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The Living of the Higher Life**

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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ON MAKING MORAL CHOICES

THERE is an intimate relation between knowledge and morality. The science of morality was highly developed in ancient India and was termed *Niti-Shastra*. One of the meanings of the Sanskrit word *Niti* is guidance, direction, management. It is applied to conduct, behaviour and decorum in individual life as also in social relationships. Even politics as a science was knowledge of the moral principles by which a state should be administered. In most cases it is religion which forms the basis of individual's morality. A true religion induces us to go in search of truth and gives us basis for thinking. We cannot apply the same moral code to all and sundry, indiscriminately. Each one's understanding of morality is different. The unfolding consciousness of a child must pass through numerous experiences before it matures into fuller knowledge of right and wrong. Thus, a child, a savage, a mature person and a person who has acquired knowledge, will show varying degrees of morality.

Though there are books and scriptures with clear statement of moral principles, the *application* of moral principles is not only found to be difficult but puzzling. At the outset, we must be clear in our minds that moral principles are one thing and our *ability* to apply them or live up to them is quite a different thing. Depending upon our inner state of development there are limitations to our ability to practice morality. We must accept those limitations, instead of trying to dilute the principles or justify our actions. Often there are tricky

situations. V. Tankha gives the example of a servant who holds a ladder for his master, who is a robber. The servant may justify his act by saying that he is doing it only to keep his job, and that he intends no harm to the person his master is about to rob. We are all guilty of such acts at some time or other, at work or at home. We may not commit a morally wrong act ourselves, but we contribute to it in some significant way. Sometimes it is an act of commission and at other times it is an act of omission. In certain organizations and institutions, such as the military and the police, sometimes there are morally questionable orders, which must be complied, else you stand to lose your job. When everyone else in the organization follows the orders obediently, one refrains from protesting, considering it futile. It is very difficult to determine in such cases, to what extent the person is morally responsible. It is not always easy to make a choice. Yet, choices have to be made, and what one does is who one is or at least who one becomes, writes Tankha. (*The Times of India*, [The Speaking Tree], August 1, 2010)

It is true that making a moral choice is never easy. At times, the question is, how willing are we to suffer and make sacrifices, and hold on to our integrity at any cost. That depends upon our previous training. With every ennobling thought and act, we have given a higher spiritual impression to the "lives" or atoms of our body. A person who has decided to speak the truth, and continues to speak the truth even when cornered, is at last able to make sufficiently strong impression on the atoms of his body. Time comes when speaking the truth becomes instinctive or spontaneous. His being will rebel if he is called upon to tell a lie, and having told a lie, he is likely to experience intense pricking of conscience. But till such a state is reached, we are bound to falter, go astray, make wrong moral choices, intentionally or unintentionally. Knowledge of good and evil, and the ability to practise the virtues to the hilt, is not ours from the start. We slowly acquire both the knowledge and the ability to make morally right choices, by bringing about necessary corrections in our natures, and learning lessons from the wrong choices made

by us.

At times, we are indirectly responsible for immoral actions. We may instigate another to cause harm or kill. At a subtle level, our consumption of non-vegetarian food, or use of medicines and cosmetics prepared from animal products or by experimenting on animals, makes us guilty of the crime of cruelty and injury to animals. The Buddha said, "One should neither slay, nor *cause* to slay."

There are these other intricate questions pertaining to moral choice. How to make a moral choice? If our choice is morally correct, but hurts the interest of others then what is to be done?

The first step is to recognize that we have free-will and power to make choice. Many people go through life, without doing their own thinking or making their own choices. They are happy if someone else will tell them what to do and what not to do in matters moral or otherwise. It is not suggested that others should not be consulted while making any choice, especially moral, but one should never want another to make decisions for oneself. Moral choice is a choice between right and wrong, or good and bad. Since good and evil are relative terms we must be careful that we do not fall prey to "categorical morality" where things are labelled "right" or "wrong". We need to maintain ethical awareness while rejecting categorical morality and that entails need to go beyond traditional categories of Right and Wrong. The definition of traditional Right and Wrong is based on customs, and it changes 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.

True morality is different from conventional morality. We are all familiar with conventional morality, which 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 in the beginning, but in the passage of time the original meaning and intention may have got lost and a very corrupt custom may have come to prevail as "moral" in that society. Quite a few of the customs which pass for morals

have been unspeakably cruel; but that they are cruel had not been taken into account by most of the people who try to govern their lives by conventional morality. For instance, the practice of *Sati* (widow-burning), or even shaving the head of the woman as soon as she became a widow, the ban on widow remarriage, marriages taking place at a very tender age, even in the cradle—not following these customs was considered immoral.

Such customs came to prevail and have sway over people's minds because the world is in a tremendously selfish state. A continuous questioning of such customs and traditions in the light of universal truths is therefore a must for everyone. We also need to examine our idea of God and whether we think of God as a revengeful Being who will punish us if we fail to practise customs which are blatantly unfair or even evil.

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, as 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. Similarly marriage and sex are not considered evil or wrong for ordinary man. But a person far-advanced in spiritual life would make a wrong choice if he broke the rule of celibacy, or took non-vegetarian diet or intoxicants.

Motive is another important factor to be taken into account in making a moral choice. There are times when we should not rigidly apply moral principles. Sometimes the situation demands that we break the moral principle and make a choice which is in larger interest. For instance, we may choose to remain silent or even tell a lie when our telling the truth is going to cost someone his life.

In the absence of the correct knowledge of moral principles, and

guidance of a wise person or scriptures, we must 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 must 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 by hatred. So also, 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.

When there is a pure motive—especially a lofty motive to benefit humanity—without any desire for reward, such choices are likely to be morally true and good. Though we may use *Upaykaushalya* or Skillfulness in action, it may happen that our choice may inconvenience others. For instance, an honest and upright father may decide not to take bribe, but if the family is extremely poor then all the family members have to suffer as a result. But at the same time, he sets an example of integrity and uprightness, which the members of the family may learn to appreciate and emulate in future, as their perception grows. Life is full of difficult choices. Some young people who decide to settle abroad for better future are torn between self-satisfaction and personal advancement on one hand, and loyalty to their country and duty towards their parents on the other. Some find the middle way, of returning home after earning sufficient money. The same is true of the persons who are at the head of an institution or a nation. When they make choices, such as, adhering to the principle of non-violence in the face of threat from the enemy nations, or not manufacturing Nuclear weapons, or giving political asylum to certain citizens of another country, some of these choices could produce harmful repercussions. Industrialization of

nations and computerization of office work rendered many jobless. Since we are all interconnected, even when decisions are made with clear conscience, certain amount of suffering may still come to others, in spite of keeping in mind the larger good. Difficulties, pain and even destruction are part of the process of growth and renewal. We must consult duty and our conscience. It is as a result of collective Karma that we are brought together and we should not sacrifice moral principles for the sake of personal interest.

In the ultimate analysis, there is no alternative to making choices, for those who want to grow spiritually. It is by exercising the sovereign power of choice that we learn how *not to make mistakes*. In the ancient times, all the Teachers have given to their *Chelas* (disciples) the talisman of duty. 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. It is through right performance of duty that we have the opportunity of impressing aright the lives of the body by higher type of thoughts. Doing what comes to one as one's duty without complaint, is a mark of complete acceptance, and obeisance to the Lord within. There are daily initiations through daily duties, which pave the way for *Viveka* or spiritual discrimination, "the knowledge of what is good to do, as to the right discrimination of good from evil."

IGNORANCE conceals the pre-existent Knowledge just as water plants cover over the surface of a pond. Clear away the plants and you have the water. You do not have to create it; it is there already. Or take another example—a cataract grows on the eye and prevents a man from seeing; remove the cataract and he sees. Ignorance is the cataract....Jnana (Knowledge) is not something to be attained, it is eternal and self-existent.

-SAI BABA

"YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

THE WORDS that form the title of this article are attributed to Jesus and were addressed to his disciples. This is a very encouraging, energizing, inspiring affirmation for every candidate on the path of the spiritual life, every aspirant to spiritual wisdom. It kindles the awareness of one's responsibility to endeavour to follow that light without fail, steadfastly and perseveringly, in the work of study, practice and assimilation of the Eternal Verities, in order to remove at least some of the darkness in which the world is plunged. It is necessary to revive the heart-doctrine in these times when morality is ebbing away and our civilization is in peril. True devotion and faith are needed to keep ever in mind that we are children of light, "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It is the light of the mind and heart that alone can guide the personal man and enlighten him. Though it is in us and we are in it, yet, instead of seeking its protection and guidance and becoming self-reliant, we depend on outer resources.

Light and darkness are the world's eternal ways, says Sri Krihna. It is human beings alone who can transcend the darkness of the world by realizing that the light is within them and that they can become its embodiments, thus reaching the goal of human evolution. A rose or a lily, a tiger or a skylark, cannot attempt to change themselves. It is man's privilege, with his power of thought-will-feeling, to chase away the shadows of darkness from within himself and, therefore, around himself. The human mind was lit up by the solar gods over 18 million years ago, that it may reach divinity, and these "gods" were the divine Intelligences who had reached perfection in prior fields of evolution. It is only through this divine light that the forces of darkness can be vanquished, and the earth become a heaven full of light, purity and goodness.

All the scriptures hold out this ideal. Zoroastrian ethics, for instance, based as it is on good thoughts, good words and good deeds, lays full stress on self-purification for every human being, so

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that with him the whole of nature may be raised, and evolution may proceed on higher rungs. On this subject H.P.B.'s article, "The Devil's Own: Thoughts on Ormuzd and Ahriman" (reprinted in *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 7*), throws a great deal of light. Ormuzd and Ahriman represent the light and darkness within the hearts of human beings as around them. In the words of Milton, quoted by H.P.B.:

Hail, holy light, offspring of Heaven first-born,
Or of the Eternal co-eternal beam.

...Since God is light

Bright effluence of bright essence increate. .

.. Satan

Puts on swift wings, and towards the gates of hell

Explores his solitary flight.

H.P.B. calls Ormuzd and Ahriman the two Brother-Powers, such is the close connection between them. Understanding of this would make the task of self-purification less difficult. "Ahura Mazda alone," she says, "being the divine, and therefore the immortal and eternal symbol of 'Boundless Time,' is the secure refuge, the spiritual haven of man." We have full security within ourselves, and yet people look for it outside, and when they do not get what they want, they become discontented and dissatisfied. H.P.B. further states that Ahriman or Angra Mainyu, being, in one of its aspects, the embodiment of man's lowest nature, "is only a periodical and temporary Evil." Therein lies the hope for man. Ahura Mazda, the Divine Light, being eternal can always overcome and conquer Ahriman. This implies human progress and human evolution through the transformation wrought by self-effort. Once the inner light begins to shine, the darkness within and around us will disappear gradually. In this present cycle, the whole world is full of dark forces and powers dragging human beings to sorrow and misery on all planes—physical, mental and moral. H.P.B. strikes another hopeful note: "By the middle of the Seventh Race, says an occult prophecy, the struggle of the two conflicting Powers (*Buddhi* and *Kama-Manas*)

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will have almost died out." Theosophy being a quickener of life and progress, it can help us to accomplish this task earlier, arduous though it is. H.P.B. goes on to say:

In these days of so-called progress and civilization when the light of knowledge claims to have replaced almost everywhere the darkness of ignorance, how many more volunteers do we see added to the army of Ahura Mazda, the Principle of Good and Divine Light?

So we need more recruits for the army of Light. As this army of peace and goodwill becomes stronger, the radiating light will surely remove the sorrow and misery of the world and the law of unity and harmony and brotherhood will come to prevail. It is necessary to keep this symbol of Light ever burning within our minds and hearts so that its radiance may spread around and awaken other human souls to become recruits spreading the message of Theosophy. Just as from the heights of a mountain one can observe the little lights in the somber valley below, so the Masters are waiting to see a light here and a light there, which when brought together can make a flame and help in the work of the Spiritual upliftment of humanity.

ONE day he (Bayazid al-Bistami) was walking with a number of his disciples. The path was very narrow. He saw a dog coming along and turned back to let it pass. One of his disciples blamed him secretly and thought to himself, "How can Bayazid, who is the king of gnostics, make way for a dog?" Bayazid said, "This dog asked me with dumb eloquence, saying, 'In the eternal past what fault did I commit, and what act of grace didst thou perform, that I am clad in the skin of a dog, while the robe of spiritual royalty hath been conferred on thee?' This thought came into my head and I made way for the dog."

—ATTAR

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA THE ROD OF PUNISHMENT—II

8. *The fool in doing ill knows not his folly. His own deeds, like a fire, consume the fool. (136)*

9. *He who offends the harmless and the innocent soon reaches one of these ten states: (137)*

10-12. *He will suffer (1) sharp pain, or (2) disease or (3) bodily decay or (4) grievous disaster or (5) loss of mind or (6) displeasure of the king or (7) calumny or (8) loss of relations or (9) loss of all his wealth or (10) destruction of his house by lightning or fire. At death, poor fool, he finds rebirth in woe. (138-140)*

THE FOOLISH man commits sins without realizing the consequences. His own deeds consume him like a fire. Man is morally responsible for whatever he does. Ignorance is no excuse for doing wrong. The law works. If a child puts its finger into the fire it will burn. However, while the actions of a foolish person are not condoned, the law of Karma does take into account his ignorance when it metes out the punishment. As against this, when a person knowingly offends the harmless and innocent person, grave results must follow. Imperfect as we are, it is natural for a person to retaliate when attacked. But a deliberate act of evil against the innocent and harmless is a blatant violation of the law of harmony.

The question may arise that if a powerful but wicked person acquires psychic powers and uses them against the innocent, is there no protection from such people? We are told that "a clear conscience and a firm desire of benefiting Humanity are our best protection." "The only safety for any one in the range of such forces is to be pure in motive, in thought and in act." They form a protecting shield around the person, capable of repelling evil forces. As a ball which fails to penetrate an object rebounds upon the thrower so also the evil wishes return home to roost, from the pure person, unless of course the person is a fully developed "black magician." There is a story in which a sparrow messed up on the head of an ascetic who

was meditating in the forest. The ascetic looked up angrily at the sparrow and it was burnt to ashes there and then. Later, this ascetic went to the village begging for food. He came to the house of a pious woman who told him to wait for a while as she was attending to her blind husband. It took some time for her to complete the work and come out to give him the food. By then, the ascetic was all agitated and looked angrily at the woman. She just smiled at him and told him not to look at her with anger. She said: "I am not that sparrow who can be burnt by your angry gaze." Purity is a mighty defense. The mighty power of Karma is behind him and it is a strong protection. When you offend such a person, you make the whole nature your enemy. The General Will of Nature protects the innocent and ensures the victory of the righteous. To us, the punishment enumerated in the verse may appear to be too harsh, but these severe results are as seen by the inner eye of the Buddha.

13. *Not nakedness, nor matted hair, nor filth, nor lying on the ground, besmearing the body with dust and ashes, nor posture squatting can cleanse the mortal who is full of doubt. (141)*

14. *But he who is tranquil and serene and calm and lives a tamed and restrained life of holiness and has ceased to injure living things, though richly attired, he is a Brahmana, an ascetic (Samana) and a monk (Bhikkhu). (142)*

It is not the outward appearance but the inner disposition that purifies the man. Nakedness, matted hair, filth, lying on the ground, besmearing the body with dust and ashes, and posture are the marks of a person who has utter contempt for the body. These people consider their body to be a hindrance to attaining union with the Self. They torture their body and try to achieve the union through extreme asceticism. While such practices give them enormous control over body, as also will power, it does not necessarily purify their moral nature. It refers to false practices without reliance on the law. People often make the mistake of thinking that rituals and

ceremonies would make them spiritual. As against this, the one who thinks and acts from the basis of Spirit within, is truly a *Brahmana*, a *Samana* and a *Bhikkhu*. *Brahmana* is one who has realized the Brahman within. He has driven away sins, is harmless and has his body, speech and mind tamed through restrained life of holiness and meditation. This is the right kind of restraint wherein there is no struggle to relinquish the unnecessary. The one who lives in serenity is called a *Samana*. There is inner purification. Then it matters not for him whether he is richly attired or wears a humble robe.

15. *Is there in this world any man modest enough, humble enough, that he minds not reproof, as a thoroughbred horse is not stung when touched by a whip? (143)*

16. *Like a thoroughbred horse, touched by a whip, let a man be ardent and active. By faith and virtue, energy and mind, by discernment of the Law, endowed with knowledge, good behaviour, concentrated, he will strike off the great sorrow of earthly existence. (144)*

Upright and self-respecting person does not give chance to another to find fault with him. Such a person is ardent and conscientious. But the truly wise is also humble and modest. He is ready to respond like a thoroughbred horse touched by a stick. A thoroughbred is a breed of horse developed for racing and jumping. They are sensitive and high spirited. Being sensitive, he responds to a mere touch of a stick. He does not take the touch of a stick as reproof but a command to move faster. Ordinary and clumsy horse may resist and stop going even at the normal speed.

The practical implication is that when a demand is made upon you, do not get upset. The stimulus may be a reproof from a wise one who might say, "You have failed in your duty," or "you have done wrong." Then the modest and humble should *respond* and not *react* like a stubborn or stupid horse. Such a person knows the difference between reproof and punishment. Such a man has imbibed the teaching of the Buddha, which says:

If you see an intelligent man who detects faults and blames what is blameworthy, follow that wise man. Value him as a revealer of hidden treasure. He will be beloved of the good; by the bad he will be hated. Let such a man admonish, let him instruct, let him forbid what is improper. (*The Dhammapada*, verse 76)

Punishment is an ultimate judgment, and Buddha preaches against any kind of final or arbitrary condemnation. Reproof, however, administered as a goad toward self-improvement, need not be accompanied by a condemnatory attitude. What must be said is said, yet need not be accompanied by inner tension or moral judgment on the part of the admonisher. Nor does the sage ever make the erring disciple feel inadequate or a failure. The true teacher is never concerned with the disciple's past, but only with his future, and with that future only insofar as the disciple is able to see that, "like a thoroughbred horse," he has the capacity for a more vigorous and noble gait. (*Theosophy*, October 1956)

17. *Irrigators lead the water; fletchers make the arrows straight; carpenters carve the wood; good people discipline themselves. (145)*

The above verse also appears in the canto of "The Wise Man." The meaning is essentially the same. All craftsmen mould, shape and give direction. They control their material in such a way that it becomes useful for its purpose. So should the good man treat his "material." He should shape it and subdue it for the purpose of the higher life. Good people discipline themselves. It also implies that they do not use the rod on others. Others cannot be forced into adopting either the scriptures or a "higher life" by threats of punishment or promises of reward.

(Concluded)

SRI YANTRA AND SOLOMON'S SEAL

MANTRA and *Yantra* are popularly known to form part of *Tantra* philosophy, and both are considered to be aids to the practice of meditation. *Mantra* literally means "that which protects the mind." *Yantra* is the abstract diagram. Every thought and every sound is a vibration. Every sound corresponds to certain colour and form. *Yantra* might be said to represent the subtle form which is behind the gross form. *Yantra* is a Sanskrit word and it means an instrument, a machine or an apparatus. Thus, *yantra* can be the tool for achieving concentration of mind. A *yantra* may be regarded as an attempt to give a visual representation to the Supreme Being. *Yantras* reflect highly developed mathematical knowledge that our ancients possessed in creating accurate geometrical patterns.

Generally, a *yantra* is a diagram which consists of point, circle, triangle, square, pentagram or hexagon. Each of these geometrical figures, beginning with a point, has great metaphysical significance. The circle, for instance, represents cycle of eternity or a great spiral of evolution and even *Parabrahmam*. The point within the circle is the First Cause. At the time of manifestation, there starts out into existence a centre of spiritual energy within the bosom of *Parabrahmam*. The appearance of this conscious centre of energy marks the beginning of cosmic activity. This point is designated differently in different systems of philosophy. It is called Verbum, Logos, *Sabda Brahman* and *Avalokiteshwara*. Point also denotes a seed or Germ. Just as a tree is potentially contained in the seed, so also, the cosmos is potentially contained within this point.

"Deity geometrizes," says Plato. In *Notes on the Bagavad-Gita*, Mr. Crosbie elaborates this statement by pointing out that from the "point" whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere, a radiation equal in all direction begins and establishes a circumference, thus producing a sphere within which the activity of the "point" is confined. The "point" spreads out horizontally and becomes a diameter, dividing the sphere into positive and negative

hemispheres as basis for action and reaction. Similarly extension of the point vertically forms the cross within the circle. The lines of forces proceeding from the center and tending to return to it begin the revolution of the sphere with vertical and horizontal lines extending towards each other and thus forming ansated cross (or *swastika*), and finally the square within the circle. He goes on to explain how the figure of cube, pentagram or five-pointed star and six-pointed star would be seen within the sphere.

Interestingly, this is part of the explanation of Arjuna's *Viswarupa Darshan* or seeing the Divine Form as containing all forms. The Divine Form is like the spherical mirror which reflects all things. We might consider Arjuna's *Viswarupa Darshan* to be a glimpse into the *noumenal* or archetypal world, in which all that is in manifestation, exists as abstract forms. Thus, a four-pointed star is a symbol of animal kingdom. It is the symbol of a being that has not yet developed *Manas* or mind. A five-pointed star or Pentagram is the symbol of mind. It also symbolizes a human being who is not an Adept. The Pentagram is an emblem of the *microcosm* or "little universe," or man mirroring the *macrocosm* (the great cosmos). It is the sign of supremacy of human intellect or spirit over brutal matter. The five-pointed star inverted or upside down represents dark side and also symbolizes death, writes Mr. Judge.

Five-pointed star is used in *ceremonial* magic, and is considered to be the most potent magical instrument. The figure of Pentagram could be used successfully by some to cure or at least stop the pain of scorpion bite. But it is not the sign of Pentagram which brings about the cure. It only helps to concentrate the attention, and nail the will of the operator to a certain spot. Man is himself the five-pointed star, formed by his head, two arms and two legs. H.P.B. explains that these are the five channels through which mesmeric fluid, which can produce healing, flows with great intensity. Hence, when the figure of the five-pointed star is *traced with fingers* around the spot of the scorpion bite, and when there is also the strong desire to alleviate pain, the healing fluid flows out from all the five

extremities, with far greater force than it otherwise would. Since the attention of the operator is concentrated at the spot of the bite, the healing fluid flowing out of the extremities rebounds on that spot and brings about the cure. Though, the ignorant mesmerizer attributes the cure to Pentagram, it is only instrumental in bringing about the cure, writes H.P.B.

The Six-pointed star symbolizes *macrocosm* or the great cosmos. It is represented as "double triangle" composed of two triangles, white and black. It is known in Europe as "Solomon's Seal," and in India as the "Sign of Vishnu" or *Sri Chakra*. These two triangles are interlaced (figure 2). The tip of the *white* triangle pointing upwards or towards heaven represents Spirit. The lower point of its *black* triangle pointing downward or towards the earth represents matter. The two lower points or angles of the white triangle symbolize, "spirit falling into generation," or pure spirit getting involved in the phenomenal world.



Figure 1



Figure 2

The *two* triangles with *two* colours show that duality supervenes in the manifested universe in terms of Spirit and Matter or *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, as also, darkness and light, heat and cold, pleasure and pain. Both man and nature are triune. The three aspects of man and Nature are: Body, Soul and Spirit; or purely *spiritual*, purely *material* or physical, and the middle astral or indwelling energizing nature. The trinity of Nature and man is depicted by an equilateral triangle, with three equal sides, because these three principles are diffused throughout the universe in equal proportions. These three principles or three aspects—spirit, matter and middle nature—are depicted as *three lights* and *three energies*, viz., creative, preservative and destructive. The *first light* which infuses conscious life throughout the universe represents creative energy. The *second light* or energy, which continually produces (astral) forms out of cosmic pre-existent matter, represents preservative energy. The *third light* produces universe of gross physical matter, which forever recedes from the central spiritual light, and hence leads to darkness, evil and death, and thus represents destructive energy, explains H.P.B.

The "point" placed in the central space formed by the two interlaced triangles, is without any dimensions of length, breadth or thickness and hence represents *Avyaktabrham* or the "unmanifested deity." Sometimes, the interlaced triangles are shown within the circle and in the central space there is a figure of man or five-pointed star. The two interlaced triangles form six smaller triangles, which touch the surrounding circle at six points. The circle represents the great wheel of evolution. It is explained that the thinker (man) at the centre touches all things from six sides and gains experience from nature. It may symbolize the disciple who endeavours to awaken his higher senses to look into noumenal world beyond the phenomenal. The interlaced triangle symbolizes his struggle to subjugate matter to spirit.

The symbol of interlaced triangle was called "Seal of Solomon," because it was believed that the great Adept Solomon used this seal when dealing with the genii or elemental spirits that obeyed him. In

one of the *Arabian Nights* stories a fisherman hauls up a large iron pot, with a metal cover, with Solomon's Seal engraved upon it. When the fisherman opened the pot, vapours arose which on condensing gave rise to a monstrous form. Mr. Judge explains that since the pot was made of metal and as there was talismanic seal on the lid, the Djinn was prevented from escaping. However, H.P.B. points out that the "seal" or the emblem of the "double triangle" did not originate with Solomon, but is equally of Hindu origin, and is, in fact, found among natives of Europe, America and Asia. She writes about a legend associated with "Sign of Vishnu," or double triangle mentioned in a very old manuscript of magical incantations and spells in *Malayalam* language: "To remove trembling arising from demoniacal possession, write this figure ["double triangle"] on a plant that has milky juice, and drive a nail through it; the trembling will cease." It is easy to prove that King Solomon got his "magic" and "wisdom" from India, says H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 135-36 and 136 fn.)

The "double triangle" is also known as *Sri Yantra* and *Satkona Chakram* in Indian tradition. In the Tantric tradition there is a *Sri Yantra* made up of nine interlaced triangles centred around a point or *bindu*, from which they radiate out (figure 1). The *bindu* is the junction point between the physical universe and its unmanifest source. *Sri Yantra* is called the mother of all *yantras* because all other *yantras* are derived from it. *Sri* is one of the names of goddess Laxmi. Hence, in one sense, *Sri Yantra* represents the goddess in her form of Sri Lalitha or *Tripura Sundari*, meaning "the beauty of the three worlds." Of the nine interlaced triangles, four triangles point upwards and represent Siva or Masculine principle. Five downward pointing triangles represent *Sakti* or feminine principle. The nine triangles are arranged in such a way that they produce 43 small triangles. It shows that first there is descent of spirit into matter, followed by ascent through matter, or involution followed by evolution. *Sri Yantra* is considered to depict spiritual journey of an individual, from material existence to spiritual enlightenment. *Sri Yantra* depicts the step by step journey of the aspirant who strives

to go beyond his limited existence, and with every step he is brought closer to the goal. Various smaller triangles formed by the intersection of nine triangles represent various steps and phases in the process of becoming. *Sri Yantra* is the most powerful tool for inducing meditation, which is a reminder to the aspirant of his spiritual source.

In Tantric Hinduism a linear diagram is used as a support for ritual. *Yantras* range from those traced on the ground or on paper and disposed of after the rite, to those etched in stone and metal, such as are found in temples. One characteristic *yantra* employed in the ritual worship of the goddess *Sakti* is the *Sri Yantra*, also called *srichakra* or "wheel of Sri." (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

In his article, "Theosophical Symbols," Mr. Judge shows how from a bigger "Solomon's seal" or "Six-pointed star," one can arrive at a figure with three smaller "Solomon's seals" contained within a greater one. If we count the chambers or divisions in this new figure, they are thirty two, and by adding the figure as a whole we get thirty three. The figure so obtained is the emblem of thirty-third degree of Freemasonry. It also depicts thirty-three crores of gods or forces of Nature in the ancient Hindu Pantheons. In *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, H.P.B. mentions that even in the exoteric Puranas we are told about at least four kinds of Esoteric Sciences—*Yajna Vidya*, *Mahavidya*, *Guhya Vidya* and *Atma Vidya* or true Wisdom. *Mahavidya*, simply means "great knowledge," the magic of the Kabalists and of the *Tantrika* worship. She points out that without the help of *Atma Vidya* the other three remain only *surface* sciences. They are like the soul, limbs and mind of a sleeping man, capable of mechanical motions or even sleep walking, but of nothing higher in the absence of any conscious spiritual impulses. The *Tantras* read esoterically are as full of wisdom as the noblest occult works. But accepting the Tantric rules and practices in their dead-letter form, studying without a guide, and performing the rites with selfish motive, could be extremely dangerous.

EVOLUTION—PHYSICAL, INTELLECTUAL, SPIRITUAL

II

AS regards the evolution of plant and animal species, we are told that these are evolved from the general forms brought over by the first class of monads from the previous chain. While the general forms were still in astral plane, the Dhyanis carried out alterations and additions to them, resulting in subsequent differentiation of species on the physical plane. And since their *root types* are on astral plane, scientists are unable to trace their lineage to the parent stock—the primary cause of "missing links of Science." (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp 139-141)

The evolution of species is guided by divine intelligences to adapt, to learn from mistakes and retain in their memory, or shall we say, in their very genes, the useful knowledge gained through experiences. These experiences have taught them their dos and don'ts in achieving their ultimate purpose of survival, proliferation and progress. We call this an "animal instinct." "Instinct is direct perception of what is right within its own realm." By that, the animals know what to eat, what is dangerous, how to protect themselves and their young and so on. Instinct is on the whole beneficial and the animal follows it blindly. It does not reason about it. This works well within known circumstances, but if there is drastic change in the environment, this skill may be found insufficient to ensure its survival. H.P.B. mentions Lemmings perishing by thousands in Atlantic ocean during the time of migration in their quest for an island which had existed in the middle of Atlantic ocean earlier and had sunk below the ocean long since, leaving the exhausted Lemmings to perish.

The next question that arises is whether the mind of man is the product of physical evolution. Also, if man and anthropoids share a common ancestor then how is it that the two groups differ so greatly from one another in their mental capacity? Human mind is distinctly superior to that of the animals. Man can think, analyze, reason and choose. He is a self-conscious being with power of apperception or

introspective self-consciousness. His power of speech is infinitely superior to that of the animals. As against this, the intellect in the highest animals or apes, at best, compares with that of a baby or a savage.

When the monad reached the human stage, man was only human in form but not in mind. However, his brain was of better and deeper capacity than that of any other animal. While his animal mind or instincts were active, the human mind was latent and needed awakening. It was lighted up by others who had already gone through this process in earlier periods of evolution in other worlds. Some of them actually incarnated in the most developed monads. But the majority of the mankind received only a spark. Still others, the latest arrivals in the human kingdom remained without a spark. They became the narrow headed, mindless. This explains the intellectual difference seen between the man of civilized nations and the aborigines of Australia, Veddhas of Ceylon and some of the African tribes. "Mankind is 'of one blood,' but not of the same essence. We are the hot-house, artificially quickened plants in nature, having in us a spark, which in them is latent," writes H.P.B. It is owing to the sacrifice of the Solar *Pitris* or *Manasaputras* that man has got mind—the sacrifice of Prometheus in Hellenic philosophy. These great beings taught infant humanity their arts and sciences. It is under the guidance of these *divine* Rulers, mankind built large cities, cultivated arts and sciences, and knew astronomy, architecture and mathematics to perfection. But for their active help, the Paleolithic savage could never have developed these things, says H.P.B.

Explaining the striking similarity between man and the apes we are told that it was the unnatural union between the mindless man and the huge she-animals that created huge man-like monsters, which later dwindled in size to produce lower apes of Miocene period. With these the later Atlanteans (men with minds) renewed the sin with full responsibility, producing Anthropoid apes which are considered to be our ancestors, whereas they are just the progeny

of man and she-animals. It is not surprising that science is unable to trace the missing link between man and ape or identify the common ancestors of these two. Man had in the Third Round and in the third race of this round a Gigantic ape-like astral form, which accounts for the human features of the Apes. In them are trapped some of the human monads which will emerge into human state in the Fifth Round. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 130)

Mr. Judge tells us that Mind becomes dual as soon as it is attached to a body. Reasoning and analytical power of the mind is the lower aspect of the Thinker or *Manas*, and not the highest. Its higher aspect is intuition or direct perception of truth in all things, and does not depend on reason. The lower, and purely intellectual, is nearest to the principle of Desire, and is thus distinguished from its other side which has affinity for the spiritual principles above. If a man then, becomes wholly intellectual, the entire nature begins to tend downward; for intellect alone is cold, heartless, selfish, because it is not lighted up by the two other principles of *Buddhi* and *Atma*. We can also train and develop our mind and astral body with various practices and acquire psychic powers such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, mind reading, telepathy, apportionment, and so on. But these are lower powers and may lead man to hell and toward the downward path of becoming a black magician, if he uses them selfishly. H.P.B.'s comment on reasoning faculty in man is:

The latent mentality which, in the lower kingdoms is recognized as semi-consciousness, consciousness, and instinct, is largely subdued in man. Reason, the outgrowth of the physical brain, develops at the expense of instinct—the flickering reminiscence of a once divine omniscience—spirit. Reason, the badge of the sovereignty of physical man over all other physical organisms, is often put to shame by the instinct of an animal. As his brain is more perfect than that of any other creature, its emanations must naturally produce the highest results of mental action; but reason avails only for the consideration of material things; it is

incapable of helping its possessor to a knowledge of spirit. In losing instinct, man loses his intuitional powers, which are the crown and ultimatum of instinct. Reason is the clumsy weapon of the scientists—intuition the unerring guide of the seer. Instinct teaches plant and animal their seasons for the procreation of their species, and guides the dumb brute to find his appropriate remedy in the hour of sickness. Reason—the pride of man—fails to check the propensities of his matter, and brooks no restraint upon the unlimited gratification of his senses. Far from leading him to be his own physician, its subtle sophistries lead him too often to his own destruction. (Isis, I, 433)

This brings us to the third and important phase of evolution, viz., Spiritual or Monadic evolution. Monad is that spiritual, immortal and unchanging aspect of consciousness which is working through various forms and intelligences, high or low. Hence, it is absurd to speak of "monadic evolution." When we say mineral, vegetable, animal and human monad, it merely represents the progressive stages of evolution of the forms and intelligences through which monad passes and thereby acquires higher and increasing facility of expression. In truth, Monad cannot either progress or develop or even be affected by the changes of states it passes through. It is the plank of salvation for the personalities in which it indwells. It is for the personalities to cling to it and thus partake of its divine nature and obtain immortality. This fact is corroborated by an Oriental Aphorism which states:

Man is also triune: he has his objective, physical body; his vitalizing astral body (or soul), the real man; and these two are brooded over and illuminated by the third—the sovereign, the immortal spirit. When the real man succeeds in merging himself with the latter, he becomes an immortal entity. (Isis, II, 588)

Thus, it is not the monad which evolves, but the *manas*. "It is divine in its essential nature, yet not pure enough to be one with the

ALL and has to achieve this by passing individually and personally, *i.e.* spiritually and physically, through every experience and feeling that exists in the manifold or differentiated Universe...It is the *real* EGO, the thinking Entity imprisoned in a case of flesh and bones... But once imprisoned, or incarnate, their essence becomes dual ... (a) their *essential* inherent characteristic, heaven-aspiring mind (higher *Manas*), and (b) the human quality of thinking, or animal cogitation, rationalized owing to the superiority of the human brain, the *Kama*-tending or lower *Manas*. One gravitates toward *Buddhi*, the other, tending downward, to the seat of passions and animal desires." (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 181-82)

The purely personal consciousness, what men call "living" disappears at death. From each life, our higher nature carries with it to *Devachan* only that which is consubstantial with its nature, the aroma of the life which becomes part of our Higher Ego, the vehicle of *Buddhi* and becomes immortal.

Evolution in the lower kingdoms proceeds by natural impulse, but with mind, man can accelerate his progress by his own "self-induced and self-devised ways and means, checked by Karma." There are no gifts or favours bestowed by imaginary God on anyone, save that which he has earned through his own merit. Perfected being is an efflorescence of an age. "Among thousands of mortals a single one perhaps strives for perfection, and among those so striving perhaps a single one knows me as I am" (*Gita*, VII). Man's progress is in his own hands. Unlike animals which do not reason and cannot but act according to their inherent nature, man can think and choose, he has the free will. But with the use of free-will comes "moral responsibility" which in lower kingdoms does not apply. See what H.P.B. tells us:

The tiger and the donkey, the hawk and the dove, are each one as pure and as innocent as the other, because *irresponsible*. Each follows its instinct, the tiger and the hawk killing with the same unconcern as the donkey eats a thistle, or the dove pecks at a grain of corn. (S.D., II, 513)

There is the general belief that man by his bad actions may be born into some lower animal. The occult teaching says: "once a man, always a man." By his beastly and cruel nature, he gives such impulse to the lives that form his lower principles as also the lives that get attracted to him that they then fly back to the appropriate kingdom. This is what makes snakes more venomous and tigers more ferocious. Man has a responsibility to lower kingdoms in their evolution. It is by careful and reverential handling of all things and beings that we can give these "lives" a higher impulse and bring them to human plane and make them remain there rather than slipping back into their lower estate. Mr. Judge writes:

What then is the universe for, and for what final purpose is man the immortal thinker here in evolution? It is all for the experience and emancipation of the soul, for the purpose of raising the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature, nature, and dignity of conscious god-hood. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 60)

At this stage of our development, it is the lower, animal nature which has the upper hand, because the mind in man is not fully active in the race and the Desire is still uppermost. In the next, Fifth Round, *Manas* will be fully active and developed in the entire race and hence they will come to the point of making a conscious choice as to the path they will take, right or left, one leading to complete and conscious union with *Atman*, the other to the annihilation. An individual choosing the right path will be led on through many a trials and initiations, up to the *true spiritual intuition*. Then at last "the world will have a race of *Buddhas* and *Christs* for the world will have discovered that individuals have it in their own powers to procreate *Buddha-like children—or demons*." (S.D., 11, 415)

(Concluded)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

Question: What are the factors that determine skin colour of human beings? Does skin colour have any relation to morality? Is "White-pigment arrogance" justified?

Answer: Our Skin has three layers of tissues, of which epidermis is the outermost layer. The epidermis is made up of five sub-layers. The bottom layer of epidermis is basal layer which contains melanocytes. Melanocytes are the cells that produce pigment melanin, which imparts colour to the skin and also protects it from the effects of ultraviolet radiation. By absorbing ultraviolet radiation from the sun, melanin controls the amount that penetrates the skin. Ultraviolet radiation is needed to manufacture vitamin D, but excess radiation can destroy folic acid, a shortage of which leads to birth defects. More melanin pigment is produced by people with dark skin as compared to light skinned persons. There are two types of melanin pigments. Pheomelanin is red in color and eumelanin is dark brown in color. The quantity and type of melanin are determined by various genes, which are responsible for the variety of skin tones.

There is a relation between skin colour and environment. For instance, people living in the tropics (e.g. Africans), where there is more sunlight, are darker skinned. It is because the skin has greater quantity of melanin that acts as a natural sunscreen, protecting against ultraviolet radiation. In regions which are away from equator, there is less sunlight and ultraviolet radiations reaching people who live there. The skin has lesser melanin which is dispersed, giving lighter colour to the skin, as in the case of Europeans.

People are classified into different groups or "races" based on

physical characteristics, area of geographic origin and shared culture. *The Secret Doctrine* says that we are in the Fifth or Aryan Race, after having had experience in the four earlier races. The complexion or skin colour of these races is given as: The *first race* was moon-coloured; the *second race* yellow, like gold; the *third*, red, and the *fourth* brown. We are told that the fourth race became black with sin. The brown race refers to Atlantean sorcerers who became black because of their evil practices. The mental and moral degradation produced a change in the colour of the skin.

Regarding the relation between the physical characteristics and the environment, the *Secret Doctrine* states that the evolution of these races, their formation and development, went *pari passe* and on parallel lines with the evolution, formation, and development of three geological strata, from which the human complexion was as much derived as it was determined by the climates of those zones. We are also told that for 300 million years, Earth and men were both in an ethereal state and reached the consolidated state only in the middle of the Third Root Race. "The light yellow is the colour of the first SOLID human race," which gave birth to *red-yellow* and brown-white races. They "of the yellow hue" are the forefathers of those whom Ethnology now classes as the Turanians, the Mongols, Chinese and other ancient nations. They fled to Central Asia, where entire new races were born. (S.D., II, 425)

Though it is stated that mental and moral degradation led to change in the colour of the skin and also to diminishing of the human stature, it appears that at present, we can no longer correlate skin colour with the inner nature of the person. Yet, unfortunately, skin colour has played an important role in classifying human beings into different groups or races, some superior and others inferior. In modern times skin colour rests on biological, geological and genetic basis rather than moral. Though, in ancient times there seems to have been a link between skin colour and morality.

De Quatrefages asserts that there are four principal colour groups in the human family—white, yellow, red and black races. The

Sanskrit word *Varna*, literally means "colour." Indian philosophy speaks about *Chatur-varna* or four *castes*—*Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*—each having distinct colour. People have wondered if the four castes were based on differences in degree of skin pigmentation. In the *Mahabharata* we are told that the colour of the *Brahmins* is white; of the *Kshatriyas* red, of the *Vaishyas* yellow, and of the *Shudras* black. Col. Tod, who has given history of Rajputs, holds that Rajputs [*Kshatriyas*] are red in colour. Certain *Kshatriya* or Rajput sects are called *lohita*, or red, which is also the name of planet Mars, the fighter. Some believe that "colour" does not refer to colour of the skin but to the qualities of human nature.

In the earlier days, family life was understood and conducted so as to provide proper environment for egos of the same nature as the family. There were pure family lines, so that there was direct relation between outer physical characteristic and inner psychic and moral nature. However, in our days, there is *varnasankara* or mixing up of castes, and hence there is no longer direct relation between the inner and outer characteristics of the person. Thus, a person's physical body and skin colour may be of one type, while his psychic and moral nature may be of another type. A person of fair complexion or white skin colour does not necessarily possess nobility of character, with genuine love for knowledge and high moral values.

Ultimately, we might say, each one of us gets the skin colour, under Karma, just like any other physical, mental and psychic characteristics. We may learn to avoid the folly of identifying ourselves with the "outer garments," which we might change "tomorrow" (next birth), since under Karma we are likely to take birth in a body with a different skin colour. There is no need for the dark races to suffer from inferiority complex or the white race to have superiority complex. A Master of Wisdom is at pains to explain to an Englishman, who regarded the Hindus as an *inferior race*, that though the highest race in *physical intellectuality* was that of the white conquerors, the "highest people now on earth (spiritually)... are the Aryan Asiatics."

Question: How do we cultivate brotherly feelings towards someone who is inimical towards us?

Answer: We may spontaneously love those who love us, but it is our duty to be good and do well by those who are not well disposed towards us. It does not happen spontaneously and we have to make a special effort. Yet, we must be the change we want to see in others. So long as we harbour inimical feelings and thoughts towards that person, and also express our dislike through our words and actions, we provide the other person with a stimulus to react harshly. There are times, when we are not aware of any specific cause for enmity of the other person. It is under Karma. Since we are not meeting people for the first time, in most cases, the feeling of enmity in another may be the result of some action on our part in a prior life. In this life we have to make amends.

Perhaps it would be better to have minimum interaction with such a person, till we have learnt to handle him. Meanwhile, we may consciously generate currents of goodwill on the level of thought, word and deed. We might take special care to brush aside negative thoughts of criticism and dislike for that person, and instead dwell on good aspects of his or her character. Mr. Crosbie says that you cannot be attached to or have dislike for a thing or a person you do not *think* about. We have to learn and make a special effort to *respond* to every harsh word and action of that person. It might take us long time to cultivate *love* towards that person, but we might begin by cultivating goodwill towards him.

Meditation could be of great help in cultivating positive feelings. The Buddhists have *Metta* or *Maitri bhavana* meditation. The meditation consists in first, making one's own image and then directing kind and loving thoughts towards that image, wishing oneself well. Next, we must repeat the process by making the image of a person we love, and then of a person towards whom we are neutral. Only in the last step, we are asked to make an image of the person who dislikes us or towards whom we have inimical feelings, and direct loving thoughts towards that image. We must genuinely

wish that person good health, peace of mind and happiness, and prosperity—material and spiritual. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge goes a step further and asks us to *identify* ourselves with the poor, ignorant, wicked and those who dislike us. In such a meditation, we must try to *feel* that *we are that person*, with all his idiosyncracies, weaknesses and feeling of aversion. When such meditation is undertaken with all sincerity, our attitude towards that person may gradually begin to change.

Once a saintly person who was bathing in a river saw a scorpion struggling in the water. In order to save it from drowning, he picked up the scorpion and tried to put it on land, but just then the scorpion stung his hand. The saint flung his hand in pain, dropping the scorpion in water. On regaining his composure, he picked up the scorpion again from water. This drama went on for some time. A person standing on the riverbank who witnessed the drama, advised the saint to give up, as the scorpion will never cease stinging. The saint replied that "it is scorpion's nature to sting and it is my nature to save." We cannot reform another, but like the saint in the story we must continue to answer every inimical word and act of another with kindness and forgiveness. Then, very gradually we may find the change coming about in the other person. However, when the karmic tie of hatred is too strong, we may discern no change in the person in spite of our efforts to be good to him. But even then, "cast no one out of your heart." If we tried to understand the background of the person, perhaps we might be able to understand his feelings of animosity, anger, harshness or jealousy. In other words, we have to take the trouble of getting into the shoes of another to know where the shoe pinches. Ultimately, as a Bishop once remarked, loving or liking is an art, and like any other art, we achieve nothing by theorizing. We learn to dance by dancing, to sing by singing, and we learn to love by loving. It is suggested that if you want to be good, then act as goodness requires you to act, do not *wait* for the feelings to first arise in the heart.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Soshin is a concept in Zen Buddhism which means "beginner's mind." We must cultivate "beginner's mind" not only while learning martial arts or other forms of art, but in all areas of life. Cultivating "beginner's mind" refers to acquiring an attitude of openness, eagerness and lack of preconceptions when learning. Often we find those who are experts in their own chosen field, struggling to learn new things, but giving up too easily. They have not cultivated the beginner's mind and hence they are impatient with their slow pace of learning, and cannot bear to display their own early incompetence. As a result, they miss out the joy in the process of discovering and understanding something new. We have to learn to step away from the "I know" attitude. In the achievement-oriented culture of today, adopting "beginner's mind" could be very challenging, yet useful. Shunryu Suzuki explains: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few." It is also suggested that 'Don't know' is the warrior's wisdom." With that attitude one can step back and give a different response to the situation, breaking the old habits of responding. The idea behind this approach is that you *put away* all of the things you know—your expertise, opinions, reason and logic, even your cherished beliefs. You do not throw them away, but you "empty your pockets" for a while. "I don't know" occupies an important place in the process of learning. At times, when we say that "we know," the "knowing" consists merely of our assumptions, or our experiences and judgments about similar situations in the past. Real learning cannot take place so long as we are focused on the past or involved in setting future goals. It happens in the here-and-now. To cultivate "beginner's mind" we must let go of the past stories, set aside expertise and status, take one step at a time, focus more on the questions instead of the answers, and be ready to fall over and over again, writes Marguerite Theophil, a personal-growth coach. (*The Times of India*, November 6, 2010)

Learning is an ongoing process and at times we cannot learn

new things unless we are ready to unlearn. Our perception is coloured by our conception. Preconceptions and biases become biggest obstacles to learning.

As regards making one's mind free of preconceived notions, it is useful to read the hints given in *Some Observations on the Study of the S.D.* It is recommended that during individual and collective study of the *Secret Doctrine*, one must empty one's mind of all thoughts; the mind must be at peace with oneself and with the world. One must approach the subject with willingness and eagerness.

In case, the ideas of occult philosophy do not coincide with our preconceived ideas, we must be prepared to lay them aside for a while. John Middleton Murray speaks of negative capability, which he calls the mark of a genius, where there is no irritable reaching after facts, but preparedness to remain in doubt and uncertainty till the true meaning dawns on you. A man of meditation will not be worried about "is this the answer?" but "what is truth?" Pursuit of Truth must be an ongoing quest. We need not be judgmental nor should we have blind faith, but we must keep the faith skeptically, as there are three kinds of faith—blind, reasoned and intuitive. In order to judge we must have clear grasp of the teachings. Narada, the ancient philosopher said: "Never utter these words: 'I do not know this, therefore it is false.' One must study to know, know to understand, understand to judge." (*Isis*, I, 628)

Expert typists do not have to be consciously aware of pressing particular keys with their fingers, while typing. They seem to zoom across the keyboard without ever thinking about which fingers are pressing the keys. New research from Vanderbilt University, published in the journal *Science*, revealed that this skill was managed by an autopilot, which becomes aware of the typing errors, even when conscious brain is not aware. The hands know when they make an error even when mind does not. The lead author of the

study, Gordon Logan, said that it is known that we do certain things like walking, typing and familiar tasks like making coffee etc., on autopilot. But "what we do not know as scientists is, how people control their autopilots." To determine the relationship between the autopilot and the conscious brain, or pilot, Logan and co-author Matthew Crump designed a series of experiments. In one such experiment they asked skilled typists to type words which appeared on the screen and then these typists were told if they had made any errors in typing. These typists were timed as they typed; making note of the slowdown which occurs when one hits the wrong key. However, what was also done was, to introduce through a program certain errors which the typists had *not made* while typing, and likewise to correct the errors that the typists had made while typing. When the errors inserted by the program were reported, the typists took the blame for these errors, as if they were committed by them. Likewise, they took the credit for the mistakes (made by them) corrected by the program, believing that they had typed correctly. The research revealed that while the typists were fooled by the program, their fingers, as managed by the autopilots were not so fooled, because it was seen that the typists slowed down when they actually made an error, and did not slow down when false error (inserted by the program) appeared on the screen. "This suggests that error detection can occur on a voluntary and involuntary basis," said Crump. (*Mumbai Mirror*, October 30, 2010)

What the researchers termed "autopilots," can be explained on the basis of true understanding of memory. Our body is made up of atoms, and atoms are made up of "lives." Every atom has life and memory of its own. Memory in the "lives" when *innate* is called instinct. Instinct functions through readymade nerve connections, which ensure that such-and-such a response will occur in a certain situation. In a habit these nerve connections are made through exercise, when "lives" in the body are repeatedly given certain kind of impressions, day after day. Similarly, we can train the "lives" of the body to perform certain tasks—for instance, typing, playing

musical instruments, etc. The "lives" in the fingertips retain the memory, are habituated, so that after several attempts we are able to perform the task effortlessly.

Mr. Crosbie says that memory of walking and talking is with us, though we may not remember how and when we learned to walk and talk. It is memory that connects us with body, through all its changes. Without the memory, we would simply live from one impression to the other without any sense of self-identity. We are also told that every organ and cell in the body is a seat of memory. More than a hundred years ago, the great scientist Thomas Edison had remarked, "To me it seems that every atom is possessed by a certain amount of primitive intelligence." In H.P.B.'s time Dr. Pirogoff shared this belief with Edison. H.P.B. writes:

Occultism tells us that every atom, like the monad of Leibnitz, is a little universe in itself; and that every organ and cell in the human body is endowed with a brain of its own, with memory, therefore, experience and discriminative powers....If plants can be shown to have nerves and sensations and instinct (but another word for consciousness), why not allow the same in the cells of the human body? (U.L.T. *Pamphlet No. 20*, p. 5)

The researchers are surprised at the way the autopilots work, as if they were dissociated from the brain (pilot) and the mind. It would be well worth noticing that Dr. Michael D. Gershon, the Chairman of the department of anatomy and cell biology at Columbia, has identified a powerful brain in the gut known as enteric nervous system. Dr. Gershon explains that the gut deserves to be called "second brain," as the enteric nervous system takes care of every aspect of digestion from the esophagus to the stomach, small intestine and colon, with the help of nearly self-contained network of neural circuitry, neurotransmitters and proteins.

Gayatri Mantra, it is said, affects the three states of

consciousness—Waking, Dreaming and Dreamless sleep state. It is supposed to help one transcend three-fold ailments which affect body, mind and soul, i.e., ailments of the physical body, negativity of mind and restlessness of the soul. In other words, Gayatri *Sakti* or energy cleanses and energizes one's body, soul and mind. The Gayatri sharpens the intellect and polishes memory. Mind is like a mirror and it gathers dust. Gayatri cleanses the mind so that it mirrors in a better way. The Gayatri mantra has 24 letters which correspond to 24 vertebrae of the spine. Just as backbone provides support and stability to the body, Gayatri mantra brings stability to the intellect. Gayatri *Sakti* is the energy field and it is culmination of three energies—*tejas* or radiance, *yashas* or victory and *varchas* or brilliance. These energies manifest in the one who chants Gayatri and he acquires the power to bless, and these energies are transmitted to one receiving the blessing. The Gayatri mantra is considered to be *bija* (seed) mantra, as the syllables of Gayatri, contain in a nutshell, all the possibilities of a creation. It is possible to experience benefit by chanting a mantra even when one does not know its meaning. Just like sounds of laughter or weeping can cause shift in our consciousness, so also, the energy field created by sound vibrations of Gayatri mantra tend to elevate our consciousness. The ideal time to chant Gayatri mantra is during the transitory hours of dawn and dusk. It is the time when either the mind can easily be confused, and slip into inertia, lethargy and negativity, or, it can be elevated and put into meditative state, radiating positivity. Chanting the Gayatri mantra rejuvenates the mind, writes Bhanumathi Narasimhan. (*The Speaking Tree [The Times of India]*, November 14, 2010)

In the article, "A Commentary on the Gayatri," Mr. Judge translates the Gayatri mantra, thus:

Unveil, O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, that face of the True Sun now hidden by a vase of golden light, that we may see the truth and do our whole duty on our journey

to thy sacred seat.

Mr. Judge comments that the whole verse is an aspiration in the highest sense, and "unveil" is the cry of the man who is determined to know the truth; the cry is made to the Higher Self. Just as the True Sun (Central Spiritual Sun) is hidden behind the physical sun, so also, the Higher Self is hidden by the passions and desires, the personal self and the thirst for life. "So long as desire and the personality remain strong, just so long will the light be blurred, so long will we mistake words for knowledge and knowledge for the thing we wish to know and realize." *The Voice of the Silence* suggests that unless the flesh is passive, the head cool and the soul as firm and pure as a flaming diamond, the sunlight will not reach the inner chamber and do its work of illumination. Inner preparation needs to be made before we can partake of the guidance and communication with that Sun or Christos within.

Mr. Judge writes that "a mantram is a collection of words which when sounded in speech, induce certain vibrations not only in the air, but also in the finer ether, thereby producing certain effects." The efficacy of the mantra depends upon the form given to it, and that in turn depends upon many things, such as, numbers and syllables of the sacred metre, rhythm, correct pronunciation, intonation, etc. Thus:

The Gayatri metre, for example, consists of *thrice eight* syllables, and is considered the most sacred of metres. It is the metre of Agni, the fire-god, and becomes at times the emblem of Brahma himself, the chief creator and "fashioner of man" in his own image. (*Isis, II*, 410)

BE a *Serpent* to the *evil*, but at the same time be a *Dove* to the *person*.

-PETER S TERRY