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**THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.**

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India  
email: [ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in](mailto:ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in) ♦ Phone : 22039024  
website: [www.ultindia.org](http://www.ultindia.org)

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### THE LAW OF CYCLES

OUR UNIVERSE is an orderly universe governed by Law, which some choose to call the “Will” of God. It would not be wrong to say that God is Law. The order in Nature has made philosophers like Plato to say: “God geometrizes.” The balance and harmony in Nature have been expressed by Pythagoras who says: “Hear the music of the spheres.” The law of Karma, of cause and effect, is an expression of the moral application of the Law. Theosophy recognizes all these phases and aspects but considers the Law of Periodicity as a fundamental proposition, which is seen as the Law of Cycles.

Theosophy teaches that the law of cycles prevails in all departments of life, in all the kingdoms below man as well as in that above man. Cycle means return of that which was before. A cycle is a period of time marked by sequence of stages. In a cycle there is orderly synchronization of quality and quantity. For instance, a cycle of 24 hours—of day and night—includes forenoon, afternoon, dusk, night, etc. After one day and one night is completed, another cycle of 24 hours will start which also would have all these four stages, but the morning of this day is not exactly like the morning of yesterday. “The word cyclic is derived from the Greek word *Kuklos*, or a ring.” However, a cycle is not a circle; it is more like a spring or spiral so that we come back to the same point but at a higher level.

Cycles are within our own complex constitution. For instance, the circulation of blood in the human body is a cyclic process—the heart-beat and the pulse-beat are cyclic; breathing in and breathing

out are cyclic; cravings and appetites and their satisfaction are cyclic, sickness and convalescence are cyclic, sleep and waking are cyclic, life on earth is cyclic. The commonly used definitions of man's age—"three score years and ten" bespeaks an inner truth. The seventy years of the cycle of one incarnation can be divided into 10 periods of equal length, lasting each 7 years. The first five periods are of birth and growth, the next five are of decay and death, or rather of maturing and assimilating what has been gained in the first 5 periods from one year to thirty-five years of age. Periods may vary but in such human incarnation we note ten stages, five ascending and five descending. The law of Cycles operates within man.

A universe comes into existence and goes out of existence, periodically. There are racial, national, and individual cycles. H.P.B. writes that there are "Cycles of matter" and there are "Cycles of Spiritual evolution," and draws our attention to an essay by Professor Winchell, entitled, "The Cycles of Matter" (*S.D.*, I, 638). In his work, "World-Life" (pp. 494-95) Professor Winchell writes that activities of a dead universe can be renewed because Motion affects matter and brings about change in distribution of matter. That means in whatever direction matter has been distributed by Motion, when its limit is reached, there will be reverse distribution. The forces of attraction and repulsion bring about rhythmic changes. When attractive forces predominate there is universal concentration and when repulsive forces predominate there is universal diffusion, and that is how we have alternate periods of Evolution and Dissolution. These periodical occurrences of cosmical activities and rest are referred to as the "Cycles of matter."

On p. 43 (*S.D.*, I) we read: Our "Universe" is only one of an infinite number of Universes, all of them "Sons of Necessity," because links in the great Cosmic chain of Universes. Each one standing in the relation of an effect as regards its predecessor, and being a cause as regards its successor. The sum total of causation of the previous universe must of necessity become the seed for the succeeding one. This process is beginningless and endless. *The*

*Bhagavad-Gita* refers to Brahma's Day and Night. At the approach of Brahma's Day all manifested objects come forth from the non-developed principle and at the approach of Brahma's night they are absorbed in the original principle.

This is the Great Cycle, which includes all cycles of every kind. We have the cycle of Yugas. Each period of manifestation is divided into Yugas or ages, which are four in number—*Satya Yuga*, *Treta Yuga*, *Dwapara Yuga* and *Kali Yuga*, *i.e.*, the Golden Age in which humanity was in its childhood, still innocent and guided by great teachers; the Silver Age or the period of youth or adolescence, when the spiritual teachers withdrew, but left behind Initiate kings to guide the humanity; the Bronze Age was like manhood, when humanity was left to itself, but free to seek the help of the adepts; the *Kali Yuga* is marked by predominance of materialism, selfishness and spiritual darkness. Within these large cycles, we have a cycle of day and night; a cycle of four seasons, and so on.

What determines these different cycles? Mr. Judge explains that at the first moment of the solidification of our earth, "the mass of matter involved attained a certain and definite rate of vibration, which will hold through all variations in any part of it until its hour for dissolution comes. These rates of vibration determine the different cycles, and...the doctrine is that the solar system and the globe we are now on [our earth] will come to an end when the force behind the whole mass of seen and unseen matter has reached its limit of duration under cyclic law." This force at work that determine various cycles is that of man himself, *i.e.*, of the Egos taking experience on a given planet, and when they have finished taking experience, they move to another world, and with them goes out the force holding all together, and this is followed by dissolution. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, Indian edition, pp. 126-27)

Thus, "Cycles of Spiritual evolution" pertains to the Soul or Ego. The law of Reincarnation lays down that man comes into this world, lives a life and then dies to come back in a new body and personality. Is it mere mechanical repetition of birth-death-rebirth stages? In the

period between death and rebirth, the soul goes to heaven or *Devachan* and assimilates the good garnered during earth life so as to come back enriched in the next life. The Ego remains in *Devachan* for a time exactly proportional to the good psychic impulses generated during life. The average stay in *Devachan* is said to be 1500 mortal years. The general average of the stay in *Devachan* gives us the length of a very important human cycle—the Cycle of Reincarnation.

The souls or Egos “who made the most ancient civilizations will come back and bring the old civilization with them in idea and essence,” writes Mr. Judge (*ibid.*, p. 127). “Great civilizations like those of Egypt and Babylon have gone because the souls who made them have long ago incarnated in the great conquering nations of Europe and the present American continents” (*ibid.*, p. 91). Thus, fall of civilization or dying out of races happen cyclically, when the Egos have finished having experience in a particular race body, who then seek for better bodies and environment.

We are also told that “cycles are the clock of Karma.” Cycles are not different from the Law and Karma, but only the way of marking the time of cause and effect, of action and reaction. Karma is like the mainspring that makes all the wheels go round in a clock. There are many little and big wheels inside the clock. Cycles are like the hands that point the hour on the face, as they travel round it. Thus, we may say that the sequence and the length of the Yugas are determined by the Karma of the people experiencing them. However, the course of evolution for every race is itself divided into four *yugas*, in its own way.

Just as a fruit yields a seed, which when sown in due season (that is in the course of time) produces a tree with branches, leaves, flowers and fruits with the seed in it, which makes a cycle, so it is with the seeds of our thoughts and feelings, good or bad. Every repetition strengthens the seed—good or bad. Take for example our anger. It grows every time we are angry. Converse is true also. If we show patience and remain calm in the face of frustrating irritability, it is less difficult to overcome irritability on the next occasion. Silence

practised under the temptation of speech brings greater accuracy in speech and the power to hold our tongue.

We must learn to work with the law, which means to understand that time does play its part. But just as every clever gardener by hot-house process quickens the process of growth, so can man, by study of his thoughts hasten his evolution. As we think, so we become: but ordinary people think spasmodically and grow spasmodically. Theosophy teaches deliberate thinking of certain thoughts, deliberate practicing of certain feelings, deliberate exercise of right charity, right sacrifice, which requires study. It must be done regularly, because regularity shortens the time.

Our “blues” or depression comes in cycles. In *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 24*, Mr. Judge mentions that if we maintained a diary, we would observe that depression occurs at regular intervals of time. When the depressive cycle returns, we must compel ourselves to feel joyous, even against our will—or at least try to feel the joy of others. We may do this the next day or even two days later. We would then have implanted joyous impressions in ourselves, so that when the depression returns, it brings along with it the impressions of joy and they would counteract each other’s momentum. Soon we would succeed in establishing a joyous cycle. By paying attention to cyclic return of impressions, we can save time and effort in training of the mind and body. If we eat our food at regular times, our digestive system is ready and active so that the food is digested well. If we study at a fixed time every day, then the mind comes ready for work so that more work gets done.

The festival of Winter Solstice is of astronomical significance and symbolizes soul-awakening. The northward journey of the sun, which commences from December 22, marks a six-month cycle of natural progress: physical, psychical, moral, mental and spiritual. It marks the end of the cycle of darkness and ushers in the cycle of light and growth. Spring, summer, autumn and winter are the outer and visible signs of something that takes place invisibly on the inner planes, in nature and in man.

The astronomical points, *i.e.*, the equinoxes and solstices, which mark the four seasons, have their psychic and spiritual roots. In fact, the astronomical points are the reflection or result of the psychic and spiritual natures of planetary bodies. Earth renews herself in every Spring, like the snake sloughing off the old skin. She does so by the powers of her psychic nature. But behind both physical and psychical natures is her spiritual being.

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, says H.P.B. Sun is the giver of life and light, physical and Spiritual. 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 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 or similarity—whenever we make a resolve to be good. The astral light acts as an unobstructed pipe or a sieve. This support is greater during this period due to renewal of life energy.

Cycles of spiritual light and darkness come to humanity based on their collective Karma. Cycles will run their rounds, but if we are conscious of them, we are able to take advantage of them. “To hold on strongly during a falling cycle is as necessary as to make the proper advance during a rising cycle” writes Mr. Crosbie. In *Kali Yuga*, when there is moral darkness everywhere, doing good and being good is difficult, as compared to the Golden Age, when everyone around is moral. We cannot do much *against Kali Yuga*, but we can do much *in* it. For instance, it is tiresome to walk a long distance on a hot summer day under the blazing Sun, requiring more effort. However, the same is accomplished with much less effort on a pleasant winter day.

But even when the cycle is descending—whether it is a cycle of civilization, race or *yuga*—an individual can still rise superior. A candle lighted in a dark valley can be seen from the mountain top,

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so also in the darkness of the present age, the one who shows concern for others and aspires for truth, displays the *Tathagata* light, and is noticed and helped by the Great Ones.

On the other hand, even the Great Beings cannot prevent the working of the downward cycle except to bring about some minor changes when collective Karma of the nation or humanity, as a whole, permits. And that is how perhaps a Master of Wisdom says that if a nation has accumulated for itself a vast amount of bad karma, then its fate is sure, and even if there may be noble men and women in that nation, including great souls or Adepts, nothing can save it, and it will go out like a torch dipped into water. He says, “The cycles must run their rounds. Periods of mental and moral light and darkness succeed each other as day does night. The major and minor yugas must be accomplished according to the established order of things. And we, borne along on the mighty tide, can only modify and direct some of its minor currents. If we had the powers of the imaginary personal God, and the immutable laws were but toys to play with, then, indeed, might we have created conditions that would have turned this earth into an Arcadia for lofty souls,” thereby showing that They are but *agents* of Karmic and Cosmic laws.

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THE EVIL we see in others, and which we criticize, is in truth in our own selves; from ourselves we draw it out, and on ourselves it falls back again. We see clearly only those faults which we already possess, or which we are about to acquire. The evil flame whose glow we see casting its light on others is in our own selves....Who speaks evil of another is after all maligning himself; for at bottom, slander is the history after the event, or anticipating it, of our own fall.

—MAURICE MAETERLINCK



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE INVISIBLE MAN—II

IN the second book of Plato's *Republic*, there is a legend of the *Ring of Gyges*, which makes the person who wears it, invisible. It is a hypothetical magic ring which grants its owner the power to become invisible at will. Once the shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia was feeding his flock. After an earthquake, a chasm was revealed in a mountainside and he discovered that it was a tomb with a bronze horse containing a corpse, who wore a golden ring. He took the ring and later discovered that by adjusting the ring, he could become invisible. He then arrived at the palace and used his power of invisibility to seduce the queen, and with her help murdered the king and became the king of Lydia. Using the ring as an example, the legend explores whether a rational, intelligent person would act justly, even when he is sure that he need not be afraid of the negative consequences for committing any injustice.

Glaucon, a philosopher, who recounts the myth says that if there were two such rings, one is worn by a just man and another by an unjust man, then no man could be of such strong nature that he would stand fast in justice. No man would be so honest as to not touch what was not his own, when he knew that he could safely take what he liked out of the market. Then the actions of both just and unjust man would be the same, and that would be a great proof that a man is just, not willingly or because he thinks that justice is any good to him individually, but of necessity.

In other words, Glaucon argues that morality is socially constructed, and if there are no social consequences to one's actions, then that act is not strictly immoral. Socrates disagrees and points out that anyone who wore the Ring of Gyges and used it to do whatever they wanted without fear of consequences would actually become a slave of their own desires, and the lack of control would harm the wearer of the Ring.

Is it possible for a person to become invisible? Theosophy teaches that there is occult science with its occult knowledge and occult powers, and one such power is Glamour. Glamour may be defined as, “witchery or a charm on the eyes, making them see things differently from what they really are,” or making them see things which are not there, or making things disappear.

There are tales in which a person sees houses, persons, etc. which are actually not there. Also, there are stories in which a man or woman is changed into the appearance of an animal or bird, but is changed back to its original form when touched with a magic rod. That is because, in such cases, what appears to be a change is not really so, but only the glamour or illusive perception. Such phenomena connected with *glamour* have been partly referred to in Patanjali’s *Yoga Aphorisms*. Aphorism 21 in Book III explains the power of disappearance. It declares that in order to be able to see an object not only is it necessary for rays of light to proceed from the object to the eye, but also light must proceed from the eye towards the object. If the light from the eye, falling on the object, is *cut off*, then the object disappears. But when the character of the luminousness of the light coming from the eye is *altered*, then the object is altered in shape or colour for the perceiver. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 85)

The concept of glamour was explained away by science on the basis of defective training of the senses, a few years ago. However, in our days, modern science has come closer to accepting the possibility of making objects invisible. For instance, the radar antenna sends out a burst of radio energy, which is reflected back by any object it may encounter. The aircrafts are easily detected and tracked with radar equipment, as the radar signals are reflected very well by the metal body of an aircraft. The goal of Stealth Technology is to make the airplane invisible to radar. This can be achieved by either covering the aircraft in materials that *absorb radar energy* instead of reflecting it, or by changing the shape of the aircraft. Most conventional aircrafts have rounded shape, and as a result, no matter

where the radar signal hits the aircraft, some of the signal gets reflected. In Stealth Technology, the aircraft is made up of completely flat surfaces and very sharp edges. When a radar signal hits the aircraft, it reflects away *at an angle*, so as not to reach the radar and therefore the aircraft remains invisible.

In quite a different sense, we can understand the desire for or lure of the invisible. The third object of the Theosophical Movement is: “The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.” It is not suggesting that one should make efforts to *develop* the hidden powers but advocates *investigation* of the *laws* of Nature which are not known to modern science, and thus help to further the cause of the occult science along the right lines. Thus, for example a student of Theosophy is not expected to learn to levitate his body but only theoretically understand that gravitation is half the law, the other half is levitation. A student-aspirant has to first master the theory and the basis underlying the phenomenon instead of calling it “a miracle.” In the given case, the underlying basis is that the earth is a magnetic body charged with one form of electricity, say positive. All the organic and inorganic bodies on earth are charged with the opposite form of electricity, *i.e.*, negative. Since opposite poles attract, there is attraction between the earth and all the bodies on earth. Changing the electrical polarity of an object on the earth, from negative to positive will result in repulsion and consequent levitation. This change of polarity can be achieved by a well-regulated “Will.” Likewise, the student is not called upon to develop his latent psychic powers of clairvoyance, mind-reading, etc., but to investigate the laws governing them. Thus, the safe way pointed out by Theosophy is to first acquire a theoretical knowledge of the occult laws that govern these phenomena to understand the rationale.

Today, even scientists are attracted towards the invisible and are engaged in investigating abnormal happenings, or what are called psychical, parapsychological and paranormal phenomena. But their

investigation consists mainly in recording a number of dream experiences, visions, apparitions, Extra Sensory Perception (ESP) phenomena and so forth. Unlike the psychical researcher, Theosophy deals with laws and not with phenomena, and thus goes straight to the heart of the truth. It is necessary to acquire true knowledge of Nature and of Man, and the laws that govern the evolution of Man and Nature must be studied, assimilated and applied to daily life. Today we find that psychic characteristics or psychic powers are showing up in many individuals. Many are striving to exercise powers and faculties which are not understood and therefore ignorantly misused. It is dangerous to exercise such psychic powers as mind-reading, hypnotism, etc., without moral purity, as one may be tempted to use these powers for selfish purposes. Those who practise mind-reading, hypnotism and the like for their own selfish ends are just as immoral as a burglar or a thief. Those who are eager to acquire and exercise these powers must first cultivate the feeling of universal brotherhood and follow the advice: “*Lead the life necessary for the acquisition of such knowledge and powers, and Wisdom will come to you naturally.*”

When we live the “necessary” life for acquiring such knowledge, we will find Wisdom springing up spontaneously within us. Wisdom is *vijnana*, or realized knowledge, or Occultism, and that in turn is defined as Spiritual discrimination between right and wrong, or good and evil. What that “necessary” life involves may be inferred from the description given in the Thirteenth chapter of the *Gita*, which says, “true wisdom of spiritual kind is freedom from self-esteem, hypocrisy, injury to others, patience, sincerity, meditation on birth, death, decay, sickness and error, resolute continuance in the study of *Adhyatma*, Supreme Spirit, etc.”

Just like Griffin in the story, who failed in his attempts to reverse his invisibility, those who attempt to cultivate clairvoyant faculty, by gazing into coffee cups or the white of the Egg or a glass of water, or shinning objects, in which pictures or images from astral light get reflected, *without proper training* of the mind and senses,

slowly but surely, fall into passivity, almost beyond recall. The “Will” of the person, says Mr. Judge, is gradually overpowered, and they fall under the control of demons and evil elemental spirits. A person who dabbles in the astral realm begins to live on the astral plane, and hears and sees things of that plane, *without his control*.

All that is invisible is not divine. Man is visible and invisible, and in the threefold classification, shown to be composed of Body, Soul and Spirit. What we see of man is just a tip of an iceberg. We apprehend the visible man by his looks, his speech or his writing. But what do we know of his unexpressed thoughts, feelings, desires and aspirations? What do we know of his powers and potentialities? “To know one through and through, root and branch, is not given to any mere physical thinker. So, there is in the human being that which is invisible—that power of perception and expression, of which we sense only a part. That invisible part of man has never been fathomed, though it exists in all of us, and from it all that is visible has sprung,” writes Mr. Crosbie. Theosophy teaches that this invisible part in Man is the sovereign, the immortal spirit. “When the real man succeeds in merging himself with the latter, he becomes an immortal entity.”

This immortal Spirit or *Atman* is everywhere, in everything. The same Spirit is in all. It is the source of all the powers, all the knowledge and also of perfect happiness. All the great teachers have sought to teach that the strength and beauty of life is within each one of us, if we would but draw it forth. What is the significance of this? This suggests that when we look at a man we should not just see *where* he is, but in *what direction* he is heading. It also implies that we do not meet the same person twice. Every time we meet him, he has changed, for better or for worse. We have to acquire the art of seeing beyond the personality. As Professor C. S. Lewis writes, if we could only see every man that we meet, from day to day, as he *really* is, we may want to fall at his feet and worship him.

(Concluded)

## SOUND AND ITS POWER

### I

IN physics, sound is a vibration that propagates as an acoustic wave through a transmission medium such as a gas, liquid or solid. Sound is created by a vibrating object and is a type of energy made by vibrations. When an object vibrates it causes movement in surrounding air molecules, which in turn collide with other air molecules that are nearby and so on, until the molecules run out of energy. This “chain reaction” movement is called sound waves. Thus, Sound travels as a wave through a medium. Sound cannot travel through a vacuum. Sound being a mechanical wave, it needs a material medium to travel or propagate. In the absence of a medium, or material particles, no vibrations can take place. When a vacuum is created within the closed glass jar with a bell inside the jar, the bell sound is not heard any more due to vacuum created by removing all the air from the jar.

The process of hearing involves sensing the vibrations in the air. These vibrations, when they enter the outer ear, cause our eardrums as also three tiny bones attached to the eardrum to vibrate. These bones tend to amplify the vibrations, which are then picked up by the auditory nerve. A sound wave travels faster through a denser medium, such as a bone, than it does through a less-dense medium like water or air.

H.P.B. points out that Mr. Tyndall, for instance, has studied and recorded the whole course of *atmospheric vibrations*, till the point of their setting up vibrations in the tympanum, but this constitutes the *objective part* of the process in nature. When, however, they cause vibration of the auditory nerves, then it constitutes the *subjective side* of the process, which we may call sensation of sound. What is involved in this process can be seen by a psychic or a spiritual seer, using their inner Eye, which penetrates the veil of matter. The undulations, waves and vibrations studied by science are caused by molecular motion, but molecules themselves are

propelled to activity, *from within*, by atoms. She says that Atoms are called “Vibrations” in Occultism. We must know that atoms of occultists are the primordial divine units, or the seventh principle of a molecule. Brahma himself is called *Anu* or the atom, differentiating and fashioning the shoreless ocean of the primordial matter. “Atoms fill the immensity of Space, and by their continuous vibration, *are* that MOTION which keeps the wheels of Life perpetually going,” explains H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 633)

We get a better understanding of this if we try to understand the statement that for Occult Science, light, heat, sound, electricity, etc. are the “Shadows of matter in motion.” The sensation of sound is like the noise produced by the rolling wheels of a moving carriage, which is a phenomenal effect. The immediate cause of this noise is the driver who drives the carriage, but even behind this driver is the owner of the carriage, who guides and directs the driver. So also, the sensation of sound is produced by the motion of Nature-Spirits or elementals, but even behind these are the guiding intelligences and *noumenal* causes, or the higher spiritual beings or Dhyan Chohans.

There are infinite gradations and correlations of colours and sounds in the cosmos. However, there are limitations to our senses. Both, colour and sound are rates of vibrations. Frequency is the number of vibrations per second. Ultrasound is the sound waves with frequencies higher than 20,000 hertz, which is the approximate upper threshold of human hearing. Ultrasound is not different from the audible sound in its physical properties, but cannot be heard by humans. Infrasound is the sound waves with frequencies lower than 20 hertz which is the low frequency end of human hearing threshold.

At the peak of our youth our ears hear frequencies between 16 and 20,000 cycles per second. Humans do not hear low frequencies very well, and that is merciful, because, otherwise, the sounds of our own bodies would be as deafening as sitting in a lawn chair next to a waterfall. But we are skilled extenders of our senses. For instance, a doctor listens better to a patient’s heart with a stethoscope.

Doctors rely on ultrasound, consisting of over 20,000 cycles per second, to help diagnose tumours, writes Diane Ackerman. (*A Natural History of the Senses*, pp. 188-89)

When ultrasound is used in the medical field for producing visual images it is called ultrasonography or simply sonography. Infrasound can come from many natural or man-made sources, such as thunderstorms, earthquakes, mountain ranges, rocket launchings. Low frequency sounds can travel for long distances. Mammals like whales, elephants, giraffes, hippopotamuses and rhinoceros can produce and perceive infrasound. Different animals have varying hearing ranges.

Sound travels much farther underwater than in air. The sound produced by marine mammals gets projected for many miles. Marine animals are able to communicate different messages by changing the rate, pitch and structure of sounds. They use sound for multiple purposes, such as, to sense their surroundings, to communicate, to locate food and to protect themselves. Echolocation is a technique used by some animals, such as bats, dolphins, whales, to determine the location of different objects in the world around them using sound waves. The sound waves emitted by animals bounce off the objects around them. By means of the sound waves reflected back to the animal by the objects, the animal can tell the distance and even size of the objects around them. There are around a thousand species that use echolocation. It appears that studying echolocation helped to develop SONAR (Sound Navigation and Ranging) technology, using which submarines find their way around underwater.

In an article that appeared in *Smithsonian* magazine (December 2011) we read that Sperm whales “see the world through sound—both the sounds they hear and the sounds they make.” In the 1800s people on a whaling ship, designed for catching whales, heard loud knocking, “almost like hammering on a ship’s hull, whenever sperm whales were present. They called the animals ‘the carpenter fish.’” By a very complex process these whales are known to make clicking



sounds. Hal Whitehead has identified four patterns of clicks, of which the so-called “creaks” that sound like a squeaky door, are used at close range, when the prey is likely to be captured soon. “Slow clicks” are made only by large males and are probably related to mating. “‘Codas’ are distinct patterns of clicks most often heard when whales are socializing....But most of a sperm whale’s clicking...is devoted to one thing: finding food.”

Sound and speech are closely related. Only human beings are endowed with articulate speech; animals communicate through sounds. Speech may be defined as “the faculty of expressing thoughts and emotions in spoken words.” The evolution of man shows that early humanity (first three and a half races) did not possess articulate speech. Theosophy asserts that “a *human* brain is necessary for *human* speech.” Speech is also connected with the mind. The First Race of humanity was mindless and therefore speechless. The Second Race had a “sound language,” *i.e.*, chant-like sounds consisting of vowels only. The language of the early Third Race was “only a slight improvement on the various sounds in Nature.” In the middle of the Third Race, *i.e.*, 18 million years ago, when man’s mind was “lit up,” speech developed gradually.

Speech consists of thought, feeling, will and sound. In unuttered speech there is no sound, but there will still be power of thought, will and feeling, hence words that are pronounced mentally will produce effects. For instance, there are one thousand names of Vishnu. Constant remembrance of the name of the Deity is called *namasmarna*, and it is considered to have a purifying effect on mind, elevating the consciousness and enabling the mind to turn inward. However, a spoken name or word would have added power of sound. H.P.B. writes: “*The spoken word has a potency unknown to, unsuspected and disbelieved in*, by the modern ‘sages,’” because sound and rhythm are closely related to the four Elements of the Ancients; and because such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken corresponding powers, union with which produces good or bad results, as the case may be. That is why, the adepts never

spoke of, nor allowed the disciples to speak about disastrous events in the history of humanity, such as, destruction of Atlantean continent and the Atlantean race, because speech can once more attract powers associated with that event and probably there would be repeated occurrence of that event. We are able to see here the connection of the thought impressed in the astral light, which enshrines a thing or an event, and speech once again awakens the thought and the event.

When we utter a word or a name, we awaken the occult potencies or elementals associated with that Word. Names and words could be beneficent or maleficent. According to Vinita Nangia parents take great care in choosing names for their children, and often name their children after names of gods and goddesses or heroes, with the hope that the child would show forth those qualities, as the underlying belief is that the meaning of one's name does impact the type of person one is. Thus, if one is named "*Anweshā*" one is likely to "search for perfection." Likewise, one who is named "*Bhagwan*" is likely to try to be God-like.

H.P.B. points out that every name carries with it invisible, secret, but very potential influence and "leaveth wherever it goeth." We are not aware of the forces or powers latent in sound. "There are words which have a destructive quality in their very syllables, as though objective things" (*Isis*, II, 411). It was observed that when infant mortality rate was high, parents were scared of losing their children, particularly sons, and so to ward off the evil eye, they would name their sons, "Kaala" or "Kaalia," meaning black, writes Vinita Nangia. In numerology every letter of the alphabet is connected to a number and therefore, when numbers of the letters in a name are added we get "a number," which is supposed to determine the impact of the name on the destiny of the person.

*(To be continued)*

THE SEEDS of Godlike power are in us still: Gods are we,  
bards, saints, heroes, if we will.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD

## ON CHRISTMAS

CHRISTIANDOM celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, said to have been born on 25th December, of a Virgin Mother. The first fact to note is that which most Christians ignore—that we have absolutely no record, to be traced of any kind whatsoever to the date of Jesus's birth. In fact, we know for certain from authentic historical authors that the date of 25th December was fixed years after Jesus had been crucified by his followers in Rome. And the historians explain that this particular day was chosen because it was the date of certain festival among the pagans, who did not follow Jesus. The Christians were evidently ignorant of the real date of birth of their Saviour and prophet but chose 25th December because it coincided with pagan celebrations, and thus it is explained that the Christian countries celebrate Christmas on 25th December. The 25th December was the Winter Solstice when the pagans annually celebrated the birth of Sol, the Sun. Similarly, other Saviours and Prophets are also said to have been born near the Winter Solstice and of a Virgin Mother. In India, Krishna was born of the Virgin Devaki, and we find that the Buddha entered Maya's womb as a Six-Pointed Star. The Egyptian Horus, the Babylonian Adonis, and the Greek Bacchus or Dionysus, also the South American gods in Mexico, and what is more is that many of these gods or heroes are born at the Winter Solstice. Even Fo-hi of China was born of Virgin.

What is the underlying truth behind this similarity of the legends and myths concerning founders of almost all great religions? First, that it is only through ignorance that men have been led to believe in the uniqueness of their own teacher or saviour, their refusing divinity to all other great instructors. From the Theosophical point of view, all of them, from Vishwakarma to Jesus are members of the same great protectors and have come to us for the same aim—spiritual advancement of the race.

## ON CHRISTMAS

Second, that the legends and myths of the stories of all these teachers are of the nature of the symbols—they are not only historical, but also astronomical and mystical. Once understood in this light they reveal to us certain cosmic and human phenomena. They are narrators of the inner process of Soul Growth. Thus, for instance, the divine birth of Krishna, Jesus or Buddha represents not only historical fact, the actual incarnation of a divine teacher but also an astronomical fact—the birth of the Sun at the Winter Solstice and a mystical event—the birth of the Soul, the spiritual principle in man, the Christos or Christ.

It is therefore easy to perceive why there exists this universal tradition that these great ones are born at this particular time of the year. Special cycles are but reflections of the cycle which belong to the inner planes of beings. The starting of the Sun on its northward journey marks the awakening of physical and psychic or magnetic currents of life—a process of regeneration and revitalization. What happens for the earth is symptomatic of what happens within ourselves. In man too there are periods of sowing and reaping, and man can take advantage of this cycle to bring about in himself the birth of the Soul—spiritual and divine. The spirit in man is like unto the Sun that shines from without—overshadows man, and it is for man to gravitate and aspire towards the Spirit and attain conscious union with it. Thus, and thus only does man attain true immortality. When we turn within, a conjunction takes place between man the thinker and the Divine Spirit, and man is born again.

Thus, with the return of the Sun, each year, there is not only a physical renewal of the earth and all beings but also a return of the inner life, of impulses of a spiritual kind. Christmas is a season of birth and of growth. It reminds us of the birth not only of Jesus but of all divine teachers of mankind. It speaks to us of the inner principle within us, the Christ, which all, whether Jews, Zoroastrian, Hindus, or Christian can attain. Let us then take advantage of Christmas from the spiritual point of view and resolve to be born again.

## THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE

### PREFACE—I

THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE is derived from the few Stanzas of the book, called the “*Book of the Golden Precepts*.” This is the work made known to mystic students in the East, as its knowledge is almost compulsory in that mystic School.

H.P.B. says that the work from which she translates *The Voice of the Silence* forms the part of the same series from which the “Stanzas” of the *Book of Dzyan* have been taken, on which *The Secret Doctrine* is based. The *Book of the Golden Precepts* and the great mystic work called *Paramartha*, which is supposed to have been delivered to the great Arhat *Nagarjuna* by the Nagas or “Serpents,” i.e., the ancient Initiates, these two have the same origin.

*Nagarjuna* was an Arhat. Who is an Arhat? In the journey towards spiritual perfection, every religious tradition speaks of certain stages of spiritual development, which are landmarks for spiritual growth. Buddhism mentions four stages or four Paths. The “Srotapatti” is the one who has attained the *first* Path of comprehension in the real and the unreal; the “*Sakridagamin*” is the candidate for one of the higher Initiations: “one who is to receive birth once more”; the “*Anagamin*” is he, who has attained the “third Path,” or literally, “he who will be reincarnated no more,” unless he so desires, in order to help mankind. An Arhat is initiated into the esoteric mysteries. He is the one who has entered the best and the highest Path. An Arhat sees the *Nirvana* during his life. He experiences the *Nirvanic* bliss during *Samadhi* state.

In the *Theosophical Glossary* we read that “*Nagarjuna*... was one of the founders of the esoteric Mahayana systems, not their *exoteric* travesties. The allegory that regarded *Nagarjuna*’s ‘*Paramartha*’ as a gift from the Nagas (Serpents) shows that he received his teachings from the secret school of adepts, and that the real tenets are therefore kept secret.”

The *Book of Dzyan* forms part of the first volume of *Commentaries* upon the seven secret folios of *Kiu-ti*. There are 14 volumes of

Commentaries which are of untold antiquity and contain annotations and glossary for Initiates. They are secret and in charge of Teshu Lama. Also, there are 35 exoteric volumes of *Kiu-ti*, full of myths, blinks and errors. The *Book of Dzyan* is based on the original commentaries, which are in Senzar language. Some extracts from Book IV of *Kiu-ti* are found as “the Laws of Upasans” or the qualifications expected in a Chela; some of them have been mentioned in the book, *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*. Thus, the “Stanzas” of the *Book of Dzyan*, which form the basis for *The Secret Doctrine*, are from the Books of *Kiu-ti*, as are also the *Book of the Golden Precepts* and *Paramartha*.

As for *Kiu-ti* itself, we read that it has been derived from the “very old Book” mentioned by H.P.B. in *Isis Unveiled*. She mentions that it is so very old that our antiquarians may spend indefinite time in deciphering the nature of the fabric upon which it is written and yet get no idea of it. Many volumes of *Kiu-ti*, as well as China’s Bible *Shu-king*, ancient Hebrew volume of occult learning called *Siphrah Dzeniouta* and *Sepher Jezirah*, as well the Chaldean *Book of Numbers*, the *Pentateuch*, as also the *Puranas* in India were all derived from this “very old Book,” of which only one Original Copy exists today. It is said that it was communicated by the Divine Beings to the sons of Light of the Fifth (our) race. It was taken down in Senzar language. (*S.D.*, xliii)

H.P.B. says that these teachings that are based on the *Book of the Golden Precepts* have been accepted by many Theosophists. Perhaps it would be useful to grasp that under the broad definition of “Theosophists,” are included all those who are engaged in the true service of humanity, *i.e.*, those who practice Theosophy without being aware of the principles laid down by H.P.B. We put an emphasis on the teachings because only those who have grasped the teachings are fit to teach, and the main aim of Theosophy is to promulgate the tenets of Theosophy.

H.P.B. compares the methods of psychic development in India with that beyond the Himalayas. In India, the methods of psychic

development differ from teacher to teacher. This may be because these teachers belong to different Schools of Philosophy, which are six in number, but more than that, each teacher has a system of his own which he would want to keep secret. This, in a way, is justified because till people are fit to receive, certain teachings have to be kept secret to prevent their misuse. But again, it is found that this was done because each Guru thought that what he taught was a unique system and would not divulge it. This also shows that there was no uniformity in these teachings. Contrasted with this, beyond the Himalayas, the teachings did not differ from teacher to teacher, and hence we may conclude that there being one philosophy, the method of psychic development must also be uniform with all the teachers, except when the Guru is a Lama who is only a little more learned than his pupils. Here the term “Lama” is “a title applied to the priests of superior grades, those who can hold office as gurus in the monasteries” (*Glossary*), and therefore, is not a spiritually advanced being, and hence, the method of psychic development may differ from one Lama to the other. However, this does not apply to “a real Lama, who is an ordained and *thrice* ordained Gelong.” Here it is useful to recall what Mr. Judge tells us in *Letters That Have Helped Me*, that in the stage known as “accepted chela on probation,” initially, he has to “work unselfishly for humanity—sometimes aiding and aided by some older chela” (p. 53) and then again, he mentions a neophyte being placed under someone who is “some grades higher than our neophyte.” (p. 45)

The question may arise: What are the Six different Schools of Philosophy and why is it that the methods for psychic development differ in six different schools? What is psychic development? There are two branches of the Indian Schools of Philosophy: Orthodox or *Astika* schools, which recognize the authority of the Vedas and *Nastika* schools which do not believe in the authority of the Vedas. The six orthodox schools are called *Shad-darsanas* or the six *Darsanas*, or six ways of seeing things, and are the six different schools of thought, namely, Nyaya, Sankhya, Yoga, Vaisheshika,



Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta. Most of these schools of thought believe in the theory of Karma and Rebirth. They are six demonstrations of Truth. Each school has developed, systematized and correlated the various parts of the Vedas in its own way.

Thus, the Sankhya philosophy suggests a methodology of philosophical analysis. It is a dualistic philosophy which teaches that evolution is the result of the union of *Purusha* (Spirit or Consciousness) and *Prakriti* (matter). Sage Kapila is the founder of this philosophy. Sage Patanjali is the founder of the Yoga philosophy which supports duality. However, unlike the Sankhya philosophy in which *Purusha* is a mere witness, in the Yoga philosophy, it is the agent and also the Lord of the mind. This philosophy gives many practical and moral means to control the mind, and thus removes obstacles to liberation.

Sage Gautama is the founder of the Nyaya philosophy and its methodology is based on the system of logic. This philosophy emphasizes that obtaining valid knowledge is the only way to become free from suffering. It is equivalent to analytic philosophy which identifies four sources of knowledge, namely, perception, inference, comparison and testimony, and is also called *Tarka sastra*. The founder of the Vaisesika philosophy, which is concerned with metaphysics, was Sage Kanada. According to this philosophy the Will of God is the cause of creation, by causing the combination of moving atoms. A soul is born according to its merits and demerits.

Sage Jaimini is the founder of the Purva Mimamsa philosophy which is based on *karma-kanda* or performance of rituals and ceremonies. They believed in the power of *mantras* and *yajnas*. According to them, liberation can be attained by performing daily duties or *nitya karma*. The Vedanta or “Uttara Mimamsa” philosophy concentrates on the philosophical teachings of the *Upanishads*, i.e., the mystical or spiritual contemplations within the Vedas, or the esoteric aspect of the Vedas, rather than the *Brahmanas* or instructions for rituals and sacrifices. The three main sub-divisions of Vedanta are Advaita, Dwaita and Visishtadvaita.



We might say that the Nyaya and Vaisheshika philosophies make a pair, and they analyze the world of experiences, and explain how the world is made out of atoms and molecules, and tend to sharpen the intellect and enable the aspirant to grasp the Vedanata philosophy. Likewise, the Sankhya and Yoga philosophies make a pair, wherein the Sankhya provides the philosophical basis for the Yoga which deals with the control of mind and meditation. The “Purva Mimamsa” prepares one for the final step of spirituality, while the Vedanta helps to reach the goal, which is union with the Divine, by destroying ignorance.

It is clear from the above that six different ways of approaching the truth match people with different temperament, capacities and mental calibre, and hence the Teachers require their own methods of psychic development. The method of psychic development may not necessarily refer only to the development of psychic powers, but also to the purification and elevation of the *Kama-Manas*; purifying desires and strengthening Will so as to be able to control one’s mind. It may include refinement of desires and emotional nature. As one’s taste refines, he will require more depth and substance to satisfy the psychic nature. *Atma-Buddhi* or our monad is already perfect and needs no development. It is its vehicle that requires purification and development for the divinity to shine forth.

The term psychic refers to the *Kama-manas* or personal ego, and psychic development refers to training of astral senses and psychic powers. As against this, there is spiritual ego or *Buddhi-Manas*, connected with the development of spiritual powers. At a higher level, there are occult sciences and occult arts: (1) *Yajna-Vidya*, knowledge of the occult powers awakened in Nature by the performance of certain religious ceremonies and rites. (2) *Mahavidya*, the “great knowledge” or Tantrika worship. (3) *Guhya-Vidya*, knowledge of the mystic powers residing in Sound, *i.e.*, *Mantras* or chanted prayers or incantations. (4) *Atma-Vidya* or knowledge of the Self which includes all the Occult Sciences.

Whether it is training of astral senses for the development of psychic powers of clairvoyance, clairaudience, mind-reading, etc. or learning of occult arts, one could pursue them without any previous preparation or moral purification. However, with a Teacher of “Raja-Yoga,” the training would always be in the direction of first acquiring theoretical knowledge and purity of mind and heart; practice of altruism and cultivating impersonality till the disciple becomes “a mere beneficent force in nature.” In the article “Spiritual Progress” H.P.B. puts it thus: “... We would warn all our members, and others who are seeking spiritual knowledge, to beware of persons offering to teach them easy methods of acquiring psychic gifts; such gifts (*laukika*) are indeed comparatively easy of acquirement by artificial means, but fade out as soon as the nerve-stimulus exhausts itself. The real seership and adeptship which is accompanied by true psychic development (*lokothra*), once reached, is never lost.” In the article “Lodges of Magic” we read: “Among the indispensable pre-requisites for psychic development, noted in the mystical Manuals of all Eastern religious systems, are a pure place, pure diet, pure companionship, and a pure mind.” The right mode of psychic development consists in paralyzing gradually within us the appetites of the lower personality so that the animal man in us may make room for the spiritual.

H.P.B. writes that some of the ideas and maxims of the great mystic work, *Paramartha*, are to be found under different forms in some of the Sanskrit works, such as *Dnyaneshvari* (or *Jnaneshwari*) as well as in certain *Upanishads*. This is not surprising because the early followers of Gautama Buddha were the greatest Arhats, and mostly they were Hindus or Aryans. *Jnaneshwari* has been written by Saint Jnaneshwar. H.P.B. describes it as “a superb mystic treatise,” and also a “king of mystic works,” in which Krishna gives characteristics of illumined Yogi.

(*To be concluded*)

## POVERTY AND RICHES

THE terms poverty and riches are descriptive of the condition of various aspects of human life, and, therefore, have many shades of meaning according to the context in which they are used; the context may be condition of the moral, spiritual, mental, intellectual, physical aspects of man or his actual circumstances of life. These various aspects are interrelated and subject to the Law of Karma. Hence the issue of poverty and riches is very complex. Therefore, the problem of poverty does not lend itself easily to conventional solutions to alleviate it. This is evident from the fact that poverty persists in every society the world over despite efforts made to eradicate it. Even in so-called rich and prosperous countries we find a large number of people in wretched conditions of poverty and destitution. States make liberal budgetary provisions for implementation of various schemes to uplift poorer sections of society. International efforts are made under the aegis of the UNO under the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) covering almost all the countries of the world. Numerous efforts are made by sincere and well-meaning people in their individual capacity and through philanthropic organizations towards the same end. Such efforts are not entirely in vain. Physical conditions of many poverty-stricken people are indeed improved by such schemes and programs. Yet the problem of poverty persists among large sections of society. This is a paradox that has defied solution in terms of the usual socio-political or socio-economic remedies.

Dichotomy between riches and poverty is another perplexing paradox in that it is often seen that fortune seems to favour some people who are wanting in character, while men of good report are found suffering from lack of means and opportunities. Yet another paradox which baffles philanthropists who labour for the cause of poverty alleviation is the fact that their labour of love often elicits ingratitude from the beneficiary; while in some vice and wickedness seem to spring up which the conditions of adversity in which they

were had kept these in check. Large amounts of money unwisely expended with the intention to relieve communities in wretched social conditions are often productive of widespread evil consequences. Sociologists and social psychologists have formulated theories of human behaviour based merely on symptomatic appearances, and completely miss out taking into consideration the underlying unseen moral causes.

Theistic religions when asked to explain the paradox say that it is the will of God that some must suffer from want of the wherewithal, while some others should be happily circumstanced, irrespective of their moral character—an explanation, so unjust and unreasonable, so revolting to conscience, that it has bred in a thinking portion of humanity an attitude of agnosticism and atheism. Yet, true knowledge exists, which is perfectly reasonable, verifiable, and just, which resolves paradoxes and apparent contradictions, unravels the mystery of human nature and cosmic riddles.

The key to understanding the paradox of poverty and riches, as all such apparent inconsistencies, is to be found in a knowledge of the true and permanent nature of man to be Soul and Spirit, and of the twin laws of Karma and Reincarnation—the innate law of our being. The eternal Ego is the permanent *Individuality*, the Real Man, the immortal pilgrim Soul in quest of absolute perfection by garnering and assimilating life-experiences through a numberless reincarnations under Karmic Law. Unexceptionally every man, imperfect in his terrestrial nature is nevertheless perfect in his divine nature, his Higher Self; the latter can manifest itself on the terrestrial plane in each life through the former, its proxy on earth—the mortal personal self. Ego is “divine in its essential nature, yet not pure enough to be *one with the ALL*, and having, in order to achieve this, to so purify its nature as to finally gain that goal. It can do so only by passing *individually* and *personally*, *i.e.*, spiritually and physically, through every experience and feeling that exists in the manifold or differentiated Universe.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, Indian Editionp. 181).

It is self-evident truism that Nature and our perceptive faculties are pervaded by duality, or pairs of opposites, such as, light and darkness, good and evil, vice and virtue, affinity and aversion, life and death, and so on; and that through contrasting experience of the opposites as effects of our Karmic action, and by comparison, and idealized reflection, that we learn lessons of life. It is through long and bitter experience, life after life, that man learns that there is in reality no separateness, that he is an integral portion of all humanity, of all life, and that true happiness and bliss is found in renunciation of personal self—the rife and the sole source of all sorrow and suffering—and seeks union with changeless Eternal Self, the Self of ALL, that transcends pairs of opposites in which they become one, free from the binding influence of the three qualities—of light, action, inertia.

As nothing can come to pass in our lives without an antecedent cause which we ourselves have produced by our action, circumstances of poverty or riches in human life therefore is necessarily the fruit of Karma of the individuals. Similarly, riches and conveniences one enjoys is a reward for their good deeds in the past; which may also be a Karmic compensation for much suffering endured by the action of others. Life teaches us the lesson that we retain what we give and lose whatever we selfishly keep for ourselves without thought for others.

Charity is the foundation of all virtues, the scientific basis of which is found in the implacability of the Law of Karma. One who is aware of it would never avenge, even in thought, any injury done to him by another but forgives the offender, and bids him well, instead, knowing well that the hand that smote him is his own. “Vengeance is mine; and I will repay, saith the Lord [Law],” is a biblical saying pregnant with meaning. “As Karma is sure to punish the man who wronged him, by seeking to inflict additional punishment on his enemy, he, who instead of leaving that punishment to the great Law adds to it his own mite, only begets thereby a cause for the future reward of his enemy and a future punishment

for himself.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, Indian Edition, p. 198). In the working of this aspect of the Karmic Law is found the explanation of the paradox of fortune often favouring unworthy persons and good people in dire strait.

Theosophy teaches that people in poverty and want in a society is not always the fruit of individual Karma but is also the result of the distributive effect of the collective Karma of a nation, and due to the fact of actual interdependence of humanity. The social phenomenon of collective suffering of vast masses deprived of basic necessities and opportunities, stunted and arrested in physical and mental development, is the direct result of neglect of social duty on the part of the other well-to-do section of society. It is only when altruism becomes the basis of thought and action in the life of individuals consequent on a profound awareness of the truth of interdependence of humanity and of the Karmic Law, that each individual will conscientiously live for all, and all for every individual, that the solution to the terrible iniquity of mass deprivation is to be found. Humanity is destined by the compulsion of Karmic and evolutionary law to arrive at such an enlightened state of soul development, however far its consummation may appear in the present.

Shakespeare had an uncanny insight into the human psyche when he penned, “Sweet are the uses of adversity.” A life of ease and pleasures, of luxuries and comforts—pleasant and attractive as they seem—teach us nothing. In fact, selfish indulgence in them drains the Soul of its spiritual vitality, weakens our moral fibre, which is adverse to the Soul development and evolution. But an individual so favoured, if wise, will recognise the happy circumstance of his life to be the fruit of the Karmic merit he has earned, and following the mandate of conscience, use the same for the benefit of fellowmen and especially for those in need and help. Adversities and challenges which come into our lives either as the fruit of retributive Karma—whose heart is Mercy—or as the result of deliberate choice of the Ego, are our greatest friend and benefactor as, by no other means,

can we learn patience, endurance, empathy, strengthen will, and elevate character, thus grow in Soul-life. This truism is enunciated in an episode in the *Mahabharata* wherein Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, prays to Sri Krishna, when He was bidding them parting farewell after the war, to grant her always adversities in life so as to be ever drawing closer to Him in mind and heart.

Neither is poverty bad Karma nor riches good Karma *per se*. It is we who make of them good or bad by our attitude while experiencing them. Poverty is bad Karma in respect of the one who resents the adverse conditions in which his Karma has placed him and envies others who are better off, or is wicked in character. One blessed with good things of life is not necessarily enjoying his good Karma if he neglects to share it with others and indulges in selfish gratification. Both these kinds of people slide down in soul-life and impair their character.

We need to rise above tastes and preferences of evanescent personality and learn to follow the dictates of the Higher Self and place reliance on the absolutely just and never erring Law. The one unfailing touchstone of right discrimination and judgment is found in the ancient axiom: "Good Karma...is that which is pleasing, and bad that which is displeasing, to the Higher Self [Ishwara]." The Master [Ego] often makes deliberate choice to be circumstanced in a birth under poor and adverse conditions to cultivate virtues of patience, develop will, and strengthen character, as in no other way but through trial and suffering can the soul evolve. Though such a prospect may be felt as unsavoury to the personality, the wise willingly submits to the wish of the Divine.

Resigning oneself to the dictates of Ishwara, the very embodiment of absolute Justice and Mercy, seeking neither the pleasant nor shunning the unpleasant, looking upon both with an equal mind, one strikes off the bonds of Karma and rises to the higher unity of Eternal Self where Karma ceases to operate. He is liberated, and being free labours for the redemption of beings in bondage.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Can we regard neutrality as a calculated choice? A few hundred years later when the history of our time is written, it is likely that the most important event historians will see will not be technology, internet, etc., but an unprecedented change in the human condition showing that “substantial and rapidly growing numbers of people have choices, and that they will have to manage themselves. And society is totally unprepared for it.” According to Peter Drucker we have lost our ability to filter what is important and what is not. This is termed “decision fatigue” by psychologists. It has been observed that the quality of our decisions deteriorates with the increase in the number of choices we are forced to make. Thus, we observe that voters are baffled when they have to choose from a plethora of political parties with a huge number of candidates. Then, one may decide to assume neutral position.

But can this neutrality be called desirable? “To be neutral does not mean inertia or sluggishness. Nor is it shunning one’s fundamental and moral responsibility. Neutrality is mindful non-participation,” writes Sumit Paul. As human beings with free will and having knowledge of good and evil, we have to be active in moral and political lives, to assess, judge and decide what is right and wrong, as also, who is right and wrong.

In ethics, neutrality is treated as a vice more often than a virtue, and humanitarian organisations see neutrality to be mostly wrong but can be right if pursued in a good enough cause. However, neutrality, or not making a decision, may be seen as a prudent quality when one is being neutral in order to observe. For, not making a choice or making delayed choice allows a country, party or individual to assess the situation and take stock of things. Our world is in a state of chaos partly because of over-participation by all and sundry. “Neutrality, at times, is a calculated and wise choice. The Buddha believed neutrality was better than participation leading to conflicts and confusions,” writes Sumit Paul. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, November 2, 2024)



The term neutral denotes being unbiased. In philosophy neutrality is the tendency to not take a side in physical or ideological conflict. However, it is important that neutrality is not just “sitting on the fence,” *i.e.*, lack of decisiveness or hesitance to choose between two sides in an argument or inability to decide due to lack of courage. True neutrality requires open-mindedness, willingness to consider different viewpoints. Maintaining neutrality does not mean being indifferent or passive but rather actively engaging in thoughtful analysis while refraining from taking sides. There may be situations wherein due to lack of adequate information, evidence or facts, or even lack of proper knowledge, one is forced to take a neutral stand. Apart from these reasons, the motive for remaining neutral must have moral basis. Often, people choose to remain neutral out of the fear of consequences, or in order to please people, or to assert one’s independence. Even in making moral choices, there are times when we should not rigidly apply moral principles. Sometimes the situation demands that we break the moral principle and make a choice which is in the larger interest. For instance, we may choose to remain silent or even tell a lie when our telling the truth is going to cost someone his life.

Each one has to exercise his discrimination as much in choosing to remain neutral as in deciding to choose, and being aware that as human beings our spiritual progress depends upon exercising the power of choice. It is true that making a moral choice is never easy. At times, the question is how willing we are to suffer and make sacrifices, and hold on to our integrity at any cost. Knowledge of good and evil, and the ability to practice them to the hilt, is not ours from the start. We slowly acquire both the knowledge and ability to make morally right choices, by making necessary corrections in our natures, and learning lessons from the wrong choices made by us.

In the absence of the correct knowledge of moral principles, and the guidance of a wise person or scriptures, we must exercise our intuition and consult the “Voice” within. At times, simple reasoning is enough to help us differentiate between right and wrong. As we

continue to exercise intuition, and to put all problems before it, we will find that we are gradually enabled to make morally correct choice.

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It appears that “Excellent” is not the same as “perfect.” “Perfectionism can be defined as “setting, working toward, and becoming preoccupied with idealized *goals* that are unrealistically ambitious. Perfectionists can be highly self-critical, with too little self-compassion and too much self-doubt.” Excellencism “could be defined as a tendency to strive toward high yet attainable standards in a determined yet flexible way,” and though they try to produce high quality work, it is a healthier approach and their ultimate goal is never perfectionism writes Arash Emamzadeh, a writer and poet.

To wish to do things as well as we can and to appreciate excellence are positive traits, but we should be careful that it does not degenerate into struggle for achieving perfection. The perfectionists always desire to produce the ultimate best, and along with flawlessness they want certainty. These traits tend to make them less productive and efficient. Perfectionism is correlated with workaholism, which could interfere with health, happiness and maintenance of personal relationships. They tend to judge their work more harshly and live in the fear of others’ assessments and consequently experience physical and emotional exhaustions. We can become “good enough perfectionists” by always “trying our best but remaining gentle and forgiving with our fragile selves” writes Anna Katharina Schaffner, a burnout and executive coach.

People who struggle with perfectionism can find it impossible to move forward if they see any chance of failure ahead. As they are so concerned with not making mistakes that they view “everything through a lens of how it fails to meet their unrealistically high standards.” A team lead by Sarah Redden of Florida State University whose recent research is based on the belief that a concern over making mistakes is at the heart of perfectionism, felt that if avoiding

mistakes is central to perfectionism then the antidote could be forcing perfectionists to make mistakes to help them become more accepting of failure. When this idea was tested on a group of perfectionists, it was found to lower the level of perfectionism and concern over making mistakes, writes Susan Krauss Whitbourne, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. (*Psychology Today*, November 2024)

Perfection means to be “exact, without flaw, blemish or fault.” There are those who argue that if the world were perfect, it could not improve and so would lack true perfection, which in turn is dependent upon progress. Hence, Empedocles was of the view that perfection depends on incompleteness, since the latter contains the potential for development. Therefore, to strive for perfection, which we all do, in our respective fields of activity, is to change, to progress or to be better. We soon discover that the quest for perfection is an on-going quest.

In order to achieve perfection, we must be ready to recognize that we are imperfect in many ways. It will not do if we are self-deprecating and judgemental about our own faults, and it will also not help to have a high opinion about ourselves. Perfection arises out of imperfection when we are willing to learn from experiences which our imperfections bring. One striving for perfection should not try to impose it on others and in fact endeavour to find and highlight something praiseworthy even in the most simple, ordinary and imperfect person.

While quest for perfection is an admirable trait, perfectionism is considered a negative quality, as against excellence. In excellence, one enjoys one’s achievement while determined to do better, while in perfectionism one seems to be focused on how much one has not achieved. Experts feel that those in the grips of perfectionism are constantly focused on negative evaluation.

The whole aim of spiritual life is achieving perfection—in physical, mental, emotional, moral and spiritual nature. “Be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect.” There must be no

desire for growth, but willingness to follow the discipline and work in harmony with the divine within. Then, one develops into luxuriance of purity rather than hardening by the forcible passion for personal stature, says *Light on the Path*. “Perfection is not achieved when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away,” said Antoine de St. Exupery.

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There is a lot of filth in the world we live in, in terms of corruption and other negativities. Some people choose to be merged into the filth, while others try to run away from it because they want everything to be pure, and that is not possible because the filth of the world has entered our minds, one way or the other. Thus, we cannot avoid filth but we have the option whether to empower that filth or not. Lotus flower grows in mud and filth and yet remains unaffected by the same. We can call ourselves managers only if *we* make the atmosphere around us, and not if the atmosphere we live in makes us. Management means being able to create whatever we see as the most beautiful thing that has to happen. But that is not what happens. For instance, when someone gets a job, initially, the person is happy but within few years they begin to suffer from diabetes, blood pressure, ulcers and what not. It happens not because there is something wrong with the job but because we have not paid enough attention to ourselves.

In other words, apart from management and other skills we ought to have learnt to be like the lotus, capable of going through situations untouched. “You need to be able to maintain your beauty and fragrance even if you are in the filthiest of situations,” because only then we will be able to float through life, untouched. As far as people around us are concerned, best management implies that we should have the capacity to inspire people around us to do their best, and that can be achieved if we learn to touch the core of their humanity. Our lives become beautiful not because of what we do, but because we have included everybody

around us as a part of our dream of wellbeing, writes Sadhguru, a Yogi, mystic and visionary. (*The Free Press Journal*, October 27, 2024)

Theosophy speaks of two kinds of environment. Besides the external environment that is made up of one's family, society, circumstances, etc., there is the Ego and its environment. Both the inner and outer environments are the result of Karma, and do not come to us arbitrarily. It is through them that we fulfil our Karma. Hence it is better to learn to adapt ourselves to a given environment if we are unable to change it in spite of our best efforts. Recognition that the inner environment is more important than the outer, must be followed by attempts to improve that which is closest to us, namely, the quality of our own thoughts and feelings.

*“From a heap of rubbish on the road-side, a lily blooms, fragrant and pleasing; from a mass of blinded mortals arises the disciple of the truly Wise One, shining with exceeding glory of his own Wisdom,”* teaches the Buddha. Spiritually advanced beings, like King Janaka, can remain unaffected by wealth and comfort. King Janaka was an adept-king, and set a fine example of what it is to be *in the world*, but not be *of the world*. Each individual has the power to modify his way of life. He is capable of isolating himself in some measure, and imposing upon himself certain mental and moral discipline. We have the power of refusing to watch certain movies, to read certain books, to watch certain television programmes and so on. “Come ye out from among them and be ye separate,” said Jesus to his disciples.

We are all in the habit of blaming our environment and seeking the cause of our troubles and sorrows somewhere outside. All the while we shut our eyes to those great achievers, who triumphed over their unfavourable circumstances, and at times, have achieved even the impossible. There are also those who remain untainted even while surrounded by wickedness and evil. In fact, sometimes, the great souls choose to take birth in adverse and humble surroundings so that they can set an example of a virtuous life to others around and learn fortitude and sympathy, says Mr. Judge.