

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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### ON MAKING A NEW BEGINNING

WE ARE reluctant and even afraid to make a new beginning because it might involve leaving behind the familiar, and certainly, it calls for effort. When we make a new beginning, we carry with us the knowledge, experience and errors of the past, but we are now given an opportunity to do better, by taking a fresh look at the situation, and by altering our attitude. We get these opportunities, cyclically. Cycle means return of that which was before. There is the cycle of day and night, the cycle of four seasons, and the yearly cycle. Every day and every year is a cyclic opportunity to make a new beginning.

When we wish each other a “Happy New Year!” it is an expression of good-will and fellowship. But, generally our wishes, even though they are the expression of a good and sincere desire, do not come true, as they are backed up neither by the power of thought, nor by the energy of will. Moreover, the wishes we send out or express to our friends are generally wishes for material prosperity—which need not always be of help. Years of pleasure and prosperity might only produce complacency and bring little experience and value, while a solitary hour of anguish might prove to be a wonderful, soul-awakening experience. As the Buddha says, “Neither for himself nor for others will the wise man crave sons or wealth or position.” No doubt, there is only a microscopic minority that wishes and struggles for spiritual life. But all the same, our New Year greetings must not be limited to wishing our friends and

loved ones mere material prosperity, but must include their inner development and spiritual progress.

The first of January was sacred to god Janus and *janua* means “the gate that openeth the year.” January 3 is sacred to Minerva-*Athene*, the goddess of Wisdom and also to *Isis*, “she who generates life.” However, “it is January the 4th which ought to be selected by the Theosophists...as their New Year.” The 4th of January is sacred to Mercury-Budha or Thoth-Hermes. It was the day on which the *Kumaras* lighted up *Manas*, making man a thinking and choosing being.

God Janus was revered as the “god of beginnings,” by the Romans. Janus watched the gate which opened a year. He is the presiding deity over the month of January. He is a double-faced god with one face old and another face young. The old face represents the past, and the young represents the future. With the key of garnered knowledge, he opens the New Year and with the staff he moves to higher altitudes.

Each human being is a striving and progressing Janus-like being. The good and the bad in each one of us are wrestling for victory. Man, too, is double-faced. The two faces represent our two natures—higher and lower. We are reminded every New Year that the fight is still going on between the higher and the lower. The old face which looks from the region of past memories, and the new which peeps from the region of hope still has hold over us. We begin the New Year with a hope, looking forward to pleasure and happiness. These hopes are likely to be frustrated. Hopes, fears, memories and anticipations keep the human consciousness in a non-integrated state.

At the beginning of a new year we should throw a lion’s glance at the year that just passed. “It is the custom among some people to glance back at their life’s path from the hillocks of time they annually surmount,” writes a Master of Wisdom. Every new day and a year is an opportunity to examine the thoughts, feelings, actions and also reactions and responses to the past, from which emerges the prospective vision of the future.

We must examine and analyze that past, not from the point of view of our bodily age but from that of our mental creativeness. What have I achieved as a soul, as a thinker, during that past? What shall I do with past errors, past meanness, past selfishness, past laziness? In hurting others we have wounded ourselves; in robbing others we have impoverished ourselves; but brooding over and re-living the past is a waste of time and effort. We are asked not to regret the past, but to learn from it. The suggestion is to forget the emotional experiences attached to the past events that tend to take control of our mind and colour the present and the future. Once we have extracted the lesson from an event, we must let it pass without brooding over it. Our capacity to do good in the present is adversely affected when we dwell over the past, which drags us down from our present level of consciousness.

Let us examine the past and recognize our follies, our ambitions, our pride. Once we have recognized our mistakes and limitations, we must try to find the remedy. Thus, with the cycle of Recognition begins also the cycle of Aspiration. These two cycles of Recognition and Aspiration meet in the present; past follies and future hopes join hands and each one of us can give them a right direction by the sincere quest of Truth and Wisdom.

The face that looks enquiringly and expectantly to the future represents hope. Hope is a theological virtue, which suggests that if we struggle, we can be better. From wherever we are, there is a way leading to a state of unconditioned happiness. As a first step, we must *resolve* to make a new beginning by eradicating all that stood in the way of living the soul-life, and to bring in things which will enable us to lead a better and a nobler life, and become a better human being. As the sun moves northward, from December 21st, the days become longer—bringing more light, warmth and brightness. Just as in the entire day the physical and psychic atmosphere of the early morning is most conducive for study and meditation, so also this time of the year is best suited to make resolves. H.P.B. writes:

Let no one imagine that it is a mere fancy, the attaching of importance to the birth of the year. The earth passes through its definite phases and man with it; and as a day can be coloured, so can a year. The astral life of the earth is young and strong between Christmas and Easter. Those who form their wishes now will have added strength to fulfil them consistently. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 23*, Foreword)

Sun is the giver of life physical and metaphysical. During the northward movement of the sun there is renewal and refreshment of life energy. Astral body in man and astral light in nature is the vehicle of the life energy. Every thought and feeling leaves an impression on the astral light. Good thoughts and ideation impressed on the astral light are attracted to us and support us—by the law of consubstantiality—whenever we make a resolve to be good. This support is greater during this period due to renewal of life energy, so that the astral light acts as an unobstructed pipe or a sieve.

A resolution is a decision backed by thought and desire. In other words, our resolves are no better than mere intellectual formulations, unless backed by intense desire or emotion. When the desire is intense, “will” comes into action. At times, we feel that we had intense desire and yet nothing happened. However, when we say, “I wanted to come and see you so badly but I could not,” this “wanted to” was not intense enough. Ideally speaking, when we make a resolve, we are supposed to have thought out the difficulties and obstacles that we are going to encounter, and to have calculated our strength and resources to overcome them. When we make a resolve without proper forethought or knowledge, we break it, and as a result weaken something in our psychic and spiritual nature.

In *The Friendly Philosopher*, Mr. Crosbie writes:

All have doubtless made New Year’s resolutions, and all, no doubt, have failed to keep them. There must be reason for our failures....The reason for our failures is that we do not understand our own natures. Our first mistake is to make *negative* resolutions. We say, I will *not* drink; I will *not* lie;

I will *not* do this; I will *not* do that. Whereas the proper resolve to make is that—I *will* do this, the opposite of what we are now doing. In this case, we make a direct affirmation of the will, while the other form of resolution puts us in a purely negative position. (pp. 310-11)

Often, we make resolutions only because it is proper to make them. Hence, we do not really expect to keep them, and seem to give up the struggle after a few days. We forget the need to persist and to sustain the resolution. If we do not act upon our resolution or strive to keep it, then it is as good as not having made the resolution. We need to persist, because when we make a resolve, there is an opposition on the inner planes. In the face of this resistance, we must be vigilant and refrain from taking a liberal attitude. When we undertake self-discipline, we first make an ideal plan or *Sankalpa* and then execute it. *Kalpa* means, “to form an idea or image.” Thus, *Sankalpa* is to so thoroughly think and imagine that the thing thought about gets translated into action. A solemn resolution is born of absolute determination and it calls into play spiritual or higher aspect of will. A solemn resolution is self-energized, and is an intense desire for inner change, made after careful self-examination.

What we call a strong-willed person is only a person with strong drive at the level of lower mind. So we have drives for making money or for acquiring fame, which is an expression of “personal” will. However, “spiritual will” comes into play when we learn to surrender personal will to the divine will. As Prof. C. S. Lewis writes,

We are rebels, we must learn to lay down our arms....to surrender a self-will inflamed and swollen with years of usurpation is a kind of death. We all remember this self-will as it was in childhood....Hence the older type of nurse or parent was quite right in thinking that the first step in education is “to break the child’s will.”...And if, now that we are grown up, we do not howl and stamp quite so much, that is partly because our elders began the process of breaking or killing our self-will in the nursery, and partly

because the same passions now take more subtle forms....Hence the necessity to die daily: however often we think we have broken the rebellious self we shall still find it alive. (*The Problem of Pain*, pp. 91-92)

Making a new beginning often amounts to changing one's attitude towards circumstances of life. We try to attain happiness by hankering after what we do not possess under Karma, and by attempting to change the circumstances in which we find ourselves, thinking that changed circumstances will bring happiness. But our environment only reflects our inner state. There is a need to work on ourselves and learn to adopt the right mental attitude. The right mental attitude is that of "acceptance" of pain or unfavourable circumstances, knowing that "my own has come back to me," under Karma.

The tradition of making New Year resolutions dates back to the Babylonian period, when the most popular resolution made was to return borrowed farm equipment. Some make earth-shattering resolutions and work proportionately hard to make them come true. We should begin by making realistic resolutions and resolve, at first, to overcome minor weaknesses and desires, such as, "I will not take a second helping of ice-cream," if one is fond of ice-creams. This is because lots of strength is needed to fight deep-seated tendencies, and even greater strength is needed to create new habits and instincts which are conducive to nobler life. It is not enough to make solemn resolves to abstain from doing wrong, but we must resolve to work altruistically. Probably, it would be good to make a resolution: "I would not live for myself alone. I will not live for my family alone. I will not live for my country alone. I will live and work for the amelioration of the condition of every creature in the universe." Each one of us affects mental and moral atmosphere of the world. "Those who do not help to elevate the thoughts and lives of others must of necessity either paralyse them by indifference, or actively drag them down," writes H.P.B.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### THE GIFT

THE GREAT Lord was on His peacock throne, and all the greater and lesser Gods were bowing down in deep reverence.

"Brother Comrades," said the Lord, "I would like to add something to my cherished possessions, something worthy of my spiritual store, and hence there is a task for each one of you. Go, visit the valley of tears and bring me something from our sorrowing brethren, from the world of mortals; some gift for the land of Immortals. A Divine Gift it will be. We meet again after one year."

The year went by and the Brothers of the Great Lodge were gathered together once more. Each had to show something he had brought back as his gift from the lower world, to add to the collection of the Higher. Rare and precious samples of the enlightened minds and unfolding hearts, tales and stories and records of deeds of unselfish love and devotion, of charity and sacrifice, nobility and virtue; many and varied instances showing Souls at various stages of their spiritual quest—all were accepted, all gladly admired.

But the problem remained as to which of these gifts would please the Lotus-Eyed Lord, which would be thought fittest? All waited and wondered, but the Great Arbiter kept silent. Evidently He expected something worthier for his treasured collection. All were good, but He wished for something Divine.

But hush, what draws the attention of the whole assembly? Hurried footsteps of a little God, evidently he was left behind—maybe he was waiting in the lower regions to gather his offerings for the King. Tired as he looked, there were peace and gladness in his eyes as if he had something to compensate for the delay.

"Namaste My Lord," he panted, "I am late, I am afraid. I was delayed and yet I hope, I have to offer you something worthwhile to atone for my tardiness and the inconvenience I may have caused."

He took out from under his white robes a tiny box and a small leaflet. What could these be? All looked around and wondered.

Offering them to Hari (Lord) he kept silent.

In breathless expectancy the box was opened. There glistened within the box a tear-drop—no more.

“Mighty One,” said the Messenger, “it is a tear of true repentance wrung out from the depths of a bleeding and sorrowing heart, an awakened Soul. A heart which has realized its own Divinity and is shocked and horrified to know what a tragedy it has made of life. One who has recognized his own failings, his faults and shortcomings. A heart which has caught a glimpse of Thy Divine Light. A heart which has understood how sacred life is, and sees with horror how little he has made of that grand privilege. One who has realized what a precious gem he had dropped, in order to cling to a pebble. It is this knowledge which has bled his heart and wrested that warm tear from out its core.

“But with that true recognition and repentance there is the Resolve,” and he pointed to the leaflet. “A resolve to be true to his Divine heritage, to the call of his soul. A resolve to serve and to sacrifice—to be a servant of the Wise Ones, to tread the true Path, or perish in the attempt. A resolve that nothing will shake, nothing will make him waver.

“Lord, I waited to catch the rolling tear, and to pen down the Resolve—both freshly gathered but both firm and true; my humble offering to you.”

The Great One smiled—“And a precious gem indeed for the Divine Crown. A gem of luster and beauty, rarely equalled. Brother Kinsmen, you will all agree this is the rarest, the most precious and cherished gift of the Year. May the Divine Light find many more such gifts!”

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Each one of us has a need to repent for either an act of commission or an act of omission. Which one of us can say that he is not guilty, now and then, of indulging in unbrotherly conduct or hurtful speech that made another diminish in self-respect, or of indulging in mental,

if not verbal, condemnation of another? Sometimes, we may have remained inactive, instead of extending a helping hand, even when we were made aware of the need for help. We are asked to dismiss the past and regret nothing, because repentance could take the form of self-reproach or constant brooding over the wrong done, leading to despair. It may take the form of continual crying and asking for forgiveness of God. In the case of deathbed repentance, the mere act of confessing one’s sin to a priest is not sufficient to wipe away the sin and its consequences.

A sin, crime, or error disrupts the channel of communication with our divine nature, and true repentance re-establishes this ruptured communication so that we can receive the necessary guidance to correct ourselves. It also means humbly submitting ourselves to receive the just retribution from the all-merciful Law.

Of course, we should not dwell upon the past failures, lest we strengthen the weaknesses that caused them. True repentance consists in accepting the mistake and resolving to mend the ways and acting in accordance with such resolve. If in ignorance and out of self-importance and love for creating sensation we passed along a story which we later realized to be false, we must admit the error and as far as possible correct the calumny. If we had treated our parents disrespectfully and without showing gratitude, we should try to make up for it, by showing loving care. True repentance must lead to inner transformation. We are then sowing new causes that can counteract or mitigate the bad effects generated by previous causes.

Genuine repentance is the conquest of the spiritual over the animal nature in man. In genuine repentance there is a resolve to throw away that which was debased and unwholesome, and an assertion to elevate that which is wholesome and spiritual. In true repentance there is no brooding over the effect produced by the sin, but recognizing the sin as sin, and trying to understand it in the light of the higher knowledge, while making every effort to repair or remedy the damage caused.

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

## THE BHIKKHU—I

THE CHAPTER is called *Bhikkhuvaggo* or “The Bhikkhu” or “The Mendicant.” The word Bhikkhu is derived from the Sanskrit name *bhikshu*, from the root *bhiksh*, which means “to beg for alms.” The Bhikkhu is a Buddhist monk who has given up worldly existence. A bhikkhu does not have a fixed home or possessions except his yellow robe and a begging bowl; he subsists on alms given to him by the householders. All those who aspired seriously to follow the path shown by the Buddha were invited to become the monks or the nuns. But, who is a Bhikkhu? The Buddha said: “He is not a Bhikkhu because he carries the begging bowl. Nor even because he adopts the whole law outwardly. But he who is above good and evil, is chaste, who comports himself in the world with understanding, he indeed is called a Bhikkhu.” Thus, it is the inner attitude, motive and the behaviour which makes one a Bhikkhu. However, not all the monks or the nuns understood the significance of becoming a monk or a nun. The magazine *Theosophy* (June 1957) makes a pertinent comment on this point as follows:

Fortune’s favoured soldiers cannot forcefully invite others to share the plane of mind on which they live. They can provide no precise instructions, nor guarantee any success. The chief corruptions of Buddhism have occurred among those for whom this point has been obscured, who have confused membership in a monastic order with enlightenment, and who have mistakenly thought that *inner* security may be obtained by joining with those who determinedly practice ritual. Those who read the verses of the *Dhammapada* in search of enlightenment rather than solace see how insistently Gotama stresses the need for self-reliance and ethical independence. Again and again, he also remarks that the capacity to be content with a solitary life is but a preliminary step towards the attainment of the

Nirmanakaya vesture. The disciple is counseled to be neither social nor anti-social, but to rise above those levels of perception where the “social” is the only means for expressing interdependence. The Nirmanakaya, above all beings, *enjoys* the fact of interdependence with all beings, and because he so enjoys, he no longer thinks or speaks in terms of “society” at all. Yet, despite this, he leaves behind him an atmosphere which conveys something of value to others who still need to band together for assurance.

1-2. *Restraint in the eye is good; good is restraint in the ear; restraint in the nose is good; good is restraint in the tongue; in the body restraint is good; good is restraint in speech; in the mind restraint is good; good is restraint in all things. A Bhikkhu who is restrained in all things is free from all pain. (360-361)*

3. *Call him a Bhikkhu who controls his hand, also his feet; who controls his speech; who is well controlled; who is happy within himself; who is collected and full of contentment in the solitary life. (362)*

The body is an instrument of the Spirit within. It has to be disciplined so as to help and not hinder the living of the spiritual life. This takes time because for many years in this life, and for many incarnations in the past, we have lived a purely worldly life and impressed the lives or atoms of our body with impressions, which are not conducive to spiritual life. They become our *skandhas* which go to form the personality in the next incarnation. They manifest themselves as our tendencies, idiosyncrasies, likes and dislikes, selfishness and vices. For most of us, the life of worldly aspirations comes naturally. A special effort is needed to train the lives in our body to make them subservient to the Spiritual man within. The Buddha knows this. He knows well that one does not become a Bhikkhu in the real sense simply by wearing a yellow robe and carrying a begging bowl or outwardly observing the monastic rules. One becomes a true Bhikkhu when the observance of the rules comes naturally to him. No force is needed. But before

that state is reached, the memory of sense enjoyments is likely to distract the Bhikku. Therefore, the Buddha asks him to be watchful and exercise restraint in all things—in the senses, in the speech, in the mind and in the body. One needs to control fleshly appetites and desires. All lower, material interests have to be deliberately subordinated to the behests of the spirit. The Buddha asks his disciples to exercise control regarding the objects of senses and the avenues of action. But this has to be done in a gradual manner. The Buddha taught the middle path, the path of moderation. He did not ask his disciples to practice extreme asceticism.

One can begin by cultivating detachment, by practicing moderation, by mild mortification of senses so that one is able to do without those things which one is habituated to. As *The Light of Asia* says, you have to behave as though you are in the presence of a king. Epictetus says, you have to behave as though you were at a banquet; you would take small helpings and wait patiently for the bowl to come your way and if it does not, you sit smiling without anxiety or getting disturbed. Cultivating contentment and accepting whatever life has brought to us as the result of our past actions makes the struggle less difficult.

4. *Sweet is the preaching of that Bhikkhu who guards his tongue in speaking wisdom, who elucidates both the letter and the spirit of the Law without being puffed up.*  
(363)

Study, application and promulgation are three important aspects of spiritual discipline. In *Light on the Path* we are told that the Masters are also servants, and part of their service is to let their knowledge touch the disciple; and the disciple's first act of service is to give some of that knowledge to those who are not yet fit to stand where he stands. This is no arbitrary decision, made by any master or teacher or any such person, however divine. It is the law of that life which the disciple has entered upon.

It is the duty of the Bhikkhu to pass on to others what he has

learnt from the teacher. But the manner in which he does this will influence his future progress. He must give out the teachings of his guru without distorting or diluting it. He must become a clear channel through which the teachings of his guru reach other seekers. If he places himself between the truth and the seeker, he causes eclipse—partial or full. This idea is explained in an earlier issue of the magazine *The Theosophical Movement*. It points out that when the moon passes directly between the Earth and the Sun, it causes eclipse. Let us take the Moon to represent a disciple or someone who reflects the light of truth, and reaches it to his fellow beings. Let the light of Truth symbolize the Sun. Depending upon his level of development he will reflect more or less light. Also, so long as he is faithful to his task of reflecting the light impersonally, he benefits humanity, by removing the darkness of ignorance. But when he tries to put forward his own personality, seeks to put himself on a pedestal, he begins to divert the attention of the people from the teachings to himself, and without realizing, he places himself between his followers and the light of truth, causing a moral and spiritual eclipse.

A true disciple practices reticence and gives out to each according to their level of understanding in simple language by giving examples. Adulation does not make him proud. His natural humility makes him say: "Thus have I heard." He has no sense of superiority or "holier than thou" attitude. He makes pride and self-regard bond-maidens to devotion—devotion to the interest of another. So genuine is his concern for the welfare of others that when he points out error, the other person knows that it is for his own good. Mr. Crosbie's sage advice to the theosophical student-teacher is:

All that any of us can give is Theosophy. We did not invent it. It was given to us; we stand in line and pass it along, as people used to do at fires in passing the buckets of water. People are grateful to the one who passes the "water of life" along to them, but the "passer" knows where gratitude belongs, and says: "don't thank me; thank Theosophy—as I do. It enables me to help others; it will

also enable you.” Thus he helps them and helps himself to get rid of the personal idea. The fight against the “personal idea” is a long one and a strong one. It has to be guarded against that it does not take to itself what it has no claim to. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 381)

5. *He who abides in the Law, who delights in the Law, who meditates on the Law, who remembers well the Law—such a Bhikkhu does not fall from the sublime Law. (364)*

The word *Dhamma* has been given different meanings by different translators. *Dhamma* means the doctrines taught by the Buddha—the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. It also refers to one’s duty as well as the unerring Law of harmony—the law of Karma. The Bhikkhu is devoted to the Doctrines. He meditates upon the Doctrine. He puts into practice what he has learnt. He delights in performance of every duty that is his as a Bhikkhu, towards the teacher, fellow-monks and the society in general. He possesses an unswerving faith in the working of the law of Karma.

6. *Let him not disdain what he has received; let him not envy others; a Bhikkhu who envies others will not obtain peace in meditation. (365)*

7. *Even the gods praise that Bhikkhu who disdains not what he has received, however little, but lives a strenuous and pure life. (366)*

A Bhikkhu subsists on alms. He is allowed to visit three or five houses to beg for food. He does not beg verbally but waits patiently at the door in silence and accepts whatever has been put into the begging bowl. If he does not receive anything from the houses that he visits, he is expected to go without food on that day. There is deeper psychology and philosophy underlying this rule for disciplining oneself. The very idea of eating whatever someone else has chosen to offer you is the first step in mortification of the tongue. Moreover, food received from three different houses is bound to get mixed up in the bowl, thereby taking away the pleasure of choosing the content of the next morsel or enjoying the taste of this or that

particular food item put in the bowl. The above practice helps the Bhikkhu to overcome his attachment to food. The discipline teaches him not to have any preference for what and how much has been given to him.

The Bhikkhu who has not overcome his attachment for food may scoff at what he has received in his bowl. He may show contempt for the food in his bowl because he does not like what he has received. He may even become envious of what the fellow-monk has received. He may even feel envious about the progress made by another monk. When there is envy, the mind becomes restless and fails to concentrate and meditate.

Envy is like an incurable disease which spreads silently in the body to destroy the vital organs. For the disciple who is trying to purify his lower nature and make his astral body coherent, envy can create havoc. In the article “Culture of Concentration,” Mr. Judge points out that when there is envy, the ethereal form which has assumed coherence and definiteness, instead of being pure and clear and fresh, begins to take on a cloudy and disagreeable colour, the precursor of putrefaction, which invades every part, and its effects preclude any further progress, and at last reacts upon the student so that anger again manifests itself. Envy is not a mere trifle that produces no physical result. It has a powerful action, as strong in its own field as that of anger. It not only hinders further development, but attracts to the student’s vicinity thousands of malevolent beings of all classes that precipitate themselves upon him and wake up or bring every evil passion. Envy must be extirpated, and it cannot be got rid of as long as the personal idea is allowed to remain in us.

*(To be continued)*

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I DREAM my paintings and then, I paint my dreams.

—VINCENT VAN GOGH



## JUSTICE AND MERCY OF THE KARMIC LAW

ONE OF the misconceptions which prevails in regard to the doctrine of Karma is that it is too stern and exacting as retributive justice without any room for tempering it with mercy. The underlying assumption is that justice and mercy are mutually incompatible in the natural order, and that the retributive justice of Karmic law is devoid of the quality of mercy. Believers in the existence of personal God say that they find solace in the belief in a God who forgives the sins of mortals when prayed to in sincere repentance and grants their wishes, and that the belief is a stimulus to virtue and religious life. Both these views are contrary to truth and fact. H.P.B. shows that such a belief clashes with justice and logic, and inevitably leads those who believe in it to every conceivable crime and checks the progress of mankind. Truth, Justice, mercy are, in fact, the three aspects of one and the same reality, and are inseparable.

The final destiny of all beings who make up the universe is, through self-effort and merit, to consciously re-unite with the One Life, from which they had emerged, “in full possession of *Paramartha*” (*S.D.*, I, 54). This stupendous universal evolution is governed by the Law of Karma. Therefore, Absolute Justice is inherent in the whole, and, which, consequently, is the essential quality of the Soul of every being, of the lowest as well as of the highest in the degree of development. Knowledge of this verity is the *true* knowledge, and realization of which is the end, aim and ultimate destiny of human existence. Deity is Law and Law is Deity. It is Justice itself whose heart is Mercy, which, pervading the universe, constitutes the essential quality of the very heart and soul of every being. Hence Plato taught that Justice subsists in every soul and that it is the greatest good of its possessor. True Mercy is strictest Justice, and true Justice is Mercy itself.

Such perfect Justice of Nature does not however obtain, and cannot be realized, in man-made laws because of the limitation and imperfection of human nature. For instance, when an offender is

tried and punished by the State under the State laws, there is in it neither room for his rectitude and reform nor is there a provision for the full and just recompense for the injustice suffered by the victim. The human quality of mercy does indeed good to the one who exercises it towards the one who offended against him; or the State may grant remission of punishment awarded to the offender; in either case, the ill-effects of the disturbance of harmony caused by the offender by his crime are not thereby annulled or wiped out. Like a stone thrown in a pond sets up ripples which traverse to the limits of the pond and oscillate to and fro till equilibrium is restored, so is every good as well as every evil action felt throughout the universe, causing disturbance. Karma is the undeviating, unerring, ceaselessly operating Law which restores the disturbed harmony caused by actions of beings. Restoration of disturbed harmony is the strictest justice by which individuals feel the good effects produced by their good actions as happiness, and evil effects produced by their evil actions as pain and sorrow. None and nothing can prevent the good tidings from reaching a man that flows from his good actions for his weal, nor deflect the retributive justice of Karma from inflicting on man pain, exactly in proportion to the injury caused to others, and injured party is compensated exactly in proportion to the loss suffered by them by the action of the former.

Retributive Karma does not come to us as mere punishment for our past wrong doings. It comes as our teacher and deliverer, because it is only through repeated suffering, life after life, which are the fruits of our own Karma, that we gradually and slowly, in degrees, learn to discriminate rightly between good and evil; come to understand what makes for happiness and what for sorrow, what binds the soul and what sets it free, and thus through development of spiritual discrimination evolve in Soul-life, whose end is emancipation through Self-realization. Therefore, Karmic retribution does not come to us to condemn us, but that we may through the painful experience restore the broken harmony, caused by ourselves, and learn the lessons from the school of life, by which alone, and in

no other way, can we progress towards final Emancipation. Thus Justice of Karma is Mercy itself—Compassion Absolute.

The mercy of the Karmic law is visibly evident in everyday life in that we see very often people who seem to be indulging in evil deeds continue enjoying what is considered as good life. This is because the merciful law generously provides opportunities to such a person for a long time to mend his ways. This is illustrated in the episode of Shishupala in the *Mahabharata* who was allowed to do wrong a hundred times, and punished only towards the end of the long period of opportunity given to him by Krishna to rectify his mistakes.

It is a common experience that when people meet with some calamity or misfortune in life, they feel that they did not deserve it, and that life, or “God,” had been unkind to them. It is natural for them to so feel, because the average man of the world cannot know the causes he had generated in his previous lives, the bitter fruit of which he is now experiencing as so much pain. The moment one entertains such a thought that their suffering is unmerited—though nothing good or bad which come to us is ever unmerited, in reality—that very instant the Law of Compensation comes into operation, which, after the death of the body, causes the disembodied Soul to fall into a state of post mortem consciousness, called *Devachan*, in which it experiences intense, uninterrupted happiness and bliss. Every tear of pain shed on earth under the painful retributive justice is thus compensated a hundredfold with supernal bliss and rest in post-mortem spiritual consciousness. When the Ego returns to earth life, at the end of its blessed post-mortem life, in a new incarnation under Karma, the relentless retributive Karma meets it in the new body, thus affording another opportunity to the Ego to learn from the bitter fruits of past transgressions it is compelled to taste, even as it brings about happy circumstances and prospects as sweet fruits of good actions of its past lives. The subjective spiritual state of *Devachan*, in which the Ego is rested, refreshed with uninterrupted bliss for centuries (in terms of the reckoning of time in earth-life),

and evolves to a higher stage through assimilating the highest and noblest essence of all its life-thoughts, is unerringly just and at the same time the most merciful provision of the Law of Karma.

Mercy of the just Law is also seen in mortal life of the Ego on earth in the fact that not only are its past good actions rewarded with happiness, but the pain and loss it might have suffered by the evil actions of others in the past life or lives are compensated in the present one, or in the next, in fullest measure with happiness and opportunities of good life. If someone, for instance, is deprived of life, or suffers the loss of a loved one or property by criminal act of a fellowman, the victim is compensated in the next or another life by reward so as to mitigate the loss and the sorrow he suffered in full measure with corresponding happiness and blessing of fortunate circumstances. The one who committed the offence will, of course, have to suffer at the hands of retributive justice till the broken harmony resulting from his action is fully restored.

Though we may not remember our unwise action which has resulted in the pain with which we are suffering in the present, every man and woman nevertheless sees the perfect justice of all the disappointments and sorrows of their lives at the moment of their death when they stand in the light of the divine presence of their Higher Self and review in minutest detail every event of the life they are quitting, even down to a vaguest thought or a feeling that ever crossed their minds. In the same way, the Ego sees in a pre-natal pre-view, just before it is born in a new body, at the end of its *Devachanic* tenure, the perfect justice of all that awaits it in the earth life, it is poised to enter.

If we thus correctly comprehend the immutable law of being—Karma—and live, think and act in harmony with it, then no circumstance of life, however painful or difficult it may be, would ever be looked upon by us as misfortune, or any feeling of resentment would ever arise in us, nor would we make attempts to escape from it, but we would meet the same with full sense of responsibility as the just desert for our past inharmonious actions, and as an invaluable

opportunity to learn the precious lessons of life that emerge from the solemn experience.

In the light of the higher life we begin to understand that our apparent enemies who seem to work to harm us are not enemies but indeed are our friends and benefactors, because by right knowledge and right attitude on our part towards our detractors the enmity can be transformed into friendship, and hatred into Love. We thereby not only grow and evolve ourselves in spiritual life but also cause to lighten to some extent the heavy burden of the Karma of the world and help humanity in its higher evolution. No one can be inimical to us in truth because the hand that smites us is our own, the apparent enemy being the agent of retributive Karma which we engendered by our own action. But if in ignorance we were to retaliate with vengeance and anger and hurt in return the one who caused us harm, we thereby arouse the implacable retributive justice into action to react on us to punish us sooner or later, and compensate our apparent enemy with reward in a future life for the hurt we caused him. This explains why we very often see in every society men who are wanting in character, sometimes distinctly wicked, appear to be free from suffering, happy and prosperous. It is the Karmic compensation they are enjoying for having been treated badly by their fellowmen and suffered thereby, or they may be enjoying the reward of a past meritorious deed. Human laws, therefore, should as much as possible be restrictive, reformatory and educative but not retributive, in view of the implacable Law of universal Justice. Therefore, charity to each other's faults, and forgiveness of mutual offences are absolutely imperative ethical laws which have to be meticulously observed by us with an enlightened understanding of the immutable Law of our being. Only then shall we, individually and collectively, make rapid progress in higher life leading to the enlightenment and freedom of the Soul.

## THE ADEPTS IN THE BIBLE

### JESUS—I

THE BEST way we can understand the spiritual significance of Christmas is by understanding the allegory of Jesus' life. H.P.B. says that the whole of the New Testament, in a way, is an account of the Cycle of Initiation, from the birth of man in a body of flesh up to his second or spiritual birth and initiation—allegorized in the life of Jesus. But, what are we to make of Jesus Christ? Is Christ's nativity account, a fact or fiction? Many scholars are of the opinion that the Gospel account of Jesus' birth is a mixture of faith and history. *Jesus of Galilee* or *Jesus of Nazareth* is the founder of Christianity, and considered to be "Son of God" or even the "only son of God" by most Christians. His teachings and deeds are recorded in the New Testament. The only substantial sources for the life and message of Jesus are the Gospels of the New Testament. Some additional evidence can be found in the letters of St. Paul.

The Nativity of Jesus refers to the accounts of the birth of Jesus, primarily based on the two accounts in the gospels of Luke and Matthew. The Canonical gospels of Luke and Matthew both describe Jesus as son of Mary and Joseph, born in Bethlehem in Judea. They report that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived and that she "was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit." Mary was married to Joseph but had not yet entered the house of her spouse. In the *Gospel According to St. Luke*, Mary learns from angel Gabriel that she will conceive and bear a child called Jesus. When she asks how this can be, since she is a virgin, he tells her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the 'Son of God.'" Mary was assured that her virginity would be spared.

Mary gives birth to Jesus and having found no place in the inn, places the new-born in the manger. Angels proclaim him a saviour for all people. The "Star of Bethlehem" reveals the birth of Jesus to

three Magi or “wise men” of the East, who travel to Jerusalem. There they meet King Herod of Judea, and ask where the “King of the Jews” has been born. Herod, following a verse from the *Book of Micah* interpreted as a prophecy, directs them to Bethlehem, a nearby village. The Star leads them to where Jesus was, where they worship Jesus with gifts of *gold, frankincense* and *myrrh*. In a dream, the magi receive a divine warning of Herod’s intent to kill Jesus, whom he sees as a rival. Consequently, they return to their own country without telling Herod where to find Jesus. An angel tells Joseph to flee with his family to Egypt. In the meantime, Herod orders that all male children of Bethlehem under the age of two should be killed. This is known as the “Massacre of the Innocents.”

The name *Jesus*, as found in several modern languages, is derived from the Latin *Iesus*, a transliteration of the Greek *Iesous*. Theosophy regards Jesus, the Man, as a grand philosopher and moral reformer. According to the *Theosophical Glossary*, “The name Jesus is rather a title of honour than a name—the true name of the *Soter* [saviour] of Christianity being Emmanuel, or God with us (*Matthew*, i, 23).” Iassou or Jeshu lived during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus [103-76 B.C.] at Lyd (or Lud). According to the Talmudic *Sepher Toldos Jeshu*, he was the son of Joseph Pandira and was put to death at Lyd, also called Lydda. It is around this man Iassou, an adept ascetic, who lived a hundred years earlier than the Christian era that the legend of Christ was formed. “Jesus the *initiate* (or Jehoshua)—the type from whom the ‘historical’ Jesus was copied—was not of pure Jewish blood.”

As for the “three wise men” and the star that guided them, Kepler maintained that at the moment of the “incarnation,” all planets were in conjunction in the sign of Pisces, called by the Jews (the Kabbalists), the “constellation of Messiah.” It is in this constellation that the “star of the Magi” was placed. H.P.B. writes that connecting the constellation of *Pisces* only with Jesus, who was only one of the several Saviours or reformers, is erroneous, because that constellation shines as a symbol of all the past, present, and future

Spiritual Saviours who dispense light and dispel mental darkness. The real time and year of the birth of Jesus are totally unknown, and yet the Christian symbologists have tried to show that their Messiah was born at the moment when sun entered the sign of the Fish (*Pisces*). It seems that they have tried to fit their preconceived ideas with sidereal *facts* and popular beliefs. For instance, Brahmins also connect *their* “Messiah,” the eternal Avatar Vishnu, with a *fish* and the Deluge. (*S.D.*, I, 653-54)

The Christians apply the concept of virgin-birth or “Immaculate Conception” to the fact that Mother Mary conceived Jesus without intervention of father, miraculously, remaining a virgin, without sexual intercourse, but through Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost. The concept of Immaculate Conception is a purely astronomical, mathematical and pre-eminently metaphysical, but carnalized by the Christian Church, says H.P.B. Like Krishna, Jesus being the saviour and world-reformer, may be regarded as the direct emanation of the Logos, Verbum or Word—the synthesis of seven creative rays or power. *Logos* means outward expression or effect of the concealed cause. Thus, on the higher plane, the plan for the phenomenal universe resides in the Divine Mind, like an unexpressed thought, and *Manifested Logos* is the expression of that concealed thought.

In various systems of philosophy, the (manifested) Logos is variously termed as Horus, Brahma or Adam-Kadmon and they are all “son-Gods,” and are said to be born through an immaculate Mother. H.P.B. explains that matter is the root of the word “mother,” and therefore, regarded as female. In the manifestation of cosmos, the matter on the highest plane is undifferentiated, primordial matter, which is *not fecundated by some act in space and time, or by some outside cause*, because fertility and productiveness are inherent in it. Thus, anything that is born out of that inherent virtue is born *through* it. On the other hand, on the physical plane, matter or mother is passive instrument fecundated by some outside, independent cause. The Christian doctrine of Immaculate Conception is the materializing of the metaphysical and spiritual conception, because

the mother is first fecundated by the Holy Ghost, and child is born from her (*Transactions*, pp. 87-88). Jesus was not the *only* “Son of God.” H.P.B. puts it thus:

Whether the Jesus of the New Testament ever lived or not, whether he existed as an historical personage, or was simply a lay figure around which the Bible allegories clustered—the Jesus of Nazareth of Matthew and John, is the ideal for every would-be sage and Western candidate Theosophist to follow. That such an one as he, was a “Son of God,” is as undeniable as that he was neither the only “Son of God,” nor the first one, nor even the last who closed the series of the “Sons of God,” or the children of Divine Wisdom, on this earth. (*Lucifer*, I, 327)

The legends of three Saviours—Krishna, Buddha and Jesus—when compared, show striking similarity. H.P.B. suggests that St. Thomas adopted “in his gospel (from which all others were copied) the most important details of the story of the Hindu Avatar,” Krishna (*Isis*, II, 539). The Gospel account of Virgin Mary and the slaughter of the innocents ordered by King Herod, compares thus:

Christna (Krishna) is an incarnation of Vishnu, the second person of the Trimurti (Trinity). Buddha, according to some, is an incarnation of Vishnu; and according to others, an incarnation of one of the Buddhas, and even of *Adi Buddha* or Highest Wisdom. Jesus is an incarnation of the Holy Ghost, then the second person of the Trinity, but now the Third. Christna’s mother was Devaki...an immaculate virgin (but had given birth to eight sons before Christna). Buddha’s mother was Maya or Mayadevi; married to her husband (yet immaculate virgin)...Christna is persecuted by Kansa, Tyrant of Mathura, but miraculously escapes. In the hope of destroying the child, the king has thousands of male innocents slaughtered. (*Isis*, II, 537)

However, “infant-massacre” must not be taken to mean literal killing of the infants or babies. It implies the persecution, during the

reign of King Herod, of the Kabalists and *Wise men*, who had not remained orthodox. The *Wise men* as well as the prophets were nicknamed the “Innocents” and the “Babes” on account of their holiness (*Isis*, II, 199). According to the *Sepher Toldos Jeshu*, Jesus had been entrusted by Mary to Rabbi Elhanan. Rabbi Jehoshua, who continued the boy’s education after Elhanan, “initiated him in secret knowledge.” When Alexander Jannaeus ordered the slaying of all Initiates, he fled to Egypt, taking the boy with him. When the persecution ceased, they both returned to Judea.

Every tradition shows that Jesus was educated in Egypt and passed his infancy and youth with the Brotherhood of Essenes and other mystic communities. The Essenes were the descendants of the Egyptian hierophants in whose country they had been settled for several centuries before they were converted to Buddhist monasticism by the missionaries of King Asoka, and amalgamated later with the earlier Christians. It was among them that Jesus was initiated into the Mysteries. Later, however, he preferred the “free and independent life of a wandering *Nazaria*,” separating himself from the Essenes and thus becoming a travelling Therapeute, a *Nazaria*, a healer (*Isis*, II, 144), for he found himself disagreeing with the Essenes “on several questions of formal observance.”

The nazars were a class of Chaldean theurgists. The long white garment which Jesus is always represented as wearing, was the dress adopted by the Nazarene Priests and the Pythagorean and Buddhist Essenes. The term “Nazariaios” means “separation, alienation from other men” (*Isis*, II, 128). Jesus is pictured as having long hair and it is recorded that “the *nazars*—or set apart—as we see in the Jewish Scriptures, had to cut their hair which they wore long, and which ‘no razor touched’ at any other time, and sacrifice it on the altar of initiation.” (*Isis*, II, 90). John the Baptist was the leader of the oldest Nazrenes. Jesus adhered to the new sect of Nazrenes, who showed themselves “reformers and innovators.”

John the Baptist was called the forerunner of the Christ. He baptized people in the area of the river Jordan. He preached penance

and repentance for the remission of sins and encouraged the giving of alms. Baptism is the sign of regeneration as well as purification. In the gospels, John has been foretelling the arrival of someone “more powerful” than him. The real significance of what John said of Jesus, “I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (*Luke*, 3:16), is very profound and H.P.B. explains it thus:

It means that he, John, a non-initiated ascetic, can impart to his disciples no greater wisdom than the mysteries connected with the plane of matter (water being symbol of it). His gnosis was that of exoteric and ritualistic dogma, of dead-letter orthodoxy; while the wisdom which Jesus, an Initiate of the higher mysteries, would reveal to them, was of a higher character, for it was the “FIRE” Wisdom of the true gnosis or the *real spiritual* enlightenment. (*S.D.*, II, 566)

We are told that Jesus himself came to river Jordan and is baptized by John. During his baptism the heavens open and the Holy-Spirit descend in the form of dove on Jesus’ head. H.P.B. explains that the name of Jordan, according to Hebrew scholars, is derived from the Hebrew *Jar-ed*, to flow down or descend. If we add the letter *n* (in Hebrew *nun*) to Jared, it becomes Jar-Dan or fish-river. *Jar* means flowing river. Jar-Dan means “river of Dan,” or Judgement. Jesus, the *man* and the neophyte, is born of Mary, *Mar*, the waters, like every other man, and it is his first birth. At his second birth he enters and stands in the river Dan, or fish. So Jesus, the *man*, entering the water (the type of the spiritual womb of his second birth) enters Jar-Dan. Emerging from it, he became Christos, the glorified Initiate. Jesus becomes the anointed by the Spirit, symbolized by the Dove. (*Lucifer*, March 1893)

(To be continued)

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

**Question:** Daily we hear and see man’s inhumanity to man, while rarely we come across better qualities of man. Hence, some people conclude that man is basically imperfect and sinful, while Theosophy extols man as a spiritual being. But there seems to be no evidence of his “spirit.” How to reconcile this?

**Answer:** It is true that we witness more of selfishness, immorality, violence than goodness of human nature. Rare though it may be, there are as yet enough examples of humane side of human nature. There are people who practice Random Acts of Kindness (RAoK). A random act of kindness is a selfless act performed by a person or people wishing to either assist or cheer up an individual person or people. Thus, for instance, when a professor learnt that one of her students was in the hospital on account of high blood pressure she asked her students to make some bright and colourful painting, which was sent around the classroom to have all the students sign it and the same was sent to the hospitalized student with the hope of bringing smile on her face. There are people who, now and then, carry biscuit packets as they travel by car or train and give them to the poor they come across. There are examples of people who volunteer to pay money when they come across a person at a chemist’s shop who cannot afford to pay for some expensive medicine. These are all examples of people who follow the impulse of their heart—a prompting of the divine within.

About four years ago, *The Times of India* newspaper, launched its “City of Angels” column. This column featured innumerable examples of individuals and groups of individuals who have

dedicated themselves to some or the other cause of human betterment. Just as there is enough wickedness, there are also unknown heroes who must be silently working to reduce human suffering and to raise human nature through their own spiritual achievement.

The reason why we experience more of the baseness of human nature than the good side is because we are in the *Kali-Yuga* or Dark Age. Morality and righteousness is supposed to walk on four limbs in *Satyayuga*, on three limbs in *Tretayuga*, on two limbs in *Dwaparayuga* and stands on one leg in *Kaliyuga*. In *Kaliyuga*, materiality and degradation of moral and spiritual nature makes it very difficult for a person to become spiritual. In *Satyayuga*, when all are good and live virtuously, it is easy to be kind and virtuous. But when all around us there is corruption, selfishness and evil, it is very difficult for us to remain righteous and moral. To live a spiritual life in *Kaliyuga* is like swimming against the current, requiring much greater effort. Though *Kaliyuga* is dark and difficult, effort made would bring greater results quickly due to its fourfold momentum.

Moreover, our present period is described as the “transition period.” It is the point in evolution where our *Kama* or desire principle is predominant, and the race as a whole is behind the schedule in its development. We ought to show greater development of mind and lesser involvement with our desires and passions, by now. Instead, we find that there is too much preoccupation with the development of personality, and acquiring of name, fame, position and power, at any cost. In all the modes of living, gratification of the senses is considered to be the highest good.

Man is *potentially* divine, and it can be seen that the “spirit” in man is *obscured*, but right ideas and good examples can help to dispel the darkness. The expression of this latent divinity depends upon purity of thoughts, desires and actions; upon acquirement of right ideas and their application. The process of human development is from within without. We are asked to keep the ideal of Great Ones before us, because all of us have the “germs” of powers and qualities that a Mahatma has developed through training and

experience. We all have it in us to rise above our limitations. H.P.B.’s advice has been, “Selfishness, indifference, and brutality can never be the normal state of the race—to believe so would be to despair of humanity—and that no Theosophist can do. Progress can be attained, and only attained, by the development of the nobler qualities.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 233)

**Question:** In any scientific inquiry, especially concerning Man and his nature and constitution, we may need both analysis and synthesis, *i.e.*, Inductive Method. But, are we always to add to this the Platonic Method? If not, will this scientific exercise fail to give the whole truth? Are there any illustrations to support this?

**Answer:** Inductive method is the scientific method, often described as “bottom-up” approach. In this method, one begins with specific observations and then develops general theories, or draws a conclusion leading to general principle or law. For instance, if observation of many species of land turtle shows that these turtles have shells, lay eggs and eat plants and insects, then it could be concluded that all land turtles have shells, lays eggs and eat plants and insects. Thus, in inductive method a general rule or principle is formulated based on observation of few particulars.

However, when we are dealing with deeper aspects of man and nature, we are asked to proceed from particulars to universals, as well as, use the Platonic method, and study man on the basis of Universals or General Principle or the Key-note. Both Plato and Aristotle mention the existence of the Universals. For Plato, the Universals had independent existence of their own, whether or not they were instantiated in the world. For Aristotle, the Universals had no independent existence apart from the particulars. Therefore, for Science and for Aristotle, it was possible to arrive at the General Principle by the study and analysis of the particular instances. That is exactly what science has been doing on the physical plane. They have studied men and arrived at general principles that govern all men. But science does not go beyond the physical realm that can be studied through telescope and microscope and hence its conclusions

are faulty when it comes to the invisible, inner man, in his psychic, intellectual and spiritual nature.

In the article, “Universal Brotherhood a Fact in Nature,” Mr. Judge seems to use inductive method on the physical plane, to show the fact of Universal Brotherhood. He says that at the same hour every day almost all the people are doing exactly the same thing. At a certain hour in the morning, thousands of citizens catch the train to go to their workplace, one common thought inspiring them. And then, in the evening, they come home at the same hour. They eat at the same hour and also go to sleep at the same hour. This is one of the proofs, a small one, in the social and business life that they are affected together and they are all united. This method has its limitation. We need to consider the “Universals” which point out that we all have come from the same Divine Source and will go back to it, which shows identity of all beings, physically and *spiritually*. And from the Universal Unity and Causation follows the fact of Human solidarity which points out how we are united on the invisible plane, as the Sun rays are united in the Sun, and that we affect one another on physical, psychic, mental and spiritual planes of our being. Based on purely physical perceptions and analysis, it will be difficult to fully appreciate the fact of Universal Brotherhood. H.P.B. gives another example. She says that even after a flower has withered, its aroma lingers in the atmosphere for a long time. Similarly, if we strike a tuning fork, its vibrations continue much after the striking of the tuning fork. If this happens on the physical plane, how can man’s consciousness and his moral nature simply disappear with the death of the body? Something must survive after death. If science speaks of the law of conservation of energy and indestructibility of matter, how can life or consciousness which vivifies the matter disappear after death? Unfortunately, science has failed to take this logical step. This shows the importance of the deductive method of Plato, which postulate the existence of permanent Ego in man.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Eyes are the windows to the soul; they indicate the real you. Self-help gurus encourage us to look deeply into our own eyes. But looking deep into our own eyes, or of another’s can be uncomfortable experience because not all of us are prepared to face the truths revealed, writes Vinita Dawra Nangia. Eyes reveal the emotional state of the person at a particular time. The author writes that sometimes her eyes reveal the presence of a peaceful soul, at other times she saw a cynical old person with a world weary look, or a youthful person full of enthusiasm. She writes that it was like seeing a new person every time she looked into the mirror. The one who peeped from her eyes every morning gave an indication of what she was *really* thinking and feeling behind the social mask.

Just like the body, the eyes have a language of their own. Too much blinking can indicate discomfort. The one who hardly blinks or frequently looks away, may be trying to hide something. The one who looks directly at you might be interested in you and the conversation. A doctor looks into the eyes of the patient to gauge his state of health, because eyes can indicate liver disease, diabetes and even cholesterol. Through recent research doctors have been able to find non-invasive methods of looking into the eyes of a person and watch the working of dopamine in that person, which in turn can indicate the possibility of drug-abuse, gambling, or getting Parkinson’s disease or Schizophrenia. The eyes of the person could reveal inner beauty and we might see our own beauty mirrored in them, writes Vinita Nangia. (*Times Life! Sunday Times of India*, November 10, 2013)

The eyes reflect both the mood and character of the person. Often, we try to gauge from the eyes whether the person is trustworthy or not. Describing his first meeting with H. P. Blavatsky, W. Q. Judge, one of the co-founders of the Theosophical Society, writes: “It was her *eye* that attracted me, the eye of one whom I must have known in lives long passed away.”



Tears in the eyes may well be considered an outlet for bottled-up emotions. “Tears,” in the language of the occultists express simple human emotions. We know that we are not able to see things clearly so long as we are emotionally involved. “Tears” in the eyes are often indicative of the inner state, where the soul is shaken by grief, disappointment or pleasure, so as to lose its hold on the divine nature.

Every person gives out magnetic exhalations. These exhalations are more intense from the eyes, palms, fingers and soles of the feet. An “evil eye” is the destructive power of thought. An envious glance of a person on a beautiful vase or a car or any other object or person may result in damage or injury to the same. In such a case, thoughts of envy combine with elementals and become an entity which precipitates down his glance.

Hypnotic condition can be produced by purely mechanical method which involves the fixing of the eyes on some bright spot, a metal or a crystal. It is the eye, says H.P.B., which is the most occult organ of all, on the superficies of our body, which serves as a medium between the metal or crystal and the brain, and *attunes* the molecular vibrations of the nervous centres of the brain, to the rate of vibrations of the object gazed at, by catching the rhythm of the latter and passing it on to the brain. But in the case of direct passes, it is the Will of the operator radiating through his eye that produces the unison between his will and the will of the person operated upon. (*H.P.B. Series No. 9*, pp. 32 and 37)

Glamour is witchery or charm on the eyes, making them see things differently from what they really are. In order to be able to see an object, not only should the light proceed from the object to the eye, but also, light must proceed from the eye towards the object. When the light from the eye falling on the object is completely cut off, the object disappears. When the luminousness of the light coming from the eye is altered, the object is altered in shape or colour for the perceiver, writes Mr. Judge. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 85)

Power without responsibility is destructive, but power with responsibility is the secret to greatness. Power without responsibility is dangerous energy and often results in mis-creation. An excellent example of it is demon Bhasmasur, who as a result of his penance, was granted by Lord Shiva, power to turn into ashes, anything he touched on the head. The story goes that Bhasmasur chased Shiva to exercise this power on him, and kill him, because, he was enchanted by the beauty of Shiva’s wife, Parvati, and wanted to marry her. Shiva approached Vishnu who took the enchanting female form known as Mohini. Bhasmasur expressed his wish to marry her, and she agreed, provided Bhasmasur matched her in dance. As they danced together, there came a moment when he mirrored Mohini’s action and touched his own head with his hand, and himself was turned to ashes by the power of the boon. On the other hand, Hanuman was born with the power to fly, which was taken away in childhood and restored to him only when he took on the responsibility of bringing back Sita, the wife of Lord Rama, being held captive, across the Indian Ocean, by the mighty demon Ravana. Like Bhasmasur, we can lust after power, which does not seek to fulfil any great responsibility, and tends to destroy the very integrity of our being. Or, like Hanuman, we learn not to seek power, but take on a great responsibility, and in the process experience true power arising from within us.

True power is not contained within money, social status, beauty, fame, or wealth. Having love in our heart, which seeks no return, we are made powerful. True power is the genius and creativity which lie within our mind, and compassion and love that flower within our heart. Responsibility is our ability to respond to a person, a situation, to the present moment, as well as to life. We respond when we are connected and in sync with what is happening, but we react when we are dissociated. Responsibility always empowers and energises, because responsibility denotes acknowledging the fact that whatsoever we draw into our life was created by us. It is the ability to respond to life, without feeling like a victim. To think of

yourself as a victim is to give your power away.

However, responsiveness and responsibility have two great enemies, namely, blame and criticism. We have the habit of blaming everything outside of us—parents, boss, company, friends, children, government, and even God—for our miserable state. All of us also have an overwhelming need to condemn. The extent to which we move away from the mental state of blaming and criticizing others, to that extent we are centred in the Self, and are able to experience our true potential and our inner power. “Power is nothing but an intense connection with the Self. When your connection with the Self is deep, and all circuits complete, you become ready for the current to flow,” writes Sanjiv Ranjan, a Theta healing instructor. (*Life Positive*, November 2013)

Abraham Lincoln once said, “Nearly all men can stand adversity. But if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.” Power arising out of money, social status, position, beauty, tends to intoxicate the person and often baser acts are committed without much sentiments attached to them. “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely,” warned the historian, Lord Acton. Unless there is simultaneous development of unselfishness, humility, compassion and discrimination, one is likely to misuse both worldly and other-worldly powers.

All powers flow from within. The Divine within, or *Atman*, or Spirit has the powers to create, destroy and recreate. Each individual possesses these powers, using which a sinner can become a saint. The power of Will is the force of Spirit in action, and this power is illimitable and exhaustless. However, manifestation of this power depends upon the purity of thoughts and desires. Mr. Crosbie points out that we contract the divine power of Spirit within us to the pin-holes of personal desires and selfishness. We are not able to call forth the Spiritual will because our ideas are small, mean and selfish. Spiritual will can be developed by true unselfishness, by being prepared to be guided and assisted by our Higher Self and being ready to undergo all the experiences of life—to be ready to drink,

up to the last bitter dregs, whatever the cup of life contains. Most of all we must be willing to mortify the personal self. “And that power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.”

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Living with gratitude is an idea that is gaining ground. G. K. Chesterton rightly suggests that we need to get in the habit of “taking things with gratitude and not taking things for granted.” Thanksgiving reminds us about the process of giving Thanks, which could be felt, acknowledged, written or expressed through a kind act. We usually notice gifts only when we are suddenly deprived of them. A sprained ankle makes us appreciate the ease with which we normally walk and a power failure may make us feel thankful for the gift of electricity. It is a good practice to maintain the Gratitude Journal, in which, every day, before we go to sleep, we can write five things for which we are grateful. We could begin by making a list of five people to whom we are thankful, followed by five physical abilities, five possessions, five modern-day inventions, and so on. More particularly, when we hear of earthquakes, hurricanes and other natural disasters, we should be thankful for the secure roof over our head, and knowing that there are people in some villages who walk miles and miles to collect water, each day, should make us thankful for the tap-water so easily available. But we could be thankful too, for the good moral qualities developed as a result of suffering and adversities.

When we learn to focus on things we are thankful for, we feel less and less the gravity of the problems that surround us. It is always good to take trouble to express our gratitude, by spoken or written words, because that brings happiness to both, one who expresses and the one who receives. Lawyer John Kralik writes that when he reached lowest point in his life, he heard a voice, “Until you learn

to be grateful for the things you have, you will not receive the things you want.” He decided to find one person to write a note of thanks each day of the year, which proved to be incredibly healing for him. “Thankfulness puts everything in a fresh perspective, allowing us to see the many blessings all around us,” writes Marguerite Theophil. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, November 24, 2013)

Many of us are miserable because we focus on what we do not have, instead of becoming aware of and being grateful for the things we have. We tend to grumble and complain for those one or two missing things in life than being grateful for the blessings of life. Catherine Athans, a teacher of metaphysics and a life coach, based out of Los Angeles, writes: “Saying ‘thank you’ is a way of saying to God, I am open to receiving. Having a grateful attitude brings us back to the present, because most of the time, when we are complaining, we are in the past. We are thus closed off from receiving. . . . If you are facing tough times, and cannot see anything in your life that you can be grateful for, start with your bones. By thanking each and every one of them for helping you move from place to place—by doing that you are actually putting yourself out of the complaint mode and placing yourself in an appreciative mode. Slowly you will see the many, many more gifts life has already provided you and then, it may even begin to look miraculously full. Things and events you have been wanting for long appear in your life simply, miraculously. Gratitude ties in beautifully with the state of living a full, abundant life.”

There are very few people who accept what is given, with the right attitude—the attitude of gratitude and obligation. When a receiver feels the gratitude, it kindles in him a sort of reverence for the very process of giving and receiving. The giver is able to kindle the spirit of giving in the receiver, by giving with right attitude. It appears that gratitude is a heart quality. To the extent we feel gratitude, we have allowed the spiritual consciousness to make itself felt, and affect our everyday consciousness.