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THE INEXPLICABLE NATURE OF KARMA	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	10
THE STORY OF THE OTHER WISE MAN	
THE PATH OF SACRIFICE	16
EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS HEART AND BUDDHI	18
WATER AND ITS SYMBOLOGY — I	22
SELF-EXPRESSION AND SPIRITUAL LIFE	28
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	32

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE INEXPLICABLE NATURE OF KARMA

IN THE Fourth Chapter of the *Gita* (Sloka 17), Shri Krishna tells Arjuna that one should know properly what action is (*Karma*), what forbidden action is (*Vi-Karma*), and what inaction is (*A-Karma*); for the way of Karma is indeed very difficult to understand (*gahana karmano gati*). The subject of Karma or Action is most difficult. The general understanding is that action is what we perform with our body, while complete cessation of bodily movement implies inactivity or inaction. Every action has its reaction. The Law of Karma is just and impartial, and accepts no excuses. It is the nature of fire to burn, and hence even if a child puts its finger into fire, it will be burned, despite its ignorance and innocence. Hence, we must choose our actions very carefully and know what actions to perform and what to avoid.

The scriptures or *Shastras* have divided action into two categories: Karma (Actions to be done) creative and constructive actions, and *Vi-karma* (Actions to be avoided) destructive and forbidden actions. Actions to be done are further subdivided into *Nitya karma* (daily duties), *Naimittika karma* (duties to be performed on special occasions) and *kamya karma* (actions performed with the intention of obtaining desirable reward or result).

What do we exactly understand by the “inexplicable nature of action”? Many things could be included. Firstly, it is very difficult for an ordinary person to say, what action will bring what result and when. Then again, it may happen that the action we try to avoid,

thinking that it will bring bad results, may bring good fruit, and the action we perform to obtain merit, may instead bring demerit. Such a thing is possible because the result or fruit of Karma does not solely depend on action, but on something more, writes Swami Shri Savitanandji.

Swamiji says that “thinking” is a powerful factor in judging the nature and fruit of any action. There is a story in Jainism about King Shrenik who asks Lord Mahavira, the last Tirthankara, the founder of contemporary Jainism, to show him the way to liberation. Lord Mahavira suggests one way, in which the King is asked to prevent the butcher, who used to kill 500 buffaloes in a day, from performing this cruel action. The King found this to be very easy to accomplish. He put the butcher in prison and then reported to Lord Mahavira what he had done, saying, “Today, the butcher has not been able to kill a single buffalo.” However, the King is asked to visit the butcher in the prison to find out what he has done throughout the day. The King was shocked to find that the butcher had acquired clay and made 500 buffaloes and then cut the heads of those buffaloes. Lord Mahavira told him that it is true that he abstained from physical violence, but he had committed mental violence, which is at a deeper level and of far greater consequence, karmically, than the physical violence.

There are those who outwardly give up actions, and do not engage in war, in competition, in love-relationship or lust, but do it all mentally; that is not “A-Karma.” In Sloka 18, Shri Krishna seems to suggest that only that man who sees inaction in action and action in inaction understands A-Karma which is not inactivity but Un-activity or actionlessness. We might say that A-Karma is not so much a question of giving up any action outwardly, but giving up the *desire* or attachment. There is bodily action but complete inward detachment or inaction. It is explained by the analogy of a projector which causes projection of all the pictures on the screen, and yet remains unaffected by various scenes of comedies or tragedies appearing on the screen. Similarly, the Self within is the cause of all

actions, and yet, it is neither affected by nor involved in these acts. A self-realized person, or a *Jnani*, who is identified with the Self within, assumes the position of a witness or an observer.

At a simple level, this is illustrated in the well-known Buddhist parable of two monks and a woman. The story goes that a senior and a junior monk were travelling together. They came to a river with a strong current where a young woman was waiting. She was not able to cross the river and needed help. She asks the monks to help her cross the river. Without a word and despite the sacred vow he had taken not to touch women, the older monk picks her up, crosses the river and sets her down on the other side. The younger monk joins them across the river. Inwardly he is shocked and disturbed that the older monk has broken his vow, but he maintains silence. They walk together for nearly three hours. Finally, the younger monk can bear it no longer, so he asks the senior monk: “Why did you carry that woman when we have taken the vow as monks not to touch women?” The senior monk replies, “I set her down hours ago by the side of the river. Why are you still carrying her?” This story tells us about inner detachment. The *Gita* speaks of “doing with the body alone the acts of the body.”

However, to see “action” in “inaction” of *Atman* is to realize that all actions of the senses, mind and intellect, happen because the power to see, hear, eat and enjoy, comes from *Atman*. It is comparable to the Sun, which is not doing anything, and yet, it is because of the Sun and sunlight that we have heat and light, and therefore, vegetation, rain, etc.

Vi-Karma refers to forbidden or destructive actions or even evil actions. At a simple level, unlawful activities, such as, murder, stealing and assault, which are prohibited by the scriptures are called Vi-Karma. It also includes all those actions which are engaged in, simply for sense-gratification. They may not be morally evil but they become hindrances on the path of self-realization. It is very difficult to judge what is good Karma and what is bad Karma.

It would be a folly to categorize an action as good or bad, based on appearances, without taking into account the motive, the degree of development and knowledge of the person. It is the motive with which the action is performed that determines whether the act was noble or not. But then there are useless sacrifices. H.P.B. gives the example of Saint Labro who sacrificed his body for forty years only to benefit the vermin, which it bred. Likewise, one may give out large sums of money to earn merit (*punya*) or to gain name and fame, or make a charity to the wrong persons at the wrong time. Thus, even a perfectly good-intentioned action may cause harm or lead to undesirable consequences.

It is also difficult to compartmentalize and classify an act as *wholly* good or *wholly* bad. We need to dig deep and go to the base of apparently good and evil actions. For instance, a mother scolds her child and punishes him, but her motive is to bring him up as an upright individual. A person hypnotizes another to cure him, but in the process he interferes with the free will of the person. Mr. Judge points out in *Letters That Have Helped Me* that what seems evil and “painful” may be necessary for the soul’s progress. Murder is evil, we may say, but as a result the soul is incarnated into adverse and miserable circumstances and the person is chastened and softened. Was the deed wholly evil? Not really. H.P.B. says that often, kindness and charity bring to the surface those bad tendencies that were kept down by pain and adverse circumstances. Only an adept may know who needs to be kept in the mire, which is often their best teacher, and who needs to be relieved. It takes a very wise man to do *truly* good works (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 31*). Again, depending on the degree of development, what is good enough at our level might not be so for the person on a higher rung of the scale. “Good Karma—or action—is that which is pleasing, and bad that which is displeasing, to the Higher Self,” writes Mr. Judge.

It is not always necessary that two people who were involved in a piece of karma should again come back together to reap their reward or punishment at the hands of the other. It may happen that

the person who was wronged may forgive and thus is no longer karmically linked to the wrongdoer. The Law of Karma would then find some other agent or means to mete out punishment to the wrongdoer. We have the case of Buddha and Devadatta, where Buddha was full of charity towards Devadatta, who continued to be inimical to him.

Many of us have an erroneous understanding as to how evil Karma are cancelled by good Karma. It is not true that one wrong act can be counteracted by another noble act. It is important to note that *Sanchita* or stored-up Karma is regarded as our total Karmic debt, taken as a combination of Karmic Credit and Karmic Debit. Unlike the bank account, the account of Credit or good karma, and Debit or bad karma is maintained separately. However, it appears that the good and bad karmic causes can cancel each other only at the time of karmic precipitation. If the *sanchita karma* is regarded as the bundle of arrows in the quiver on the back of a bowman, then it is easy to see that till these arrows are shot they cannot counteract each other. Hence, when it is said that one can mitigate one's "stored-up" karma through prayers, meditation and selfless service, we might look upon these as means to create good karma. The only way in which one can nullify bad karma is by setting into motion right or good karma. If one has erred by lying, stealing or backbiting, one has to set into motion good causes by resolving and learning to abstain from repeating the same wrongs. What we experience is the resultant or sum total of the old, bad karma and new, good karma.

Karma does not operate on the principle of one cause producing only one effect; several causes precipitate at the same time. There is the law of parallelogram of forces, wherein the good and the bad cause may either partially or completely counterbalance each other's effect and then what we experience is the resultant. Thus, acts of love, could, to some extent, mitigate the severity of karmic consequences. However, there is the *doctrine of nullification of Karma*. According to the well-known law in physics, two equal forces opposing each other lead to equilibrium. "Thus, a person

may have in his Karmic account a very unpleasant cause and at the same time a cause of opposite character. If these come together for expression *at the same time*, they may so counteract each other as that neither will be apparent and the equilibrium is the equivalent of both," explains Mr. Judge. This may happen when a person has learnt the lesson and has changed. For, when the lesson is learnt, the necessity ceases.

In understanding the nullification of Karma we must remember that just as pounds cannot be added to rupees or, rupees to dollars, so also, in counteracting bad karma with good karma it is essential that both kinds of karma are compatible. Thus, it appears that the results of acts done primarily on the *mental plane* cannot be mitigated or obliterated by actions done on the *physical plane*. For instance, a person who spent many years of his life, mentally torturing another human being cannot hope to nullify that act by giving large sums of money to the poor. Charity done out of the surplus, without any particular concern for the poor, or still worse, only with the intention of earning merit (*punya*), cannot bring about the refinement of moral character.

Destiny or Fate is the Karma that has ripened, so that its expression cannot be averted or postponed. When Karma has ripened and begun to precipitate, all we can do is to experience the effects with the right attitude. However, "acceptance" does not mean passivity and helplessness. If we are able to change the situation, we must do all in our power. We are not expected to remain poor, handicapped, ignorant, or whatever be our plight. Karma has placed us where we are, but it does not hold us there. Sri Chandrashekhara Bharati Mahaswami of Sringeri points out that we do not know the intensity of efforts needed to completely overcome the fate created by our previous Karma. For instance, we cannot see the length of the nail inside the wood. Hence, we do not know how much effort will be required to pull it out. But with sufficient effort we can take the nail out of the wood. In a given life a person may exert to come out of poverty, or to pass a difficult examination, by making several

attempts. The question arises: How long should one struggle? It may happen that the “destiny” is so powerful that one may not succeed in spite of repeated attempts. In the Eighteenth chapter of the *Gita* (sloka 14), Shri Krishna speaks of five agents of action that are needed in the performance of every act. The fifth agent is called *daiva* or *daivam*, which is normally interpreted to mean the presiding deities. However, S. Radhakrishnan in his comments on sloka 14 writes: “*Daivam* is providence: represents the non-human factor that interferes and disposes of human effort. It is the wise, all-seeing Will that is at work in the world. In all human actions, there is an unaccountable element which is called luck, destiny, fate or the force accumulated by the acts of one’s past lives. It is called here *daiva*. The task of man is to drop a pebble into the pond of time and we may not see the ripple touch the distant shore. We may plant the seed but may not see the harvest, which lies in hands higher than our own. *Daiva* or the super-personal fate is the general cosmic necessity, the resultant of all that has happened in the past, which rules unnoticed. It works in the individual for its own incalculable purposes.” Therefore, although “Exertion is greater than destiny,” we must bear in mind the advice given by Socrates: “There is no failure in unavoidable surrender...to know when to give up struggle... there also is a kind of triumph.”

There are incidents which radically change a person’s life, and are difficult to explain and accept. There are cases involving a sudden rise from rags to riches or a downfall from riches to rags. Life seems to change in one microsecond! We are given the example of the great French engineer, de Lesseps, who was raised to a high pitch of glory and achievement for many years, with the building of the Suez Canal, and suddenly fell, covered with shame, through the Panama Canal scandal. All these examples show that “one may in this life come to a point where all previous causes being worked out, new karma, or that which is unexpended,” begins to operate. Karma is a doctrine too vast and complicated and views action from every side.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
THE STORY OF THE OTHER WISE MAN

THE STORY OF THE OTHER WISE MAN is a short story written by Henry Van Dyke, first published in 1895. The story is an expansion of the account of the Biblical Magi, also known as Three Wise Men, Three Kings and the Three Magi, mentioned in the *Gospel According to Matthew* (2: 1-2) in the New Testament. Mary gives birth to Jesus and having found no place in the inn, places the newborn 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*.

Traditionally, three wise men visited Jesus, but this story gives a fictional account of the fourth Magus named Artaban. He lived in the city of Ecbatana, among the mountains of Persia. He belonged to the ancient priesthood of Magi, called the fire-worshippers. He along with eight other priests gathered around a fire and sang a hymn to Ahura-Mazda. Artaban says, “We worship not the fire, but Him of whom it is the chosen symbol, because it is the purest of all created things. It speaks to us of one who is Light and Truth.” Those who are enlightened lift the veil of form and go into the shrine of reality wherein new light and truth come to them through the old symbols. He says that one can untangle the threads of the mystery of life from the beginning to the end by following the course of the stars. There were wise men in Chaldea, from whom the first Magi learned the secret of the heavens. He says that he and his other three companions, the three Magi—Casper, Melchior and Balthazar—have searched the ancient tablets of Chaldea and have computed the time. During the spring they saw two greatest planets in

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

conjunction in the sign of the Fish and a new star there, which shone for one night and then vanished. That night again they will watch for the conjunction to occur, and if the star shines again they would wait for him for ten days to join them and then all four of them would set out together for Jerusalem, to see and worship the promised one who shall be born a King of Israel. He had sold all his possessions and bought a sapphire, a ruby and a pearl to carry them as a tribute to the King. He invites his other priest companions to join him but they refuse to accompany him and dissuade him also from going on such a quest. However, the elder priest-companion wisely advises that it is possible that the signs are indicating correctly the coming of the King of Israel, but it may also be that it is only a shadow of the light, in which case it will involve a long pilgrimage and a fruitless search. “But it is better to follow even shadow of the best than to remain content with the worst. And those who would see wonderful things must often be ready to travel alone....Go in peace.”

He watches the sky and when he sees the sign, he sets out to meet the other three Magi to search for the King. Suddenly his horse stops and he finds a man lying across the road. The dying man’s bony fingers gripped the hem of his garment and held him fast. He wondered, “What claim had this unknown fragment of human life upon his compassion or his service?” If he lingered, he would lose his quest; if he went on, the man would die. “Should he risk the great reward of his faith for the sake of a single deed of charity?” The Magians were physicians as well as astrologers. Artaban slowly pours between the lips of this dying man, a simple but potent remedy that he carries with him and waits for a long time for that man to recover. He rides swiftly on to meet the three Magi, but to his dismay “there was no sign of the caravan of the Wise men, far or near.” However, the Magi have left behind a message on a piece of papyrus asking him to follow them across the desert. He decides to sell his sapphire to buy a train of camels, and provision for the journey.

After three days he reaches Bethlehem. He learns from a woman that the three travellers disappeared as suddenly as they had come,

and so also the parents of Jesus had fled away secretly, taking the child to Egypt. While he was still talking to this woman with a newborn baby, they heard the cries of people saying that King Herod had sent his soldiers to kill children. He gives away his ruby to save that woman's child. Artaban goes to Egypt and makes enquiries. A Hebrew Rabbi tells him that "the King whom thou seekest is not to be found in a palace, nor among the rich and powerful." He continued to search for the "King" for several years and encountered human misery and poverty. "He fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and healed the sick, and comforted the captive."

After thirty-three years, Artaban is still a pilgrim, and seeker after light. Artaban arrives in Jerusalem just in time for the crucifixion of Jesus. He spends his last treasure, the pearl, to save a girl from being sold into slavery. There is an earthquake and he is struck in the head by a falling roof tile and is about to die, having failed in his quest to find Jesus, but having done much good through charitable works. A voice tells him "Verily I say unto thee, inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these brethren, thou hast done it unto me" (*Matthew, 25:40*). He dies in a calm radiance of wonder and joy. His gifts were indeed accepted and, in a sense, he found God in a deeper way than even the other wise men.

Henry van Dyke was an American religious writer, lecturer, and clergyman. About this story, he says, "I do not know where this little story came from—out of the air perhaps. One thing is certain, it is not written in any other book, nor is it to be found among the ancient lore of the East. And yet I have never felt as if it were my own. It was a gift, and it seemed to me as if I knew the Giver."

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 Kabalists), 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 the 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)

In the article “Zoroastrianism in the Light of Occult Philosophy,” H.P.B. writes that in the night of time, origin of the Brahmins and Magi is one. “First, they were a hierarchy of adepts, of men profoundly versed in physical and spiritual sciences and occult knowledge, of various nationalities, all celibates, and enlarging their numbers by the transmission of their knowledge to voluntary neophytes.” The word “Chaldean” refers to “Chaldeism, the oldest science of astrology and occultism. And in that sense the Zoroastrians are the true heirs to Chaldean wisdom. “The Magians were priests of the fire-god; we find them among the Assyrians and Babylonians, as well as among the Persian fire-worshippers. The three magi, also denominated kings, that are said to have made gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh to the infant Jesus, were fire-worshippers like the rest, and astrologers; for they saw his star.” (*Isis*, I, xxxiv)

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).” Man has never been without a friend, *i.e.*, the Elder Brothers or adepts who help mankind. Jesus was an adept. Like Jesus, Krishna and Buddha too died on the cross. The Cross represents the “Tree of Life.” “Tree” is a symbol of sacred and secret knowledge. “Tree” also stands for various Initiates. Realizing the unity of all, these adepts and Initiates identify themselves with humanity and hence are able to take upon themselves part of the

karma of suffering humanity. Taken literally, the whole of the life of Jesus, up to his crucifixion, shows this great sacrifice which the spiritual beings make, in order to help humanity.

But the real saviour of every human being is within him. H.P.B. writes: “Christ—the true esoteric SAVIOUR—*is no man*, but the DIVINE PRINCIPLE in every human being.” Christ is not the only Son of God; we are all sons of God in our divine nature. However, unfortunately this divine nature, though all-powerful on its own plane, is quite powerless on our plane. Every time we refuse to listen to our divine nature—the Christ within—we crucify the Christ. So, it is not the personality which suffers but the innocent *Christos* within us. Every time we want *our* will to prevail over the Divine Will, there is a minor crucifixion. Every crucifixion must be followed by the Resurrection.

To resurrect the Christ, *we* have crucified, we must allow our divine nature to control the terrestrial nature, and thus raise ourselves to the spiritual level. Spiritual life has been defined as *conscious existence in spirit while we are in this body*. Spirit is eternal and we need to become aware of it. To accomplish this resurrection, the mind must be trained to co-operate with the spirit. We must be bold and frank enough to own up our misdeeds, our vices, and our defects.

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. She observes that Jesus was a *Chrestos*, “as undeniably as that he never was entitled to the appellation of *Christos*, during his lifetime and before his last trial.” The *Glossary* explains that *Chrestos* means a disciple on probation—a candidate for hierophantship. When he had attained to this through initiation, long trials and suffering, and had been “*anointed*,” *i.e.*, “rubbed with oil,” as were the initiates—as the last touch of ritualistic observance—then his name was changed into “*Christos*,” the “purified,” in the esoteric language. This is a spiritual birth.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Altruism is an integral part of self-development. Forgetfulness of the *personal* self and sincere altruism are the first and indispensable requisites for becoming a “White Adept,” in this or in a future life. If the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount given by Jesus were to be practiced at least by a sufficient number of individuals today, our world would be a different world from what we have made it through our arrogance and conceit, through our selfishness and passion, through our greed and our ambition. The remedy lies in the curbing of all selfishness and the purification of our lower nature so that “the light which lighteth every man that cometh into this world” may shine forth through the personal and the lower and illuminate not only our path but the path that all of us as pilgrims are following, some unconsciously, some consciously and deliberately, striving to find the next step.

When a person experiences the light which is in every one of us, we say that man is spiritually born. He may have been born in the flesh again and again, but he is born of the spirit only on that day when the star of his own inner consciousness is lit and his consciousness recognizes that star and begins to follow that star. And if that star is followed it will grow, and grow until it becomes the ultimate light. When that dim star which burns within becomes that radiant light of the spirit, the individual is said to be an anointed one, to be the enlightened one.

To celebrate Christmas is to remember that we are Sons of God potentially. Regarding the commandments of the “Sermon on the Mount” Jesus said: “Anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain poured down, the rivers overflowed, and the wind blew hard against the house. But it did not fall, because it was built on rock” (*Matthew, 7:24*). Thus, by hearing and practising the injunctions in the “Sermon on the Mount” we would be building a solid foundation on which we can build a Spiritual edifice. We need to make an “island” of pure thoughts that will not be swept away by the Great World Maya’s Ocean but will protect the Spiritual edifice against the temptations and suggestions, against opposition and persecution from the world.

THE PATH OF SACRIFICE

THE GREAT sacrificial action of the Cosmos is a fact to be realized through constant study, meditation and practice. The birth of both, a cosmos and a child, is an expression of the great law of sacrificial love. Life in manifestation is sustained by sacrifice. The Universe is an integrated whole. Every part in it bears a relationship to other parts as well as to the whole. If this is so, any and every action must be either harmful or beneficent to the whole of the Universe. Further, such an effect can only be transmitted through a medium which is common to all forms of life.

Life is a continuous unfolding process brought about by the sacrifice of beings of all grades. Sacrifice is performed spontaneously in the lower kingdoms; it is a natural impulse. Even death has a sacrificial meaning as the breaking up of the forms helps further the progress of more advanced units of consciousness. The countless lives that make up the forms will transmigrate into higher forms, embodying a higher type of intelligence. The purpose of evolution is to raise “the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature, nature, and dignity of conscious god-hood.” In the cosmic scheme, since man is a free agent, he has got the choice either to abide by the universal law or to go against it.

Sacrifice is related to duty. Duty has various meanings for different people. For some, the doing of one’s own duty is plain enough. For others it is a heart-searching and never-ending quest. It is understood by some that they should first perform their duties and then devote the rest of their time to acts of sacrifice and charity to further the spiritual welfare of their fellow beings. The position held by some others is that all acts should be performed as sacrificial deeds to the Supreme Spirit. This attitude is advocated by Krishna in the *Gita*. Sacrifice and Duty become blended into one single unit or concept.

It is true that one’s first duty is to serve and be devoted to the physical welfare and spiritual enlightenment of one’s own family and nation. But the discharge of such duties with efficiency and

benevolence requires knowledge and a universal approach to all problems of life. It is wrong to leave one's own natural duty and go out of one's way to help others. This is the wrong type of sacrifice, which is harmful not only to oneself but also to those, one wishes to help. Krishna says: "The duty of another is full of danger."

The right performance of natural duties involves a sacrificial attitude. The real love of a mother for her children is of such a sacrificial nature. But the sacrificial attitude of those who are treading the path of renunciation is of a higher quality. The starting point is a very modest one. Sacrifice begins at home. Within ourselves is a field of battle and of sacrifice. The first step towards an understanding of what sacrificial action implies is an intuitive perception that the mystery of the Universe is the mystery of man. The key which will open the door of Initiation into the perceptive mysteries is the key of sacrificial love.

The acquirement of knowledge is part of man's duty. It is his duty to become acquainted with the great cosmic scheme and the universal plan of the Great Brotherhood. Thus his whole life will become imbued with a knowledge of the great cosmic order and of the perfect harmony and equilibrium prevalent in all departments of nature. A vision of the evolutionary scheme has to be gained so that daily actions may be performed in harmony with the whole cosmic order. The law of sacrifice has to be applied in the light of that knowledge. The knowledge that duty and sacrifice are the two opposite poles of a single unity has to be applied to our physical nature, to our emotional problems and to our mental discipline.

Fundamentally and essentially man is a mind being. Sacrifice as applied to our mental processes is of the greatest importance in our present cycle. Silent study and meditation demand self-induced sacrifice. The positive aspect of the mind is in its work of creation. Creative activity of whatever kind calls for self-discipline, *i.e.*, sacrifice. Work of art and beauty, and *all* our actions should be such, are evolved in the workshop of the mind, illumined by the trinity of Love, Sacrifice and Detachment.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS HEART AND BUDDHI

THE HEART quality is a rare force. The personality-heart is so active that the Real Heart remains dormant. The curbing of egotism is not practised because so many like to indulge in it. Many are unconscious of the fact that they are rooted in personality, surrounded by its forces. It is an uphill path and human joints and legs are weak and desire the easy way, and *Tamas* lets Time conquer the Soul. Knowledge will compel thought and understanding and then feeling will awaken. If it is fast awakening in you, is it not because understanding and discernment came? Of course Karma aided, but you took advantage of Karma. Let us have patience—active patience, and also faith. It is Their Movement and They will reward our enthusiasm, patience and faith. The fire of faith burns bright only when weaknesses, like wood, burn down to ashes. Sandalwood is costly; ordinary wood is found in abundance. In the fire of Knowledge ignorance is consumed and then the fragrance of heart-virtue is bound to be inhaled.

One may know the philosophy mentally; one's knowledge may be wide but not deep. The horizon of the mind is wide and extensive and elastic; but the cave of the heart is deep. The subject of the Guru, the "little guru" of whom Judge speaks, the chain of gurus, etc., is not fully understood. Why? It is a subject of *heart* understanding and people want mental satisfaction. How can a hungry man satisfy himself by listening to a lecture on food values? Heart-hunger is not felt, for the heart is tamasically or rajasically engaged. Between recognition of knowledge, *i.e.*, understanding, and realization, *i.e.* experiencing, there is a gulf, not a mere difference of degree. The first result of the lighting up of Manas was Devotion—the heart quality. Theosophy's lighting up of the Heart (the Tathagata Light) is an event in and by itself. The "infant" man did not comprehend the Manas-lighting, he felt it. Fortunate the person whose feeling is aroused for Theosophy ere the light of knowledge comes.

About the heart: It is fine that you see the value of it; self-knowledge is of loving deeds the child and this applies both to the personality and the Individuality. Our loving deeds as a mere personality reveal the lower quaternary's *good* aspect; but the Individuality performs its own loving deeds by the power of the *Paramitas*. There are three hearts: one by which evil and selfish deeds are done; the second by which a man does good; and the third by which a man radiates spirituality. The first is animal instinctuality; the second is human goodness; but the last is Divine Radiance. Kama-Manas is the source of the first two, but Manas Taijasi and Manas-Buddhi is the instrument and avenue for the last, the true Heart. At present we shift from one to the other; we are animal or we are human, and the highest aspect of the human is saintliness. It is the Sage who has developed his Real Heart. The *Antahkarana* has to rise to the plane of its Parent Manas, the Ego, and fight as the warrior the personality, and finally win the Grace of Buddhi for itself, You have here a plan of the whole human evolution. Work out for yourself the aspect of each in terms of the three *gunas*; you will get more light and the practical task will become more clear. Instinct, intelligence, intuition and inspiration are also related to this process of human unfoldment.

The spiritual Heart has become passive or negative and has to be awakened. The human heart is misguided, having fallen under the dominance of the animal heart; it needs to be educated and the purification of the animal nature becomes necessary. Our emotions are not purely human; they are coloured by animal selfishness and egotism. Good, *i.e.*, unselfish or non-egotistic emotions have to come to birth. Study, application, promulgation does it.

Who is the aspirant? How does he grow into a devotee? These are basic questions. What was said you have correctly comprehended; it is well put and is worth repeating: "By the mind freeing itself from feelings and desires and uniting with Buddhi." Here are the process and the goal: (1) At present our consciousness is Kama-Manasic; (2) it must become Manasic, *i.e.*, *Antahkaranic*; (3)

Antahkarana must move towards and become Higher Manasic; (4) finally, the awakening of Buddhi should be completed. The awakening of Buddhi is in two stages: (a) The good man, to become spiritual now and here, must tend to theosophize himself—impersonalize himself. Impersonalize your feelings; do not kill them. We are hot in feelings; do not extinguish the fire; let it go down to the ember stage and then fan the flame to adequate warmth. Love and compassion and all the children that spring from the higher mind and Buddhi should be cultivated now and here. (b) Buddhi must be *activated*; see the footnote in *The Voice of the Silence* (p. 10). Study and meditation provide the motor-power; the daily routine of life provides the method.

At the present hour Buddhi is passive in all who are the children of the fifth Race in the fourth Round on this fourth Globe, the Earth. We have to activate it. Buddhi is the eternal Substance—the casket of Atma. Even when activated, the nature of its activity is different from what we call action—hustle and bustle and doing this and that. There is order, rhythm, the eternal fitness of things, not only observed but understood, and so there are calmness and light, patience and strength—slow quickness. But you must recall an intuition which you have had and try to evaluate it. By looking at how Buddhi functions, even indirectly, you will get an idea of what should be done. Remember, the lower Manasic ray which incarnates in the body has within it a basis of Buddhi (Wisdom-Compassion) and also the Atma (Will). This lower Manas is exploited and enslaved by Kama. When Manas is extricated from Kama it carries, as the Antahkaranic being, this basis of Atma and Buddhi. This is the plank of our salvation—separation from animalism. The taming of the lower nature from wildness and vileness to use and service is a long process, but if we remain conscious and deliberate we hasten the change.

Book study will not activate Buddhi but it helps the aspirant to learn how to do it. Altruism in thought depends on our understanding of Brotherhood. Judge's letter, No. 4 in the first volume of *Letters*

That Have Helped Me, lays down a most excellent basis. Application without right study leads people astray. The philosophical formula is necessary and that must be right.

We cannot pray to get Buddhi, Buddhi is to be studied as a principle and very soon we find out that it is passive and can be activated by right kind of effort. It is not so developed or awakened by people because they are involved by the *rajoguna* as the closing portion of third chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita* points out.

Manas has the faculty of *viveka* or discrimination. The faculty of discernment which comes out of detachment or dispassion is *vairagya* and brings into operation the intuition. *Viveka* and *vairagya*, discrimination and discernment, are qualities respectively of Manas and Buddhi. But H.P.B. points out that Buddhi is at the moment passive in most men and it has to be activated. Without Manas, Buddhi cannot be activated. Self-consciousness comes with Manas, and it begins to operate directly through the moral choice which is within the province of Manas. In making moral choice the embodied self, lower Manas, gets entangled with desires and therefore its moral choice goes wrong. The freedom of Manas from Kama brings it into closer proximity with Buddhi.

No man is an island, entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine own were:
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore, never send to know
for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

—JOHN DONNE

WATER AND ITS SYMBOLOGY

I

IN THE SEVENTH Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, “Earth, water, fire, air and *akasa*, *Manas*, *Buddhi*, and *Ahankara* is the eightfold division of my nature. It is inferior; know that my superior nature is different and is the knower; by it the universe is sustained.” The inferior nature is the phenomenal and transient nature, which disappears into the superior at the end of a *Kalpa*. The inferior nature is relatively so and is identical in *essence* with the superior nature. Included in the inferior nature are all the visible, tangible, invisible and intangible worlds. Most schools of philosophy accept that the material world is made up of five kinds of elements or *panchamahabhutas*, namely, ether (*akasa*), air (*vayu*), fire (*agni*), water (*apas*), and earth (*prithvi*). According to Sankhya philosophy, the *panchamahabhutas* or five elements originate from *Prakriti*.

In the article, “The Septenary Principle in Esotericism,” H.P.B. points out that the universal root-principle, *Mulaprakriti*, as undifferentiated cosmic essence is identical with *Parabrahmam*. However, when from passive *Mulaprakriti* it has become *avyakta* (an active evolver), it becomes (*gunavat*) or endowed with qualities, and becomes *Prakriti*. The first product of the evolution of *prakriti* is Mahat and that in turn produces *ahankara* or self-consciousness, and the latter in turn produces *Tanmatras* our subtle elementary principles or particles, out of which *mahabhutas* or gross elementary principles or particles are evolved. The gross physical elements arise from the subtle elements, through the process called *panchikaran* or quintuplication. It is the process by which the five elementary constituents of the universe are said to be compounded with one another to form grosser entities that serve as units in the composition of the physical universe.

Thus, from the essence of sound (*sabdatanmatra*) is produced *akasa* (ether), with the quality of sound. From the essence of touch (*sparshatanmatra*) combined with that of sound, arises *air*, with

the attributes of sound and touch. From the essence of colour (*rupatanmatra*) combined with that of sound and touch, arises *light* or *fire*, with the qualities of sound, touch and colour. From the essence of taste (*rasatanmatra*) combined with that of sound, touch and colour arises water, with the qualities of sound, touch, colour and taste. The essence of smell (*gandhatanmatra*) combined with the previous four gives rise to earth, which has all the five qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. The evolved universe is a play of twenty-four principles, of which *prakriti* is the first, the five gross elements are the last.

Occult Science recognizes Seven Cosmical Elements—four entirely physical, the fifth (Ether) is semi-material, while the two highest elements are at present beyond the range of human perception. They will appear as presentments in the sixth and seventh races of this Round. In *Transactions*, H.P.B. points out that universal, cosmic elements are the *noumena* of the terrestrial elements. Cosmic elements are not confined to our Solar system. Earth, water, air, fire and ether that we know are the terrestrial elements.

Every living and non-living body is made up of five basic, gross elements of Nature, called *Panchamahabhuta*. From ancient times water has been regarded as an essential element for the existence and survival of life in the universe. Most of the human body is water, with an average of roughly 60 percent. The amount of water in the body can change slightly with age, sex and hydration levels. About 71 percent of the Earth's surface is water-covered. The oceans hold about 96.5 percent of Earth's water.

According to Maulana Wahiduddin Khan water is a great bounty bestowed by the Creator upon us. The Prophet of Islam laid great emphasis on conserving water. Though there is a lot of water in the oceans, because the seawater is salty, we cannot drink the same. However, by the workings of the laws of nature, the water in the oceans and seas rises into the atmosphere as water vapour and then forms clouds which bring rain. We are able to use rainwater for our daily needs. This entire process, known as the hydrological cycle,

takes place on a global scale. If we were to ponder over this phenomenon, we would feel extremely grateful to God, and spirituality is another name for such gratitude. A grateful person is bound to say: “If I cannot create water, how can I waste it?”

In ancient times, when the significance of water in sustaining life in the universe was well-known to Vedic seers, not only Varuna and Indra were the two gods associated with water, but the rain-cloud was depicted as *Parjanya* god. *Parjanya* means “the cloud causing the downpour of rains,” and thus represents water in the form of rain, and is deified in the Rig Veda. The story of the fight between Indra and Vritra, from the Rig Veda, has been variously explained. According to one view, Indra is called Apsu-jit or conquering the waters, while Vritra is “encompassing” them. Vritra is a demon, and literally means “cover” or “obstacle.” He is personified drought. Vritra holds the rains and covers the waters for which he is killed by Indra using his weapon Vajra or thunderbolt. By the efforts of Indra, all the seven rivers flow again. The Vedas commanded man to be friendly towards nature in general and the elements in particular. The Vedic Aryans prayed to the concerned gods, Indra, Varuna and *Parjanya*, so that their fields would not remain dry and adequate food would be produced. Shri Krishna says, “Beings are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice (*Yajnad bhavati Parjanya*), and sacrifice is performed by action” (*Gita*, III). The Indo-Iranians of old believed that the world was created and sustained by many gods and goddesses and that these divinities must be propitiated by prayers, sacrifices and offerings. An offering made to these gods is only a symbol that acknowledges the role of various powers and forces of nature in maintaining the universe.

The physical body is called *Annamaya Kosha* or sheath, made up of food or sustained by food. Our body is the instrument of the soul and it must be kept strong and healthy. *The Chhandogya Upanishad* mentions that the food that is eaten is divided into three forms: the gross form of food is not absorbed into the system and is

thrown out as excreta; the middle form of food gets converted into flesh; the subtle vibratory aspect, that which is produced by the essential nature of the food, influences the mind itself. In the same Upanishad, the Master asks the pupil to go without food for fifteen days, and he does so. When the pupil returns to the Master the latter asks him to repeat songs and chants, but the pupil is unable to remember anything. So it is that the capacity to think and the way of thinking are influenced by the food we take. Similarly, the gross aspect of water that we drink, becomes waste, the middle aspect goes to form blood and the subtle aspect enhances vitality, energy or *Prana*.

From ancient times, water has been extensively used during the performance of rituals and ceremonies, being looked upon as a purifier of body and soul. We use water for bathing or cleansing the body, and likewise it is used for *Abhisheka* or ritualistic bathing of deities. Hindu temples are usually associated with the Idol, sacred places and Tirth or the bodies of water. Most temples are situated on river banks or near lakes, or there are water tanks or wells near the temple for religious purposes.

H.P.B. mentions that outside every temple in India, there is a lake, stream, or reservoir full of holy water, in which the Brahmins and the Hindu devotees bathe daily. The bathing festivals or *baptismal rites* are held twice every year. During these festivals the statues of gods, goddesses and idols are immersed in water by the priests—as was done in ancient Egypt and Greece. “The object of the ceremony being to wash away from them the sins of their worshippers which they have taken upon themselves, and which pollute them, until washed off by holy water....The Orphic hymn calls *water* the greatest purifier of men and gods” (*Isis*, II, 138). Perhaps it symbolizes the restoration of pure magnetism to the idols, as well as the temple, as the temple atmosphere is said to be vitiated by our purely petitionary prayers, creating a kind of psychic miasma.

Water symbolizes knowledge or *Apara-Vidya*. John the Baptist was called the forerunner of 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. 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)

Elementals are the soul of the elements; the physical elements we know are made up of nature-spirits, known as *Devatas*. There are four types of elementals pertaining to four elements, also known as, “nature-spirits.” The elementals of fire are called “spirits of fire,” or salamanders; of the air are called “spirits of air,” or sylphs; of the water are called “spirits of water,” or undines (also known as nymphs), and of the earth are called “spirits of earth,” or gnomes or elves.

Normally, a human being contains all four kinds of elementals in almost equal proportions. However, any slight preponderance of one or the other determines the so-called “temperament,” writes H.P.B. In the article “Kabalistic Views on Spirits,” H.P.B. quotes the views of Paracelsus and Eliphas Levi, who suggest that the astral currents entering the body of the pregnant woman carry with them various types of elementals and help in the formation of the astral body of the child. Says Paracelsus: “The current of astral light with its peculiar inhabitants, gnomes, sylphs, etc., is transformed into human light at the moment of conception, and it becomes the first

WATER AND ITS SYMBOLOGY

envelope of the soul—its grosser portion; combined with the most subtle fluids, it forms the sidereal (astral, or ethereal) phantom—the inner man.” Eliphas Levi suggests that at the birth of a child, these elementals influence the four temperaments in a child. Thus, the element of the gnomes (earth elementals) predominates in melancholy persons; of the salamanders (fire elementals) in the sanguine; of the undines (water elementals), in the phlegmatic; of the sylphs (air elementals), in the giddy and bilious.

Dowsing is a type of divination employed in an attempt to locate such hidden substances as the underground water, buried metals, oil, treasure, etc. without the use of scientific apparatus. If searching for underground water, when the dowser comes to the area with underground water, the dowsing rod is supposed to dip. In using the dowsing rods for searching an object, it is suggested that the dowser appears to receive transmissions from the hidden object that cause involuntary muscular contractions, which in turn make the rod bend or quiver violently. The phenomenon of the “divining rod” may be explained by the hypothesis that the preponderance of the watery element in particular individual constitutions may lead to a more perceptible effect on the rod in their hands. This would account for the fact that the “rods” are moved in the hands of certain persons only.

In *Vernal Blooms* (pp. 167-68), Mr. Judge seeks to explain various phenomena based on the preponderance of one kind of elementals in the constitution or aura of a person. For instance, those who are able to divine the presence of water in certain places, it is owing to preponderance in their constitution of the water elementals which create a natural affinity between them and places where there is hidden water. Mr. Judge explains that the preponderance of any one class of elementals in one’s constitution or in one’s aura is determined by many factors. It would depend upon the peculiarities of soil, climate, nation, family and race.

(To be continued)

SELF-EXPRESSION AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

MAN as a being is made up of the personality and the individuality. The nature of the personality, which is a shadow or a reflection—and often a very poor reflection—of the individuality, needs to be studied so that we may make of it not only a clear, steady reflection but an actual reproduction of the individuality.

As a personality a man can do three things: he can think, he can feel, he can act. Unless the personal man expresses himself through the head, the heart and the body in proper proportion, he remains deformed, incomplete. This is somewhat difficult of acceptance in the modern world, where division of labour exists to such an extent that the so-called experts in one particular line know next to nothing about other branches of knowledge. They are useful in mechanical work, but are in total ignorance of matters touching the spiritual life.

The spiritual life requires that each work with his head, heart and hands. When people speak of the spiritual life, they have some grotesque idea that it consists in sitting in a corner and meditating. They speak of wanting to lose themselves in the love of the Lord without understanding what they mean by it. That is not spiritual living. On the other hand, people who are keen on developing their intellectual and reasoning aspect are so cold, so lacking in the manifestation of the heart qualities, that it is difficult for them to understand anything regarding the nature of the life around them. We can never know anything unless we love that thing, and we cannot know the principles of the spiritual life unless we set our heart on them.

In the spiritual life three great paths are spoken of: the path of knowledge, the path of devotion and the path of action. People who know little about this subject ask: “Are you on the path of knowledge, or on the path of devotion, or on the path of action?” In the scientific and commercial spheres, we speak of experts, but there is no such thing as an expert in a particular line in the spiritual life.

In the right spiritual schools, one is taught to unfold knowledge, devotion and right action in proper proportion. That is the first great law of self-expression.

The second great law is: Be natural. A distinction must be made between what is natural and what is normal. The former is an expression of the consciousness which has its own perception of the moral law within. That natural expression is very different from the normal expression of men and women in society; in fact, the normal person usually is very unnatural, trying as he does to adapt himself to the ideas of others, regardless of what is innate in himself. There is a moral nature within us which gives to each his own inner creed.

Self-expression in a natural way is the expression of that moral law which is within us, the expression of our own inner creed, through the instrumentality of the head, the heart, the hands. In normal civilised society many do not think for themselves; the editor of the newspapers, the writers of books, political and social leaders and others mould our opinions. To the extent that we are carried away by the views of others we are not being natural and self-expression is lacking in us.

Similarly, we try to suppress our feelings. There is a lack of the true culture of the emotions. This is considered to be a good thing, but what we suppress goes below the surface and will come out finally, if not in this life, then in another. By repressing a feeling we in fact strengthen it. The expression of our feelings is governed by our place in society, our status among our friends. Or perhaps we so suppress them that there is no time for the undercurrents to settle down and as a consequence nervous disease breaks out. Undesirable emotions have to be transmuted into rhythmic and harmonious ones. If a person tries to suppress irritability, for instance, it will go below the surface, but will come up again and by degrees show itself in the form of anger. But let that person, instead of suppressing his weakness, take note of it, be natural and frank about it, and try to transmute it.

Similarly we must watch that we do not act because the society in which we live expects us to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances. There is one important principle that we must bear in mind, and that is that there is a great gulf between liberty and licence. Society is ruled by convention. If we want to be natural it may become necessary for us to break conventions; but we must show that we are doing so to establish a higher state of society and not to drag it down. Convention requires, for example, that one should not lose one's temper in public; but we should break that convention and not lose our temper anywhere, even in private.

The great law of the spiritual life is that whatever we do affects our neighbour; that our every thought, feeling and act reacts not only upon ourselves but upon all those who contact us. Therefore, if we break a convention, it must be on a higher level. We should ask ourselves: "Do I by breaking this convention hurt anyone, or do I let loose a force which will produce the uplift of society as a whole?" We must change conventions in terms of the moral law within.

The spiritual life has to do, not with a change of environment, but with changing ourselves so that the environment gets changed automatically. When we use our head, heart and hands in a natural way we gain self-dependence, and that will bring to us self-respect, without which the spiritual life is not possible. When we are able to express ourselves, we shall know what our powers and limitations are. This enables us to find out where to turn next, what to do next.

People often complain that they cannot live the spiritual life because they have to work for their livelihood. Let us thank Karma that we have our work, for serving through earning is the first great lesson that we have to learn. Carlyle spoke a tremendous occult truth when he said: "Blessed is he who has found his work." We think that spiritual life is a matter of study, of control of the mind, but the fundamental idea is the natural expression of our personality through the three channels of the head, the heart and the hands. But how clumsily we understand this! Those who have to work are unhappy in their work; those who have no work are unhappy in

their idleness. Unhappiness is Nature's signal that man has not used Nature's gifts adequately, harmoniously.

So natural self-expression is the performance of the task or the duty which is ours in our present environment. Three things should here be noted: health depends on the expression that comes through the hands; true happiness comes from the health of the emotions which are the expression of the heart; and strength of character comes from the activity of the head. We cannot have complete satisfaction in life unless the strength aspect of the head, the happiness aspect of the heart and the healthy satisfaction that comes with the work of the hands are all three blended together in harmony. At the present moment our whole life-expression is a discord, but what we want is a symphony, a perfect blending of harmonies. Next, we ought to develop the quality of adaptability. It allows us to express ourselves in a natural way in whatever environment is ours under Karma.

The dignity of labour which the use of the hands makes us recognize, the intensity of the great emotion of love which our heart-expression enriches, and the understanding of the great things of life which the head brings us—these three factors produce a rhythm, a harmony, and life becomes poem instead of remaining disjointed as it is at present. Sometimes our life is useful, to ourselves or to others, but it is the usefulness of the dictionary—very valuable but somewhat disjointed. We want life to become a poem; and as we proceed with the culture of our personality, life becomes more beautiful, deeper, spiritual, producing greater happiness.

BLESSINGS on him that invented sleep! It covers a man, thoughts and all, like a cloak; it is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold, and cold for the hot. It is the currency with which everything may be purchased, and the balance that sets even king and shepherd, simpleton and sage.

—MIGUEL DE CERVANTES

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

According to Hindu philosophy six enemies of man are: *Kama* or Desire, *Krodha* or Anger, *Lobha* or Greed, *Moha* or Attachment, *Mada* or Pride and *Matsarya* or Envy. All of us would have experienced the feeling of envy in varying degrees and at different stages of life, under different circumstances. During student life one may have been jealous of a co-student who scored a better grade, and likewise in office one is likely to feel jealous of a colleague who gets a promotion before him. In adult life one may become jealous of someone who has money, name, fame, power and position. The feeling of jealousy is detrimental to the one who holds that feeling. William Penn puts it thus: “The jealous are troublesome to others, but a torment to themselves.”

“Jealousy leads to resentment, bitterness, anger and paranoia....While anger is often expressed, jealousy is internalised. When it becomes too intense, it may erupt into physical violence,” writes Laxman G. The best way to deal with jealousy is to first recognize it as a negative emotion and then endeavour to transform it into something positive. Just as we would appreciate and applaud a player who completes a century or hits a sixer, in a cricket match, we should do the same for the colleague who gets promoted ahead of us. Instead of feeling jealous, let us aspire to achieve what the successful people around us have achieved, by assuming a positive attitude. A loser should focus on winning instead of focussing on the winner.

Let us ask ourselves two questions: “What is causing me to feel jealous and what can I do about it?” One way to get an answer is to look at the issue by becoming a dispassionate observer. “A jealous person counts the blessings of another person forgetting his own blessings. It is like the shining Moon getting jealous of the tiny twinkling stars!” Jealousy is a mental cancer. If we compare ourselves with others, it must be only to derive inspiration and not in the spirit of competition. Mary Schmich says that as the wheel of

fortune keeps rotating, we find ourselves sometimes ahead and sometimes behind. “Let not jealousy kill joy and love,” writes Laxman G. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, November 16-30, 2023)

The feeling of envy normally arises when we feel that we are as deserving of the advantage or possessions as the other person who is envied. However, people may be envious even when they know that it would not be possible for them to obtain a particular possession or advantage. The prominent feeling in the envious person is, “If I cannot have then no one else should have that advantage or possession.” Envy is a powerful emotion. In its extreme form it becomes the power of evil eye or the destructive power of thought. Whenever we think, every thought coalesces itself with a unit of life-energy or “elemental.” An elemental is a colourless force or energy without any attributes, but when coalesced with thoughts, it acquires quality or colour. Just like a charged electrical rod, these elementals carry bad thoughts to another person and cause him harm. The envious glance of a person on a beautiful vase or car or any other object or person may result in damage or injury to the same through the elementals which precipitate down the glance of the envious person. Only when the person is pure—at the level of speech, body and mind—such bad thoughts are powerless.

It is true that the person who holds onto jealousy damages himself more than the object of his envy. Our physical body is built on a model body called the *linga sharira* or astral body, which is normally intertwined with the physical body. In a person who practices concentration and contemplation, the astral body begins to separate from the physical, and then at a later stage becomes so coherent that it can be projected out of the physical and can exist as a separate body. This process is hampered if one fails to overcome fear, anger, envy, vanity, etc. Envy brings about cloudy appearance along with disagreeable colouring to the astral body, which was pure, clear and coherent. It is like putting a drop of ink or mud or colour in clear water. Also, this is the emotion which draws to the aura of the person, very bad elemental beings, which help in bringing about moral corruption.

The emotion of envy arises because competition and rivalry are ingrained in us from our childhood. The antidote to envy is cultivation of goodwill towards all, recognizing the brotherhood of humanity. Some of the Buddhist meditation practices aim at developing positive emotions, which include cultivation of “Mudita” or sympathetic joy, which is the opposite of envy. It is a feeling of joy in the happiness and well-being of others. When we truly feel happy for others our own happiness and peace increases.

Can we know the true nature of an object independent of our limited perception? When we look at a red apple placed in front of us, our eyes process the light reflected off the surface of the apple and our brain constructs an image of the apple’s redness and roundness within our visual field. However, when that apple is viewed through the eyes of a snake or an ant, it would appear different because of the way in which their senses process the sensory information. It is possible that the animal with a more evolved visual apparatus should be able to see a more comprehensive and richer image of the apple as compared to a human being. We may ask: What is the true nature of the apple, independent of our limited perception?

If we say that everything is interdependent without any absolute essence then that would imply that the observer and the observed are inseparable. The apple, in the example, cannot exist independent of the observer.

If we turn to Indian philosophers, we come across second century Buddhist scholar Nagarjuna’s observation that objects are devoid of any inherent essence. Based on the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination, he asserts that everything arises and exists in dependence on other factors and conditions. Thus, for instance, the act of observing an apple is not merely a subject observing an object independent of himself, but must be “understood as a dynamic process influenced by the interdependent relationship between the

perceiver, the object being perceived, and the conditions in which the perception occurs.”

According to the viewpoint coming from Advaita Vedanta philosophy, objects in dreams appear real until we awaken. Likewise, the apple retains its apparent physicality until we become free from the veil of ignorance or maya. Kant, the German philosopher, distinguished between phenomena, or the way things appear and noumena, or “things-in-themselves,” which remains beyond the limits of human cognition. We must be “persistent in pushing the boundaries of knowledge to bridge the gap between phenomena and noumena,” writes Ravi Singh, an Indian Revenue Service officer. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, July 11, 2023)

In *The Ocean of Theosophy* Mr. Judge explains that when we “see” an object, the eye receives the picture on the retina, which is first turned into vibrations in the optic nerves, and then transmitted to the brain, where *Manas* is able to perceive the object as an *idea*. The fact that it is not the *senses* and *organs*, which perceive (cognize objects) but *Manas*, is established by the hypnotic and mesmeric experiments. These experiments demonstrate that the object seen or felt by the hypnotized or mesmerized subject is only an idea existing in the operator’s brain.

When we see an object, say a chair, our senses bring to us its details as raw data. The lower *Manas* synthesizes it or transforms it into an idea of a chair, which may be quite different from the *real* chair, the essence or the “*thing-in-itself*.” However, our lower mind is not the only perceiver or real perceiver. Patanjali says that the Soul is the Perceiver; it is vision itself, pure and simple and looks directly upon ideas; it means that Higher Manas or Atma-Buddhi-Manas is the real Perceiver, it is the *seer*, pure consciousness, and capable of perceiving things as they are. But it is unable to perceive them so because it has to use the lower mind as its instrument, like the astronomer uses his telescope for acquiring information respecting the heavens.

We say that our perception is coloured by our conception. We are not able to see things as they are because our mind is covered with dust of attachment, dust of passions, dust of prejudice and biases. *The power to know* does not come from book-study nor from mere philosophy, but mostly from the actual practice of altruism in thought, word and deed. Such a practice purifies the covers of the soul and permits the light to shine down into the brain-mind, and then the lower mind in conjunction with the Higher Ego is able to see things as they are.

Jellyfish, being one of the biologically simplest kinds of animal that lack brain, we would think that they cannot learn. Researchers had generally assumed that learning from experience and adapting a behaviour was limited to biologically complex animals with relatively large brains, which include mice, birds and primates. According to Jan Bielecki at Kiel University in Germany, “Learning is the pinnacle of nervous system performance.” But some studies have hinted that it is possible for simple creatures also to have this ability, and this led Bielecki and his colleagues to investigate learning in jellyfish, which has shown that Caribbean box jellyfish can learn from experience, even though they lack a central brain.

It is useful to know that the box jellyfish tend to reside closer to shore and are spotted in near-shore habitats such as mangroves, coral reefs and sandy beaches. In case of mangrove, the tree grows in wet ground at the edge of the river and has some roots that are above ground. The larvae settle on mangrove roots and form polyps. Adult jellyfish live in between the roots of the trees searching for copepods to eat.

The researchers created an experimental environment that mimicked the Caribbean box jellyfish’s native mangrove-rich habitat. They painted the walls of a round tank, in which a fingernail-sized jellyfish was placed, with white and grey stripes which looked like vertical mangrove roots. The grey coloured stripes created the illusion

of the so-called roots being further away than they really were, and as a result initially the jellyfish would bump into the tank walls. In an experiment carried out with twelve different jellyfish, it was found that in about seven minutes' time each jellyfish had learnt the lesson from collision, and had started avoiding the wall by pivoting or swerving. The researchers think that instead of a traditional brain, learning happens in the jellyfish's four visual sensory organs, called rhopalium, which are embedded throughout its body. Each rhopalium has six lenses that sense light and help in guiding the swimming jellyfish's pulses and pivots, writes Corryn Wetzel. (*New Scientist*, 30 September 2023)

It appears that the jellyfish can learn from experience through visual and mechanical stimuli. It may be looked upon as associative learning in which a new response becomes associated with a particular stimulus. The response comes from the mind or intelligence working in the animal, which expresses itself as instinct. What we call learning is based on this acquired experience. There is wisdom in the instinct. H.P.B. puts it thus:

“Instinct, as a divine spark, lurks in the unconscious nerve-centre of the ascidian mollusk, and manifests itself at the first stage of action of its nervous system as what the physiologist terms the reflex action. It exists in the lowest classes of the acephalous animals as well as in those that have distinct heads; it grows and develops according to the law of the double evolution, physically and spiritually; and entering upon its conscious stage of development and progress in the cephalous species already endowed with a sensorium and symmetrically-arranged ganglia, this reflex action, whether men of science term it *automatic*, as in the lowest species, or *instinctive*, as in the more complex organisms which act under the guidance of the sensorium and the stimulus originating in distinct sensation, is still one and the same thing. It is the *divine instinct* in its ceaseless progress of development. . . . This instinct may, for the sake of exact definition, be termed automatic; but it must have either within the animal which possesses it or *without*, something's or some one's *intelligence* to guide it.” (*Isis*, I, 425)

“Instinct is simply a direct perception of what is right, within its own realm. Animals have right instinct in regard to what to eat, and in regard to what is dangerous to them, for their instinct is acquired experience. Both instinct and intuition have been gained in no other way than through observation and experience,” writes Mr. Crosbie. Science seems to agree with this view. According to William Homan Thorpe: “Ideally, instinctive behaviour seems not to depend on learning or practice but to emerge in full complexity without rehearsal when appropriate stimuli or circumstances are encountered. Often, such stimuli do not guide or mold the instinctive behaviour but seem simply to trigger or release it. This characteristic gives instinct the appearance of driving the animal endogenously (from within); the quality of instinctive activity thus appears to depend only secondarily on exogenous (external) stimulation.”

Theosophy teaches us that everything is sentient. Life wave has passed through many transformations or re-embodiments, from simplest to most complex forms and has gathered experience in mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms evolved under “Natural Impulse.” The impulse which evinces a progressive march towards higher life may be termed as “Divine Impulse” because it is guided by intelligences. The experience gained in various forms is not lost but becomes part of the nature of the organism which is termed as instinct. It is impressed on the very cells and atoms of various forms as knowledge and this knowledge or learning is passed on to the offspring, thereby producing better and fitter forms through which the consciousness can exhibit itself more fully. In the article, “Kosmic Mind,” 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. The idea of Universal Life composed of individual atomic lives is one of the oldest teachings of esoteric philosophy.” This might give us some more insight in the working of the instinct in lower organisms.