fulfil it. (*Light on the Path*, p. 68)

Pure desire is one which is free from personal motives, which arises out of a vision of universal unity, and development of a universal perspective, through long study, reflection and assimilation of the science of human progression and perfection as depicted in Theosophy. The person naturally and spontaneously brings this universal perspective to bear on every thought and act of his, with a motive and an enlightened intent of universal beneficence, and, therefore, free from even a remote expectation of reward or recognition. The good of others takes precedence over his own personal good in the scale of values in his life. When mind and heart are free from personal motives in action, an influx of power and light from within energizes the person, gradually burns away the dross of past transgressions from his nature, and transmutes the same into spiritual dynamic force that regenerates his fellowmen. He by degrees grows to become a power for good in the world. His heart and mind gradually become attuned to the great Mind and Heart of all mankind. Supreme Self is seen and recognized as present equally in oneself and in all, and all in It. Helping others to this grand consummation, in which lies the only panacea for the world's ills, becomes the prime motive of his life. Concerns of individual self and its interests are transformed and transmuted into selfless love of all beings. Good of the world—*Loka sangraha*—becomes the ruling motive of all his actions.

In helping on the development of others, the Theosophist believes that he is not only helping them to fulfil their Karma, but that he is also, in the strictest sense, fulfilling his own. It is

development of humanity, of which both he and they are integral parts, that he has always in view, and he knows that any failure on his part to respond to the highest within him retards not only himself but all, in their progressive march. By his actions, he can make it either more difficult or more easy for humanity to attain to the next higher plane of being. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 234)

It is thus through the right performance of duties of life as Sacrifice (*Yajna*) offered to the Higher Self, the Self of All, that the true devotee enters upon the path of highest service of his fellow-men and fellow-creatures that makes for harmony, enlightenment and spiritual progress of all. In the light of the spiritual knowledge that arises in oneself as a result of devotion to the Self of all in performance of duties, one begins to see ever more clearly the right modes, motives and methods of service that redounds to the highest good of all.

“We believe in relieving starvation of the soul, as much, if not more than, the starvation of the stomach,” writes H.P.B. Sufferings and miseries of man arise from thoughts and actions based on mistaken ideas of life, for he has to reap what he has sown. The wise man, therefore, while relieving the distress of others, whenever conditions so permit it, at the same time helps them, as far as possible, to rise to a higher perspective of life, gain a truer basis for thought and action, and to a realization of their responsibility and true duty to others. The student, therefore, aspiring to *true service of humanity* will be ever striving to fit himself by study, exemplification and service to be the better able to help and teach others, putting into practice all the while the Theosophical ideas of charity taught and exemplified by the great Teachers and benefactors of humanity:

Act individually and not collectively; follow the Northern Buddhist precepts: “Never put food into the mouth of the hungry by the hand of another”; “Never let the shadow of thy neighbour (*a third person*) come between thyself and the object of thy

bounty”; “never give to the Sun time to dry a tear before thou hast wiped it.” Again, “Never give money to the needy, or food to the priest, who begs at thy door, *through thy servants*, lest thy money should diminish gratitude, and thy food turn to gall.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 241-42)

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 theosophists do not believe in giving money...through other people’s hands or organizations. We believe in giving to the money a thousand-fold greater power and effectiveness by our personal contact and sympathy with those who need it...for gratitude does more good to the man who feels it, than to him for whom it is felt.” (*Ibid.*, p. 242)

I HAVE in my hands two boxes, which God gave me to hold. He said, “Put all your sorrows in the black box, and all your joys in the gold.” I heeded His words, and in the two boxes, both my joys and sorrows I stored. But though the gold became heavier each day, the black was as light as before. With curiosity, I opened the black, I wanted to find out why, and I saw, in the base of the box a hole, which my sorrows had fallen out by. I showed the hole to God, and mused, “I wonder where my sorrows could be!” He smiled a gentle smile and said, “My child, they’re all here with me.” I asked God, why He gave me the boxes, why the gold and the black with the hole? “My child, the gold is for you to count your blessings, the black is for you to let go.”

—From an e-mail forward

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 does one explain animal suffering in relation to the Law of Karma?

Answer: The Third Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine* points out that evolution in kingdoms below man is through natural impulse. In lower kingdoms, there are consciousness, intelligence, instinct and even rudiments of the power of choice. However, since the mind of man was lighted up or activated, he has self-consciousness, and the power to think and to exercise *moral* choice. The choice exercised by the animal is not self-conscious, self-decided choice with knowledge. Since man has a better-developed mind and brain and nervous system, he suffers more intensely than the animal. Animals have souls and they do suffer, and that is why fishing, hunting, shooting and even vivisection is objectionable from the standpoint of occult philosophy, which asks men to treat animals as their “younger brothers.”

An article, “Karma and Animal Suffering” (*The Theosophical Movement*, September 1951), explains that animal suffers pain, feels anger and fear, but it does not suffer from anxiety or qualms of conscience, as these are mental states and have relation with memory and anticipation. We may compare animal suffering to that of a child. A child with the bruised knee after a fall might cry, but if we direct his attention elsewhere, he stops crying. He will again cry if his attention is directed back to the pain and fall. Like children, animals too, have the power of forgetting the pain and

the hurt and are unable to re-live the pain in memory, like an adult person. But there is pain by association. When a dog sees the stick, he recalls the beating, and similarly the sight of a coat and a hat may remind him of being taken for a walk by his master. Thus, the more developed and sensitive the nervous system, the deeper is the suffering. A horse, an elephant, a cow suffer more than a worm.

As far as Karma in its aspect of moral compensation is concerned, it is not applicable to animals. Also there is no reincarnating Ego or continuing entity in an animal (as in man) which after the death of the animal will incarnate in another body. Hence, it is difficult to say, in the case of animal suffering, that it is the result of the Karma of the Ego in the past. However, in *S.D.*, we are told that the tendency towards segregation into individual Monads is gradual and in higher animals comes almost to the point (I, 178). When the animal dies, there is dispersal of the astral and physical forms, while the indwelling consciousness becomes part of that aspect of the Universal Mind that functions in the animal kingdom. When a new animal form is built, the suitable atoms are magnetically drawn to one another, and so also that aspect of the Universal Mind, which can use that form. It is comparable to what happens in case of a human birth and death. In man, at death, something of the incarnated mind that was consubstantial to the Higher Ego gets assimilated with it, and then at every incarnation, a new ray of *Manas* is launched, *i.e.*, man’s individual consciousness is taken from the pool of *his own* egoic consciousness as coloured by all his previous incarnations. So also, at the birth of an animal, the animal consciousness is taken from that aspect of the Universal Mind appropriate to that stage of unfoldment. The physical and astral atoms that go in the formation of any given animal will be those that had passed through similar experiences, so that they must meet the reactions of those actions. The indwelling consciousness will also receive the reactions of those experiences which, in its individual parts, it had previously undergone. *Desatir* says:

If the ravenous animal kill a harmless animal it must be regarded as retaliation on the slain, since ferocious animals exist for the purpose of inflicting such punishment. (*The Heart Doctrine*, p. 138)

However, there is an aspect of unnecessary suffering, for which those in the lower kingdoms will receive due reward. H.P.B. describes it thus:

...it is not the *injustice* or *mistakes* of Karma which are the causes of such “undeserved misery,” but other causes, independent of past Karma of either the producer or the innocent victim of their effects, new *actions* generated by the wickedness of men and circumstances, and which arouse Karmic law to fresh activity, *i.e.*, the punishment of those who caused these new *Nidanas* (or causal connections), and the reward of him who suffered from them undeservedly. (*Lucifer*; July 1888)

Question: There is the belief in the East that man can be reborn as an animal. Is that true?

Answer: The belief in transmigration into animal bodies is based on the literal interpretation of the *Laws of Manu* concerning this subject. However, Theosophy teaches that “once a man, always a man.” Though some men are so inhuman, brutal and selfish that, as Mr. Judge puts it, it would not be too much punishment, if it were possible to condemn them to rebirth in animal bodies. However, Nature does not go by sentiments, but by law. Moreover, the brutal man is not a “brute” in all aspects of his nature. Theosophy rejects reincarnation in animal bodies because man is the crown piece of evolution and is endowed with *Manas*, and though animals display certain amount of intelligence, the animal has no *Manas*. Just as the blood in the body is prevented by the valves from rushing back into the heart, so in the system of evolution the door is shut behind the Thinker and prevents him from being born into lower kingdoms, writes Mr. Judge.

Man is continually using matter and giving it good or bad impressions. In the course of evolution man has before him the

task of raising up the matter that he uses to higher and higher states. The atoms and “lives” forming the human body are continually receiving good or bad impress and flying to lower kingdoms. In the article “Transmigration of Life Atoms,” H.P.B. shows that the *Laws of Manu*, literally interpreted, have been misunderstood. She says that the statement, “A Brahman-killer enters the body of a dog, bear, ass, camel, goat, sheep, bird, etc.,” does not mean that the human Ego is born into these brute bodies, but refers to the atoms of the human body, the lower triad and the fluidic emanations. The “Brahman-killer” is “he who kills or extinguishes in himself the light of Parabrahm.” We continually impress the atoms that we use, with either lower psychic, or higher spiritual impressions—depending upon our thoughts. When these atoms are impressed by evil thoughts and actions, they get attracted to lower kingdoms, by magnetic affinity, and go into the formation of lower animals or brutes. This is the real meaning of the doctrine of Metempsychosis (*H.P.B. Series No. 25*). It is in this sense that man is said to be reborn as an animal. Man is responsible for the evolution of lower kingdoms, as he has to raise “the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature, nature, and dignity of conscious god-hood.” The explanation given to Mr. Judge, by a holy man, runs as follows:

Atoms fly from all of us at every instant. They seek their appropriate centre; that which is similar to the character of him who evolves them. We absorb from our fellows whatever is like unto us. It is thus that man reincarnates in the lower kingdoms. He is the lord of nature, the key, the focus, the highest concentrator of nature’s laboratory. And the atoms he condemns to fall thus to beasts will return to him in some future life for his detriment or his sorrow. But he, as immortal man, cannot fall....He is the brother and teacher of all below him. See that you do not hinder and delay all nature by your failure in virtue. (*The Heart Doctrine*, p. 145)

Buddha remarked to his Bhikkhus, pointing to a broom, that it was formerly a novice who had neglected to sweep out the Council

room, and hence was in this birth born as a broom. H.P.B. points out that it is a figurative statement. Man throws off the magnetic fluid or life-atoms from his body, either unconsciously or consciously, and affects the objects in his vicinity. She writes:

Let any man give way to an intense feeling, such as anger, grief, etc., under or near a tree, or in direct contact with a stone; and many thousands of years after that any tolerable Psychometer will see the man and sense his feelings from one single fragment of that tree or stone that he had touched. Hold any object in your hand, and it will be impregnated with your life atoms....It requires no adept knowledge, but simply the natural gift of a good clairvoyant subject to see them passing to and fro, from man to objects and *vice versa* like a bluish lambent flame. (*H.P.B. Series No. 25*, pp. 34-35)

In the light of the above, H.P.B. argues that if there was a shrub that grew in the vicinity of the building where the lazy novice lived, and if the shrub was repeatedly touched by him, while in a state of anger arising out of his laziness and distaste for duty, then it is quite possible for him to pass on a quantity of his life atoms to the shrub. The same would then be passed on to the broom that was made from that shrub. It was possible for Buddha to recognize the same owing to his superhuman powers.

Mr. Judge points out that if, today, tigers are more vicious, or if serpents are more poisonous, it is because they are influenced by the thoughts of men. Man's soul is not born into animal body again, but the atoms of his body do find lodgement in animal bodies.

EVEN the absolute universality of the law of causality does not necessarily limit (man's) freedom, because the law of causality not only enables him to explain the past and predict the future, but also encourages him to use his intelligence to create new results.

—HU SHIH

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What attitude should we adopt to survive in this age of cut-throat competition? “Competition can often be an excessive drive to an illusionary goal. We need to compete, instead, with our own selves, challenging and realizing our innate and unique potential,” writes Jamuna Rangachari (*Life Positive*, October 2006). It is very rarely that we witness healthy competition; more often than not, it drives people to *breaking point*. Dr. Chugh, a leading psychiatrist in Delhi, points out that the need to compete is a very basic need and that a certain amount of competitiveness is an essential part of our psyche. Dr. Darwin's theory of survival of the fittest suggests that the more competitive creature has a better chance of survival. The need to excel, improve and progress has its roots, to an extent, in competition. There is a Tamil proverb: “When taken in excess, even nectar turns into poison.” Competition for the right reasons, at the right levels, is healthy, but excessive competition turns counterproductive, shooting up stress levels. It is then described as oneupmanship, where there is competing in dress, style, possessing of latest gizmos, etc. The modern man works so hard that it leaves him no time for family, friends and, most of all, himself. Anil Bhatnagar, corporate trainer, observes that it is the vacuum in people's hearts that makes them chase symbols of success. Competition could be a useful tool if only we would examine what it is that we wish to achieve, and realize that it is our own performance we need to improve. As Dr. Chugh says, “The person with a competitive spirit is always raring to go, experiment and is willing to take initiative.” Hence he is likely to learn and grow more. Rangachari writes:

At school, encouraging children to set their own standards and benchmarks would help them realize their potential and take their rightful place in the world....Dr. Chugh says, “Instead of doing a negative comparison, try to draw motivation and inspiration from achievers.

If survival of the fittest is the key principle in nature, so is adaptability and interdependence. Just as a creeper sprouts from a wedge in a rocky surface, we too can find our place in the rockiest terrains, if only we realize that there is a place in the world for all of us.

Lately, the survival of the fittest theory is being challenged by the theory of reciprocal altruism put forth by Robert Trivers, which explains that the natural pattern of organisms is such that one organism provides a benefit to another in the expectation of future reciprocation. This theory is more acceptable from the spiritual angle, when we accept the notion that “all is one.”

Competition is the corollary to ambition, self-centredness and selfishness. H.P.B. points out that school training is very important for the formation of moral character. But our modern system of education is based on the so-called scientific revelations: “the struggle for existence” and “the survival of the fittest.” Every person learns, all through his early life, by experience, example and direct teaching that the end-all and be-all of life is “self,” the lower, personal, animal-self. Hence the growth of selfishness, and the schools are hotbeds of selfishness. Parents are equally guilty of driving their children and pushing them not only to excel but also to compete. It is the duty of parents and teachers to inculcate altruism—“devotion to the interests of others.” Plastic minds can be moulded and taught the lessons of altruism, mutual charity and love for all. It is necessary for parents and elders to set an example, and show that even in this world it is possible to earn a decent living without being unduly ambitious and competitive. As Mr. Judge writes:

Those pearls you found for another and gave him, you really retained for yourself in the act of benevolence. For when one lives thus to help others, he is thereby putting in practice the rule to try and “kill out all sense of separateness,” and thus gets little by little in possession of true light.

Are dreams but idle visions, or do they convey some message? “Dr. Stanley Krippner of the Maimonides Medical Centre Dream Laboratory suggests that our dreams can be used to expose problems that we may refuse to recognize consciously, and by so doing can lead to corrective action,” writes Anne De Braganca Cunha (*Health and Nutrition*, September 2006). Charmayne De Souza, psychotherapist and dream analyst observes that dreams have a message and often reveal an unknown aspect of our self; that there are no meaningless dreams, but there are clairvoyant and prophetic dreams that have definite significance. They fall into four categories: (1) *Precognitive*, foretells future events. (2) *Warning*, suggests the nature of impending danger. (3) *Factual*, confirms or emphasizes the situation that you know about. (4) *Inspirational* suggests a solution or course of action with regard to a personal or business problem. Carl Jung dreamed of Europe being engulfed in a rising river of blood, and many days later World War I was declared. Coleridge is said to have dreamed his whole poem *Kubla Khan*, and a German scientist dreamt of a serpent biting his own tail and thus got the idea of the closed ring structure of the benzene ring molecule. Often we go to sleep mulling over a problem and wake up relaxed and refreshed, with a happy solution. *Recurrent dreams* could be messages from Dreamland that we might have been ignoring in waking life.

De Souza suggests that we must keep a dream diary and pen by our bedside and note down the dream as soon as we wake up, especially the feeling it evokes. We must write down the association that comes up for us regarding the various aspects of the dream, on waking up. “The dream is a kind of sonograph of what your psyche is truly feeling. It sneaks past your defences and rationalizations, and it is only when you are aware of your truth can you address what you need to do with life, your ideals and your aspirations,” observes De Souza.

Generally, it is believed that dreams are of no importance. They are considered to be caused by blood pressure, indigestion, or

disease. “Yet there are many who always make use of their dreams,” and history is full of examples of those who have derived benefit and instruction from their dreams. During sleep we are in a different state of consciousness. We all pass through the dream state as well as a still higher state of consciousness called *Sushupti* or dreamless sleep. In *Sushupti* we exist as our true individuality, unhindered by the personality. There are seven different kinds of dreams. In a prophetic dream there is a prophecy, so that a future event is seen as a clear picture. Sometimes in dreams we get a warning. Then there are retrospective dreams. These are flashes of memory from past lives. These are generally stray pictures picked up from the astral light. As the astral light is a universal register, therein are impressed all events, past, present and future. Then there are allegorical dreams and dreams sent by good and bad adepts or mesmerizers who may want us to do something according to their will. There are chaotic dreams and nightmares that are caused by indigestion or mental trouble.

The most important thing is to be able to remember these dreams, and even more important is it to be able to interpret them. A dream that is not understood is like a letter that is not opened. But who can interpret the dream? Most dreams are in symbolic form. We need to learn, then, the symbolic language—the language of the soul. We are the only ones who can interpret our dreams. A dream is peculiar to a person. Except for an adept who can look into the inner nature of a person and be able to interpret the dream, no other person or dreambooks can do this, though they may offer some guidelines.

We often get solution to our problems in dreams. A person who is truly convinced of the fact that we pass into this high state every night, and believes in the existence of the Higher Self, if such a devoted and sincere person asks the Higher Self for aid in right living, he will receive it in *Sushupti* or dreamless sleep. Many a time we do not remember our dreams. There is a connection between the dream state and waking state, so that we need to prepare

before going to sleep.

As for recurring dreams, Mr. Judge explains that there is the dream that comes to those who are striving to live the higher life and to develop their inner faculties. In this, one is often apparently attacked and pursued. It is the struggle between higher and lower nature. If the aspiration towards a higher life is kept up, but a corresponding change in daily thought and act does not take place, the dream will be repeated, varying perhaps in detail, and ceases to come only when the fight is given up and one re-plunges into lower conduct, or when the battle is won by the opposite course of life and thought.

A fleeting thought, a chance impression, a word heard in the rush of the busy life could become the basis for a dream. We must cultivate the practice of tracing back every dream to such impressions and thoughts of waking hours, advises Mr. Judge.

Is our brain responsible for out-of-body experiences (OBEs)? People have often reported experiencing eerie sensations such as feeling a shadowy figure standing behind them and not finding anyone on turning around. A woman feels that she is leaving her body and floating in space, looking down at her own physical body. Previously such experiences were attributed to paranormal forces. However, experiments conducted by neuroscientists such as Dr. Olaf Blanke have shown that stimulation of a part of the brain called *angular gyrus*, on two opposing sides, yielded two distinct results: Stimulation of the left *angular gyrus* gave the patient a sensation of a shadowy person lurking behind, while stimulation of the right *angular gyrus* resulted in an out-of-body experience, as if the patient was floating from the ceiling, looking down at herself. The women were being evaluated for epilepsy surgery at University Hospital in Geneva. It indicates that the Self can detach from body and live a phantom existence on its own. (*The Times of*

India, October 4, 2006, courtesy New York Times News Service)

Our physical body is built on the design body or astral body and this inner body exists inextricably entangled within the physical, cell for cell and fibre for fibre—like the fibres of the mango in the pulp. Even when we sleep, the astral body remains near the sleeping form. Only when a person has acquired some amount of concentration, it is possible that the sleeping body is deserted for the time being. Hence projecting the astral from the physical is a most difficult feat (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 18*). However, there are those who, by reason of practices pursued in former lives, have the power of unconsciously sending out their astral bodies. These are mediums, some seers, and many hysterical, cataleptic, and scrofulous persons. The seers and adepts perform this feat at will, in others it happens involuntarily. Mr. Judge also points out that “to become a medium means that you have to become disorganized physiologically and in the *nervous system*, because through the latter is the connection between the two worlds” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*). Out-of-body experiences show that there is that in man which can exist, independent of the physical body.

NOBODY likes misery. Why not analyze yourself next time you are in a mood? You will see how you are willingly, willfully making yourself miserable. And while you are doing so, others around you feel the unpleasantness of your state of mind. . . . You must remove moods from your mental mirror. One should introspect each day in order to understand the nature of his mood, and how to correct it, if it is a harmful one. Perhaps you find yourself in an indifferent state of mind. No matter what is suggested, you are not interested. It is necessary then to make a conscious effort to create some positive interest. Beware of indifference, which ossifies your progress in life by paralyzing your will power.

—PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA

peculiarly understanding of another without much exchange of words, that other will probably think of him as intuitive.

Mr. Judge, naturally, is far better able to explain this thing in us which so often seems to behave so erratically. “There is scarcely anyone,” he says, “who has not got an internal voice—a silent monitor—who, so to say, strikes within us the bell that corresponds to truth, just as a piano’s wires each report the vibrations peculiar to it, but not due to striking the wire itself. It is just as if we had within us a series of wires whose vibrations are all true, but which will not be vibrated except by those words and propositions which are in themselves true....Many persons are inclined to doubt the existence in themselves of this intuition, who in fact possess it. It is a common heritage of man, and only needs unselfish effort to develop it.” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 45)

You see how he instantly lifts Intuition from the level of the trivial examples given above, showing it to be *in esse* a spiritual faculty. “One of the inner powers,” he calls it (*Ibid.*, p. 89), pertaining to the soul, in fact bearing witness to the soul, for, speaking of “the natural man, the lower principles and mind, presided over by the false consciousness,” he says, in *Letters That Have Helped Me* (p. 29), “Of the soul we have but brief and partial glimpses—in conscience or intuition—in our ordinary state.”

At first we may only be aware of our Intuition in embryo. But we must not permit ourselves to leave it at that. In those “Conversations on Occultism” between a Student and a Sage, included in *Vernal Blooms*, clear instructions are given as to what to do with the tiny spark of Intuition that is our heritage. (p. 172)

“Tell me,” says the Student, “some ways by which Intuition is to be developed.”

Here is the Sage’s reply:

First of all by giving it exercise, and second by not using it for purely personal ends. Exercise means that it must be followed through mistakes and bruises until from sincere attempts at use it comes to its own strength. This does not mean

that we can do wrong and leave the results, but that after establishing conscience on a right basis by following the golden rule, we give play to the intuition and add to its strength. Inevitably in this at first we will make errors, but soon if we are sincere it will grow brighter and make no mistake. We should add the study of the works of those who in the past have trodden this path and found out what is the real and what is not....We must not only be unselfish, but must do all the duties that Karma has given us, and thus Intuition will point out the road of duty and the true path of life.

Mr. Judge warns against using Intuition “for purely personal ends” just as he has told us previously that it “needs unselfish effort to develop it.” All our gains in the inner life are to be devoted to the good of all. “For when one lives thus to help others,” he writes in his first letter to Jasper Niemand, “he is thereby putting in practice the rule to try and ‘kill out all sense of separateness,’ and thus gets little by little in possession of the true light.”

Can we have faith in what our Intuition tells us? Can we let it guide us in spiritual matters? For, if Mr. Judge asserts that “No one was ever converted into Theosophy; each one who *really* comes into it does so because it is only ‘an extension of previous beliefs’ ” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 23), surely Intuition, co-operating with these, must have played a considerable part in leading many to Theosophy.

Mr. Judge would have us rely on it. “What is Faith?” he asks. “It is the intuitional feeling—‘*that is true*’ ” (*Ibid.*, p. 9). And again writing to Jasper Niemand, he says, “As far as your private conclusions are concerned, use your discrimination always. Do not adopt any conclusions merely because they are uttered by one in whom you have confidence, but adopt them when they coincide with your Intuition” (*Ibid.*, p. 23). He goes so far, in fact, as to cite “the Great Workers who are behind us” as upholding Intuition as a safe guide to the student-neophyte: “I know that their desire is that each should listen to the voice of his inner self and not depend too

much on the outside people, whether they be Masters, Eastern disciples or what not” (*Ibid.*, p. 121). And as for the fear of Intuition deceiving us, he dismisses it. “All doubts come from the lower nature, and *never* in any case from the higher nature. Therefore as [one] becomes more and more devoted he is able to know more and more clearly the knowledge residing in his *Satwa* part,” *Satwa* being the first or highest of the three qualities sprung from Nature which “exist potentially in *Purush* (Spirit)” as mentioned in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. (*Ibid.*, pp. 30 and 32)

Here a line of conduct is indicated: we must strengthen and clarify our Intuition through devotion. “In history and in our own experience there is abundant evidence that the *Bhagavad-Gita* is right in saying ‘spiritual knowledge includes every action without exception,’ and that it is to be attained by means of devotion,” writes Mr. Judge in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* (p. 75), and he instances “unlearned men,” such as Jacob Boehme, who “have attained to devotion, and thereby cleared away from before the eye of the soul the clouds of sense whose shadows obscure our view of truth.” “I do not decry or despise learning,” he adds. “It is a great possession; but if the learned man were also a devoted one in the sense of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, how much wider would be the sweep of his intellection no one could calculate.” Even Adeptship can only be obtained through “profound knowledge joined to devotion,” and, concludes Mr. Judge, “this again proves that devotion is the first and best, for these extraordinary Masters would not appear unless devotion had been the aim of their existence.” (*Ibid.*, p. 76)

So here is the essential corollary of Intuition—Devotion. “Without it,” says Mr. Judge, “a vast confusion arises within us” (*Ibid.*), and then our Intuition will inevitably function less and less. He repeatedly urges devotion—to Theosophy, to the Masters, to Krishna. He says, “Devotion must be attained by that student who desires to reach enlightenment” (*Ibid.*, p. 69). Intuition, alone and unaided, is not enough. Also, as he reminds us, “We sometimes fail to live up to our own Intuitions.” (*Letters*, pp. 4-5)

Then, what *is* Intuition?

Mr. Judge never quite defines it in so many words. In “Conversations on Occultism,” “where,” asks the Student, “should I look for the help I need in the right life, the right study?” The Sage replies, “Within yourself is the light that lighteth every man who cometh here” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 171). And to each of us in our grade of studentship comes this bidding from the same wise Teacher: “Meditate on things you want to know....Seek all knowledge within yourself, do not go without. You understand what is meant by this; not that books should be neglected but that information obtained from them should be *drawn within*, sifted, tested there. Study all things in this light and the most physical will at the same time lead to the most spiritual knowledge.”

Now, why such emphasis on the “within” if there is not indeed a “silent monitor” there, our Intuition? Mr. Judge may have thought definition needless since we are all aware of it and its very presence is its proof. Moreover, he never encourages curiosity. Interest, yes, but curiosity, no. So much is wrought silently in that sphere of the “within.” Here are some pointed words of his anent this, again from one of his letters to Jasper Niemand. He has already referred to the outwardness which can cause a ferment in the nature and which “impedes the entrance of the clear rays of Truth,” and his conclusion is, “Even now, while we cannot master these high themes, we can have a patient trust in the processes of evolution and the Law...living up to our highest intuitions ourselves.” (p. 30)