

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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CHARACTER AND SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY

You can solidify your character by attending to small things. By attacking small faults, and on every small occasion, one by one. This will arouse the inner attitude of attention and caution. The small faults and small occasions being conquered, the character grows strong. Feelings and desires are not wholly of the body. If the *mind* is deliberately taken off such subjects and placed on other and better ones, then the whole body will follow the mind and grow tractable. This struggle must be kept up, and after a while it will be easier. Old age makes only this difference—the machine of the body is less strong; in old age the thoughts are the same, if we let them grow without pruning.

—W. Q. JUDGE

WE speak of a person as having “soft” or “firm,” “base” or “noble” character. Though people often say, “What can I do, I am made like that,” is character really static? We can mould or build our character by analyzing our emotional and moral nature. A little observation makes it clear that morals backed by strong will play a vital role in character-building. A person of firm character is always integrated. A good moral character implies spiritual integrity.

Character-building is a continuous process. It is not just transition from being a bad person to a good person, but involves further development from a good to a spiritual person. As we proceed, we realize that it is a simultaneous process of breaking

and building. Often we are called upon to modify or discard traits that we incorporated with great pains into our character. For instance, others may have praised us for being sentimental and sensitive and having great attachment for our family and friends. But we may be rudely awakened one day to learn that we cannot make a distinction between our child and other children, that we need to expand the circle.

At the base of a good character is a virtuous mind. "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny." However, good moral behaviour calls for integration of head and heart; otherwise, moral principles are set at naught by intelligent minds. For instance, an orthodox Brahmin may say, God is in the hearts of all, yet he may feel no compunctions about practising untouchability! Sangharakshita gives a trivial example. Consider a case where we have decided to give up eating something we are fond of, say, cake. In the beginning it would be very difficult to stay away from the place where cakes are sold or made. But when we stick out, this craving is reduced, till we reach a happy state when there is no craving at all. Our abstention from cake is no longer a disciplinary measure, but it is an expression of the state of non-craving which we have attained within. So long as the integration of mind, heart and hands does not happen, we experience great inner conflict, which results in the dissipation of energy. So that we say: "I understand it all at mind level, but the heart refuses to accept."

When the discipline is only external, or when the desire is given up only outwardly, the inner longing eats us up. The state of such a man is described in the *Gita* as, "a false pietist of bewildered soul." Once upon a time, young boys in Sparta were tested to see how courageous they were. They were asked to go and steal one small animal from the neighbouring village. In doing so, a boy got caught stealing a baby fox. When caught by a farmer, the Spartan boy hid the baby fox under his shirt and went on talking heroically, as though nothing was wrong. But meanwhile, the baby fox got very uncomfortable inside and started eating away his vitals. H.P.B.

writes of people who, by a strong effort of will, simply put down the passion instead of slaying it: "They submit joyfully to the torture of the Spartan boy who allowed the fox to devour his entrails rather than part with it" (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*). Mere external discipline is useless. What good is celibacy if the mind is full of thoughts of the opposite sex? As the Buddha puts it:

He is not a Bhikkhu because he carries the begging bowl.
Nor even because he adopts the whole law outwardly. But he who is above good and evil, is chaste, who comports himself in the world with understanding, he, indeed is called a Bhikkhu.
(Verses 266-67)

What avails thy matted hair, O fool? What avails thy deer skin? Outwardly you clean yourself, within you there is ravening. (Verse 394)

Virtue consists not in resisting evil, but in not even desiring it. This happens when both heart and mind are set on it.

Actions are judged right or wrong, moral or immoral, depending upon the motive. We may give lakhs of rupees in charity to help the needy, or for fame, or simply because we have wealth in excess. We may decide to keep cordial relations with people out of true charity or with the ulterior motive that we can use these good relations for our benefit.

Sheela is a transcendental virtue and may be described as a good moral character. Moral qualities like truthfulness, equanimity, honesty, etc., appeal to us all. But, *Sheela* implies leading a pure and virtuous life from moment to moment, and not once in a while. It does not take a spectacular mistake or slip on our part to let in bad influences. Living a pure life, continuously, creates a shield. Then, evil thoughts, words and deeds of others do not affect us; they would be like dust thrown against high wind.

Professor C. S. Lewis observes that there is a difference between doing some *particular* just and temperate action, and *being* a just and temperate man. Someone who is not a good tennis player can play a good shot, now and then. But what we mean by a good player is the man whose eyes, nerves and muscles have been so

trained, by making innumerable good shots, that they can now be relied upon. These muscles acquire a certain tone or quality, even while he is not playing—just as a mathematician's mind acquires a certain habit or outlook, even when he is not working at mathematics. So also, one who perseveres in doing good action gets in the end a certain quality of character. It is this quality of character that is the real virtue of *Sheela*. Buddha describes such a man as one for whom “occasions to act with like or dislike arise not.”

It is because we are required to practise the virtues from moment to moment that the task becomes difficult. Often this leads to despair. The opposite of despair is hope, which tells us that we must not doubt our ultimate capacity.

Virya or spiritual energy is often essential in living a morally pure life. Creativity is the function of energy. Energy is not only required to start something new, but also for maintaining what has already been begun. In spiritual discipline we need to make efforts over and over again. “Beware of change! For change is thy great foe,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. Change is essential for spiritual growth, but on the other hand, we must take care that change does not begin to apply to things we want to preserve. For instance, once we have decided, after due deliberation, to follow a particular discipline, there should arise no controversy or conflict in our mind. Once settled, it must be like Pythagoras' theorem, verified and accepted by an advanced mathematician. Before accepting the theorem, he has tested it, and hence, does not verify every time he makes its application. Similarly, once having accepted the moral principles, we must have courage to practise them even in the face of opposition from the family, society, religion, community, etc. Says Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay on “Self-reliance”:

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

We are always craving for approval and appreciation. But in

practising morals, the highest and only true judge is our own divine nature. A Master of Wisdom expresses the attitude to be adopted towards the opinion of the world, thus:

Do not despise the opinion of the world, nor provoke it uselessly to unjust criticism. Remain rather as indifferent to the abuse as to the praise of those who can never know you as you really are and who ought therefore to find you unmoved by either, and ever placing the approval or condemnation of your own *Inner Self* higher than that of the multitudes.

Those of you who would know yourselves in the spirit of truth, learn to live alone even amidst the great crowds....Seek communion and intercourse only with the God within your own soul; heed only the praise or blame of that deity which can never be separated from your *true* self...For each one of you contains within the precincts of his inner tabernacle the Supreme Court—prosecutor, defence, jury and judge—whose sentence is the only one without appeal. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*, pp. 10-11)

Morality practised out of fear is useless. A child who follows even the simple discipline—for instance, washing his hands before meals—out of fear, is bound to skip it, when he is sure of not being found out. Virtues followed out of fear in childhood make one submit to authority, even in one's adult life. Religion often makes use of psychological fear to make people follow religious injunctions.

Sheela has been defined as the key that counterbalances the cause and effect and leaves no further room for karmic action. “Counterbalancing the cause and the effect” means, we must not allow our good intentions to remain mere intentions but act on them. As Carlyle says: “The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest.” Psychologists say that each thought has energy, and if good intentions, plans, wishes, etc., remain in your brain and are not translated into actions, then it gives rise to nervous tension.

Sheela is also the key that “leaves no further room for karmic action.” We are acting all the time. But, when we act, so as to pass

the burden of our karma to others, we are not balancing the cause and the effect. For instance, while we are standing in the queue for a ticket it may so happen that just when it is our turn to buy the ticket, it is time for the ticket-window to close. In such a case, we need to accept the situation that comes to us under karma. Instead, if we plead with the clerk on the counter to keep it open for a little while longer and issue us the ticket, we have created fresh karmic debt, and failed to “counterbalance the cause and the effect.”

What is the mark of a spiritually integrated person? One spiritually integrated does not depend on anything *outside* for his happiness. A spiritually integrated person uses all—money, power, approval, success, love, friendship—but is not dependent on them. The *Gita* describes the man confirmed in spiritual knowledge as one who “forsaketh every desire which entereth into his heart, and of himself is happy and content in the Self through the Self.” One established in the Law, has been described in the *Dhammapada*:

Not only by discipline of moral principles, nor only by resolutions and vows; not only by much study, nor even by attainment in meditation, or in seclusion and solitude, do I release myself from bondage unto Bliss. This is not attained by worldlings. O Bhikkhu, be not deceived in self-confidence as long as you have not reached the extinction of desire. (Verses 271-72)

IN the word “Sankara,” “Kara” means one who does; “Sam” indicates sublime auspicious bliss. “Sankara” implies the one who showers sublime auspiciousness all over the world without any break.

—SRI CHANDRASEKHARENDRA SARASWATI

THE WHEEL OF SACRIFICE

There is nothing, O son of Pritha, in the three regions of the universe which it is necessary for me to perform, nor anything possible to obtain which I have not obtained; and yet I am constantly in action. If I were not indefatigable in action, all men would presently follow my example, O son of Pritha. If I did not perform actions these creatures would perish.

—*The Bhagavad-Gita*

KRISHNA speaks, in the above quotation, as One Reality pervading the whole universe. One Reality or “God” expresses itself as “Law” in the manifested universe. Manifestation and dissolution of universes, ebb and flow of the tides, days and nights, sleeping and waking, life and death, are all expressions of the Law of Cycles or Periodicity. It is an orderly universe of law. Investigations of science in all departments of nature reveal to us the wonderful functioning of the laws of nature and the astonishing display of intelligence by living organisms. Minerals, plants, animals exhibit their inherent nature which scientists, naturalists, ornithologists, have, with great pain and perseverance, studied and recorded. We are able to live because minerals, plants, animals obey their *svabhava* or inherent nature. Water wets and fire burns; the dove is dove-like and the tiger has its ferocious nature. Trees follow their own cycle of growth.

Figuratively speaking, it is Krishna, the universal divine energy, who is behind the orderly working of the universe. His tireless action expects nothing in return but works on for *Lokasangraha*—welfare of the world. He is thus setting an example for us to follow. He has, as it were, set the wheel of sacrifice in motion, which expresses itself in selfless and loving acts of Mother Nature. It is reflected in the unconscious act of offering by the lower kingdoms which keeps the food chain going. If this is so, then what is the place of man, the crown-piece of evolution, in the universal scheme of things? Krishna says, “Those who dress their meat but for themselves eat the bread of sin....He who, sinfully delighting in the gratification of his passions, doth not cause this wheel thus

already set in motion to continue revolving, liveth in vain” (*Gita*, III, 24). The wheel spoken of is the wheel of sacrifice, of duty and of interdependence.

The fourth chapter of the *Gita* mentions the formation of castes. “Mankind was created by me of four castes distinct in their principles and in their duties according to the natural distribution of the actions and qualities,” says Krishna. Thus, it is *guna* or the qualities, which decide the caste of man. These qualities are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Each according to his temperament is allotted certain duties. The natural duties of a *Brahmin* spring from predominance of *sattva* quality and they are, tranquillity, purity, self-mastery, patience, rectitude, learning, spiritual discernment, and belief in the existence of another world. The natural duties of a *Kshatriya* are, valour, glory, strength, firmness, not to flee from the field of battle, liberality and a lordly character, and these spring from predominance of *rajas* quality. The natural duties of the *Vaisya* are tilling the land, tending cattle, buying and selling, and they spring from dominance of *tamas* with a quantity of *rajas* mixed therein. It is predominance of *tamas*, which makes a man *Sudra*, whose duty is to serve. And when a man is engaged in performance of works in accordance with his leanings, he is able to do his actions well. It gives him happiness and satisfaction. It is division of labour, the fruits of which may be shared by all human beings. This is the law of interdependence, co-operation and coexistence. When we drink a hot cup of tea in the morning, we are enjoying the fruits of efforts of thousands of beings. To think that payment of money entitles us to use it without having any sense of gratitude is the height of arrogance. A regular reflection on this aspect would help in cultivation of a feeling of gratitude and oneness with fellow beings.

The mixed-up castes and family lines of today no longer provide the psycho-physiological environment to soul in accordance with its line of life’s meditation. However, man’s nature is still an admixture of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Boundaries of work have blurred, leaving no obvious division of labour, but the “work of

the world” remains, and so does Shri Krishna’s injunction to the creatures of the world to keep the wheel of sacrifice revolving. Man has not become self-sufficient or independent with modern technology and scientific advance. Even today, the law of interdependence applies. Someone has to perform the duties of a *Brahmin*, a *Kshatriya*, a *Vaisya* and a *Sudra* in our present-day world. Today, a son of a *Brahmin* does not necessarily possess the required qualities and inclinations. The same goes for a *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra*. *Raj-rishis* (adept-kings) or philosopher-kings no longer rule nations. Teachers today have made a lucrative business out of the duty of a *Brahmin*, which is “to learn and teach.” A large portion of humanity is at best *Vaisya* or *Sudra*—engaged in buying and selling or serving others for earning a livelihood. There are many who wish to work but are too ashamed to take up that work which is looked down upon by our society. There are many cases of misfits who would suffer daily and hourly, year after year, with increasing degree of acuteness but would not call it quits. This is foolishness. It is said, “Doing what you like is freedom, liking what you do is happiness.” Parents push their children into vocations totally unlike their natural leaning and temperament. They want their children to pursue a career that has approval of the society, that enhances social status and so on. Brainwashed by incessant bombardment of advertisements, by views of the parents and elders, and by examples of the “successful men and women,” the child firmly believes that his chosen line is absolutely the right one.

Whatever may be our duty or our share in the work, one thing is certain: work we must. A man should not remain inactive eating the fruits of others’ labour without contributing something in return. Each person has many roles to play and many duties to perform. Some of them are family duties. But there are many others that we have consciously or unconsciously chosen by our past actions. Whatever may be the case, it is our duty to do whatever has come to us as our responsibility. To avoid work, to get away from doing something that does not interest us, to run away from a boring job,

to go on complaining about what we have to do, is tantamount to refusal to recognize our debt to others—the fruits of whose labour we have enjoyed, but are now unwilling to pay up by contributing our share. Mr. Judge advises:

The very first step towards being positive and self-centered is the cheerful performance of duty. Try to take pleasure in doing what is your duty, and especially in the *little* duties of life. When doing any duty put your whole heart into it. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

Krishna sums up the philosophy of duty and the attitude to it in these words:

The performance of the duties of a man's own particular calling, although devoid of excellence, is better than doing the duty of another, however well performed; he who fulfils the duties obligated by nature, does not incur sin. A man's own natural duty, even though stained with faults, ought not to be abandoned. For all human acts are involved in faults, as the fire is wrapped in smoke. (*Gita*, XVIII)

If we do our duty, we do not incur sin. It is our share and our lot that has come to us under karma. We are where we are because of our own past actions. The present is the result of the past. In the present hour are the opportunities for shaping our future, where we can take the next step in the right direction. Says Mr. Judge: "The careful performance of every duty belonging to one's station in life, without desire for reward, leaving results for Divine law," is an integral part of the process of spiritual development. (*An Epitome of Theosophy*, p. 19)

Theosophy puts emphasis on the performance of duty. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. writes:

"By doing the proper duty in proper place, a man may make the world his debtor," says an English writer. A cup of cold water given in time to a thirsty wayfarer is nobler duty, and more worth, than a dozen of dinners given away, out of season, to men who can afford to pay for them. (p. 239)

Duty is that which is *due* to Humanity, to our fellow-men,

neighbours, family, and especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves. This is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, leaves us spiritually insolvent and moral bankrupts in our next incarnation. Theosophy is the quintessence of *duty*. (p. 227)

Careful reading of the above reveals that no particular duty is high or low, better or worse. There can be no shame in doing an honest day's work, whatever it may be. Each one of us is an important part of the great machinery of this universe. Each part has its place and importance. Malfunctioning or non-functioning of even one nut or a bolt can cause disaster. Let us not become that nut. Let us not seek any recognition for our work but learn to enjoy what we have to do, giving to it our best. Many people dislike their own work and prefer to do that of another. They feel that they know better, that others are unable to meet their own superior standards. We must avoid this, as in seeking something else, we neglect our own duty. When we do another's duty, we deprive him of the opportunity of doing it and learning from it. If parents did the homework for the children, when will the children learn and become self-reliant? Also, if we are already good at a job, what is there for us to learn from it? It would do us good to teach another person to do it well. At the same time, we must take an inventory of our duties to detect what we are bad at and make a sincere effort to do it well. Mr. Judge writes: "If a man knows he is bad at business, he should mortify himself by making himself learn it, and thus get good discipline" (*Letters That Have Helped Me*). Even when we have mastered everything, we must emulate King Janaka, *i.e.*, set an example in the performance of duty. "For whatever is practised by the most excellent men, that is also practised by others."

DON'T be so arrogant as to suppose that the truth is no bigger than your understanding of it.

—MICHAEL GREEN

REBIRTH—A LOGICAL NECESSITY

II

IN an infinite world there are infinite opportunities. “The Universe...exists for the sake of the soul’s experience and emancipation,” teaches Patanjali (Book II, Aphorism 18). *Light on the Path* suggests: “And before you can attain knowledge you must have passed through all places, foul and clean alike,” *i.e.*, both good and bad experiences. In a given life, if we are in a male body then we are precluded from experiencing motherhood. The soul needs to pass through certain basic experiences like poverty, etc., to acquire fortitude and sympathy. Mr. Judge writes:

Viewing life and its probable object, with all the varied experience possible for man, one must be forced to the conclusion that a single life is not enough for carrying out all that is intended by Nature to say nothing of what man himself desires to do. The scale of variety in experience is enormous. There is a vast range of powers latent in man which we see may be developed if opportunity be given. Knowledge infinite in scope and diversity lies before us....We perceive that we have high aspirations with no time to reach up to their measure...To say that we have but one life here with such possibilities put before us and impossible of development is to make the universe and life a huge and cruel joke perpetrated by a powerful God. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 87-88)

Each life is an opportunity to learn and experience. In a given life we are not able to act out all our thoughts, feelings and aspirations. There is a limitation imposed by brain capacity, bodily handicaps, etc. Sometimes our efforts and achievements are only halfway through when we die. Many have felt dejected at the thought that with death, all their aspirations and achievements would vanish like a torch dipped into water. As Edmund Wilson expresses it:

The knowledge that death is not so far away, that my mind and emotions and vitality will soon disappear like a puff of

smoke, has the effect of making earthly affairs seem unimportant and human beings more and more ignoble. It is harder to take human life seriously, including one’s own efforts and achievements.

But death does not mean an end. What happens if we are in the middle of learning the piano and we die? In the next life we pick up the thread from where we had left off in the previous life. In fact, in Devachan [*swarga*] there is an assimilation and expansion of all the nobler qualities—sympathy, love for beauty, art, and the abstract things of life—so that the soul comes back enriched.

It is quite possible that a person pursues only one field, one subject or develops only one particular faculty. If, say, the pursuit of music, literature, or computer science is kept up for many lives, then we have a computer wizard, a mathematical genius, a great musician. Bach, Beethoven, Mozart were all child prodigies and geniuses. Rebirth explains the appearance of geniuses and even child prodigies. Can heredity explain? Mr. Judge cites the example of the great musician Bach, “whose direct descendants showed a decrease in musical ability leading to its final disappearance from the family stock.” Blind Tom, a negro, displayed great musical ability and skill in playing the piano, although his parents had no knowledge of piano. This bringing back of knowledge is recollection, divisible into physical and mental memory. Rebirth and Karma explain the coming of idiots or vicious children to parents who are good, pure or highly intellectual.

If we have lived before, why do we not remember our past lives? This objection is countered by the argument that we do not remember many things from our childhood period. Do we remember what we ate for breakfast three days ago? But this does not impair our sense of identity or make us feel that we did not go through those experiences. Mr. Judge explains our inability to remember past lives, thus:

The brain is the instrument for the memory of the soul, and, being new in each life with but a certain capacity, the Ego is only able to use it for the new life up to its capacity...By living

according to the dictates of the soul the brain may at last be made porous to the soul's recollections.... (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 81-82)

There are instances of people who have remembered their past lives. But that is not the conclusive proof of re-birth. In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. writes: "To get convinced of the fact of reincarnation and past lives, one must put oneself in *rapport* with one's real permanent Ego, not one's evanescent memory."

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do the wicked go scot-free? Nothing happens by chance. We are not able to explain suffering at times on the basis of actions in this life alone. We are not able to trace the effect back to its cause, which may lie in some previous life. But at a certain stage in the spiritual life the disciple is taught "unerring discernment of *phala*." We can never dodge Karma but must reap the consequences sooner or later. As *The Light of Asia* says, "Tomorrow it will judge or after many days."

We are born in the company of the souls we loved or hated. How explain sudden affinity or sudden aversion for a person at the first meeting? What could explain the fact that some people help us even when we do nothing in return, and some keep hindering us no matter how good we are to them? As Mr. Judge writes, no man becomes our enemy or friend by reason of our present acts alone. Every time we show charity and kindness to a person who may be inimical to us in this life, the tendency to enmity will be one-third lessened in every succeeding life. But if we persist in being inimical to him then this tendency is carried forward for three more lives. What shall we have in future—friends or enemies?

Rebirth explains disparities. Why is one person born with all the advantages of life and another in poor and adverse surroundings? How can we explain *congenital* blindness, handicaps and diseases? Either we have to believe in a God who is fanciful, or take these as karmic settlement of deeds of our past lives. If we believe in a just and compassionate God, then the only answer is—Karma and Rebirth.

It is the knowledge that our own comes back to us, if not in this

life then in some other life, that can make people live ethically. They would think twice before doing anything wrong. Knowledge of rebirth takes from us the dread of death. It changes the very outlook on life. Truly, "For logic, consistency, profound philosophy, divine mercy and equity, this doctrine of Reincarnation has not its equal on earth." (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 152)

(Concluded)

ONE of two things will happen when you socialize with others. You either become like your companions, or you bring them over to your own ways. Just as when a dead coal contacts a live one, either the first will extinguish the last, or the last kindle the first. Great is the danger; so be circumspect on entering into personal associations, even and especially light-hearted ones.

Most of us do not possess sufficiently developed steadfastness to steer our companions to our own purpose, so we end up being carried along by the crowd. Our own values and ideals become fuzzy and tainted; our resolve is destabilized.

It's hard to resist when friends or associates start speaking brashly. Caught off guard when our associates broach ignoble subjects, we are swept along by the social momentum. It is the nature of conversation that its multiple meanings, innuendoes, and personal motivations move along at such a fast clip they can instantly shift in unwholesome directions, sully everyone involved. So until wise sentiments are fixed into you as if they were instinct and you have thus acquired some power of self-defense, choose your associations with care and monitor the thrust of the conversations in which you find yourself.

—EPICETUS

TSUNAMI—WHAT CAUSED IT?

Nor has science sufficient humanity, so long as the naturalist overlooks that wonderful congruity which subsists between man and the world; of which he is lord, not because he is the most subtle inhabitant, but because he is its head and heart, and finds something of himself in every great and small thing, in every mountain stratum, in every new law of colour, fact of astronomy, or atmospheric influence which observation or analysis lay open.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

FORMIDABLE waves called “Tsunami” spread a ring of destruction through nearly a dozen countries in south-east Asia the last week of December 2004. Tsunami is a Japanese word; literally translated, it means “harbour wave.” It is a wave train or series of waves generated by the disturbance that vertically displaces the water column. Earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions and even impact of cosmic bodies like meteorites can generate tsunamis. Unlike the normal wind-generated waves, the tsunami waves are high-speed waves that gain in height—becoming several metres high—and diminish in speed near the coast, in shallow water.

The tsunami of December 26, that claimed thousands of lives, crippled thousands and caused widespread destruction of property, was caused by an earthquake of high magnitude, with its epicentre off the west coast of Northern Sumatra. In spite of scientific explanations for such calamities we are always left wondering: “Who is responsible for natural calamities—earthquakes, volcanoes, cataclysms, etc.—man or God?” While the scientists attribute them to physical causes, Theosophy has this to say:

It is absolutely *false*, and but an additional demonstration of the great conceit of our age, to assert (as men of science do) that all the great geological changes and terrible convulsions have been produced *by ordinary and known physical forces*. For these forces were but the tools and final means for the

accomplishment of certain purposes, acting periodically, and apparently mechanically, through an inward impulse mixed up with, but beyond their material nature. There is a purpose in every important act of Nature, whose acts are all cyclic and periodical. But spiritual Forces having been usually confused with the purely physical, the former are denied by, and therefore, have to remain unknown to Science, because left unexamined. (*S.D.*, I, 640)

Nothing in nature happens by chance. Everything that happens is the result of Law—eternal, immutable, ever active. God and Law are identical. The Law of Karma, which is described as the *Ultimate Law* of the universe, seeks to restore the disturbed harmony, bringing the effects back to the point of disturbance, like the ripples in the pond converge back to the place where the stone was thrown. H.P.B. writes:

The only decree of Karma—an eternal and immutable decree—is absolute Harmony in the world of matter as it is in the world of Spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we, who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we work with, through and along with nature, abiding by the laws on which that Harmony depends, or—break them. (*S.D.*, I, 643)

Are we really working with, through and along with nature? Are we not guilty of disturbing the harmony of nature in various ways? Man is the crown piece of evolution and kingdoms below man look up to him for their evolution. Instead of helping, we seem to hinder the progress of the lower kingdoms. Instead of working on with nature we have only sought to conquer nature for selfish ends. Many nature lovers have expressed serious concern, especially over the melting arctic ice, because of over-industrialization.

Our forests and wildlife are facing a crisis solely due to the uncaring and exploitative attitude of human beings. We are responsible for the vanishing wildlife, and destruction of forests. “We kill and maim without remorse, almost as a form of mob

entertainment. The Romans did a bit of that 2000 years ago, but that was less horrific than our blood sport,” wrote Valmik Thapar, (*Sanctuary Asia*, August 2003). He raised a few questions that compel introspection. Thus:

Why does the Inspector General of Forests, Government of India, talk of breeding tigers to kill them? Why do the captains of the business world sit mute as the natural world is torn apart? Why do senior politicians feel that they have a right to plunder and pillage the natural and cultural heritage of our country?...It’s an all-pervasive attitude of make-the-quick-buck, hire the right contractor, pocket the commission, bribe and be bribed and violate this nation’s natural treasure house.

All forms of life—plants, birds and beasts—display an instinct for globalization, wrote Bittu Sahgal, editor of *Sanctuary Asia* (*Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, February 4, 2004), but not a single species ever tried to overpower nature. Sahgal writes:

Never has nature forgiven one species for exercising more power and influence than it deserved, which is precisely what Homo Sapiens is busy doing right now, ignorant perhaps of the fact that the extinction files are full of those who tried to battle nature.

Theosophy teaches that the ancients have always revered Nature, never seeking to conquer it. An article, “Morality and Pantheism” that appeared in the magazine *The Theosophist* (November 1883), expressed the Theosophical views regarding man-nature relationship thus:

If an individual attempts to move in a direction other than that in which Nature is moving, that individual is sure to be crushed, sooner or later, by the enormous pressure of the opposing force. We need not say that such a result would be the very reverse of pleasurable. The only way therefore, in which happiness might be attained, is by merging one’s nature in great Mother Nature, and following the direction in which she herself is moving: this again, can only be accomplished by assimilating

man’s individual conduct with the triumphant force of Nature, the other force being always overcome with terrific catastrophe. The effort to assimilate the individual with the universal law is popularly known as the practice of morality.

In the light of the above, is it not possible that the recent calamity is nature’s chastisement for our disturbing the harmony?

It seems twenty-first-century modern technologies—robotics, genetic engineering and nanotechnology—pose greater threat to humanity than did the twentieth-century technologies underlying weapons of mass destruction. Nanotechnology—which consists in manipulating matter at the atomic level—threatens to destroy the biosphere on which life depends.

Besides undue interference with nature, there is a direct relation between man’s thoughts and natural calamities.

Karma operates to produce cataclysms of nature by concatenation through mental and astral planes of being. A cataclysm may be traced to an immediate physical cause such as internal fire and atmospheric disturbance, but these have been brought on by the disturbance created through the dynamic power of human thought. (“Aphorisms on Karma,” No. 30)

Mr. Judge describes the power of human thought in these words:

Man is a great dynamo, making, storing and throwing out energy, and when masses of men composing a race thus make and distribute energy, there is a resulting dynamic effect on the material of the globe which will be powerful enough to be distinct and cataclysmic. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 128)

We can look upon earthquakes, tidal waves, torandoes and tsunamis to be like a sickness of the earth. Mr. Judge describes physical illness as discharge of the inner sickness of the inner being on the physical plane. Similarly, “the lives of the earth that have been impressed by the harmful thoughts—the selfish thoughts—of millions of men [and women] have reached a point of explosion, which comes about just as naturally in its own order and cycle, as day follows night. Those...who suffer most from such events have

earned the suffering....Man *is* a part of Nature, and if he makes Nature suffer, he will suffer through Nature.” (“*Because—*”*For the Children Who Ask Why*)

Occult philosophy holds that all major cataclysms are manifestations of electrical and magnetic changes, proceeding under the rule of cyclic laws. “Not only is man ruled by these laws, but every atom of matter as well, and the mass of matter is constantly undergoing a change at the same time with man. It must therefore exhibit alterations corresponding to those through which the thinker is going. On the physical plane effects are brought out through the electrical and other fluids acting with the gases on the solids of the globe.” Further, Mr. Judge explains:

Earthquakes may be brought on according to this philosophy by two general causes; *first*, subsidence or elevation under the earth-crust due to heat and steam; *second*, electrical and magnetic changes which affect water and earth at the same time. These last have the power to instantaneously make the earth fluidic without melting it, thus causing immense and violent displacements in large or small waves. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 131-32)

Mr. Judge writes that earthquakes indicate that some souls of use have come into the world somewhere. The doctor makes his calls where there are sick people. In a similar way, earthquake indicates sickness of the earth and it is a sign that Great Souls are needed. It may also be that “the actual disturbance in the earth permits their entrance here.” Earthquakes may be looked upon as making the earthly conditions conducive to their entrance. Thus:

It would not even be strange if such a being coming to birth would be the *immediate* cause of an earthquake....Have you never noticed how the coming of any little baby upsets the household where it comes? Old habits have to be given up by all the members of the family for the little one’s welfare; new habits have to be formed; in fact, that baby makes a new world for the family as well as for itself, when it takes the road of birth!” (“*Because—*”*For the Children Who Ask Why*, p. 137)

Further, earthquake is a means whereby Karma is affording an opportunity to all concerned to learn—each sufferer his own lesson. During the Bihar earthquake of 1934, Gandhiji said that “behind even this indescribable calamity there is divine purpose that works for the good of humanity.”

In the recent calamity, tens of thousands of people missing or dead included those of at least 40 nationalities. “The disaster’s reach is an unsettling reminder that globalization has brought the world closer together in unexpected ways so that people now share the pain as well as profit from far-flung places. Even for people who have never left home, otherwise abstract calamities in distant lands now frequently have a familiar face,” writes Craig S. Smith. (*The Times of India*, December 30)

“Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin,” so that all of us who were fortunate enough to escape the suffering must do all in our power to help rehabilitate the victims and alleviate their suffering. More importantly, let us take a vow to charge the atmosphere with good and noble thoughts as we take to heart these words from the Bible:

For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. (*Job*, Chap. V, v. 23)

THE fish trap exists because of the fish; once you’ve gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you’ve gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning; once you’ve gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?

—CHUANG TZU

SELF-CHOICE AND INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS

SELDOM does one associate the idea of liberty with evolution, yet there can be no true evolution without liberty and freedom of choice.

When we approach this subject of liberty or freedom to choose the types of thoughts we shall accept or generate, the types of feelings or emotions we shall encourage or engender, or the types of actions we shall perform, we must dissociate the ancient concept of true liberty from the modern one, which often fails to distinguish between liberty and licence.

The Theosophical idea of liberty is the same as the true ancient conceptions of that term, and implies evolution carried forward to its ultimate end, which is freedom from the bondage of matter through spiritual insight and determination. Such freedom comes about by the acquisition of discernment and discrimination, the natural concomitants to the deliberate choice of spiritual ideals and ideas as opposed to their material counterparts.

When the desire to know the truth arises in the mind-heart of man, and the will to serve his brother-man flowers as a result of such desire, a crucial stage is reached, and according to the choices made will be the progress or retrogression of the “chooser.”

This idea that our choices lead either to progress or retrogression will make us perceive the necessity for right choice, and right choice implies the acquisition of true knowledge and its application in the fields of our mind, emotions and physical nature.

The first step towards the acquisition of true knowledge is not just the desire and determination to acquire it, but rather the purification of the inner motive, or the reason why we desire such knowledge. As Mr. Judge states in *The Ocean of Theosophy*: “Even a Buddha or a Jesus had first to make a vow, which is a desire, in some life, that he would save the world or some part of it, and to persevere with the desire alive in his heart through countless lives.” With the right motive of helping or serving others, the next step that naturally follows is that of finding ways and means to serve. It

is here that the necessity is seen for the study of the Teachings, testing them by the process of application in daily life, in the light of service or help rendered to others. Not all types of “service” are helpful to others; so, as our knowledge increases through study and application, our ability to discriminate between right and wrong service is also strengthened.

It will be seen that freedom of choice plays a most important part here; we are constantly choosing, every moment of the day, in one way or another, but choice with the motive of service behind it produces a more deliberate, discerning and discriminative attitude of mind, which in turn gives rise to actions more beneficial and helpful to the whole “stream of evolution” on our planet Earth.

Just as individual choice in the right direction is responsible for the progressive evolution of any one individual, so, too, the collective choices of all result in the progressive advancement of all beings in the scheme of evolution. Here will be seen the responsibility of the individual in clearly setting before his mind’s eye the goal of service instead of that of liberation. *The Voice of the Silence* explains why the Path of Renunciation is superior to the Path of Liberation. It is the goal of renunciation that is kept in view by all true Theosophists who wish to follow in the footsteps of the Great Teachers of Humanity, who are also “the True Servants of Humanity.”

Evolution consists “in raising up to a higher state all the matter concerned in the chain of globes to which the earth belongs” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 62). This is the work in which all individuals are engaged, whether they are consciously aware of it or not. Are we not told in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Help Nature and work on with her; and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance.

And she will open wide before thee the portals of her secret chambers, lay bare before thy gaze the treasures hidden in the very depths of her pure virgin bosom. Unsullied by the hand of matter, she shows her treasures only to the eye of Spirit—the eye which never closes, the eye for which there is no veil in all

her kingdoms.

To become conscious co-workers with Nature is the prerogative of all human beings, who alone have the liberty or freedom of self-choice; and upon this choice depends the harmonious progress of all the beings evolving with us on our planet Earth. To end this short article, another quotation from *The Voice of the Silence* may be given:

Which wilt thou choose, O thou of dauntless heart? The Samtan of "Eye Doctrine," fourfold Dhyana, or thread thy way through Paramitas, six in number, noble gates of virtue leading to Bodhi and to Prajna, seventh step of Wisdom?

FAME and wealth without wisdom are unsafe possessions.

You can tell the man who rings true from the man who rings false, not by his deeds alone, but also by his desires.

False men and shams talk big and do nothing.

The friendship of one wise man is better than the friendship of a host of fools.

Seek after the good, and with much toil shall ye find it; the evil turns up of itself without your seeking it.

An evil and foolish and intemperate life should not be called a bad life, but rather, dying long drawn out.

Fortune is lavish with her favours, but not to be depended on. Nature on the other hand is self-sufficing and therefore with her feebler but trustworthy resources she wins the greater meed of hope.

A sensible man takes pleasure in what he has instead of pining for what he has not.

The pleasures that give most joy are the ones that most rarely come.

—DEMOCRITUS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

Question: Is it right to vote for an individual candidate or his political party during election, since we cannot check on the use or misuse of power and position they later enjoy? Is it right "to judge," favourably or not, any individual, such as a candidate, since Theosophy advises us not to judge?

Answer: The above questions pertain to making a judgement and the fear of karmic consequences arising out of making defective decisions such as casting a "vote."

There is a difference between "passing judgement" and "judging," which is an application of our inherent faculty of discrimination. Charity demands that we refrain from sitting on the "judgement seat," *i.e.*, being harshly judgmental about persons, with a view to critically notice only what *we* think is a faulty and defective side of others. We may find an erroneous justification for our condemnation of choices and actions of others, but we are not to condemn them as persons, in thought or in words. "Condemn the sin, but not the sinner."

We must never misuse our precious faculty of discrimination that helps us to assess people and situations, after due deliberation. For instance, before we employ a domestic help, it is necessary that we find out his/her background, character, efficiency, experience, credentials and suitability for the job.

If we are to vote for an individual, we must apply our intelligence and after due investigation decide the appropriateness of his candidature. It is our human prerogative to think and even to consult our intuition before making any choice, unprejudiced by the opinion of others.

As for the voting process, our karmic responsibility does not end with casting a vote for a candidate or a party. In a nation, we are all linked together, and therefore must accept the due consequences of our trust or confidence in the candidate. We become a “partner” with the candidate on account of our choice—right or wrong and made with best of intentions.

As mature and responsible citizens, it is our duty to vote. By neglecting to vote, we forfeit our duty to participate in the proper development and progress of our democratic state. It becomes an act of omission that brings its own karmic consequences.

Moreover, as Henry David Thoreau points out, our job as true citizens of a democratic state is not over merely, by casting our vote. “Voting” is simply a feeble expression of our wish that right should prevail; it does not mean that we are *vitaly concerned* that right must prevail. In spite of our best intentions, if a wrong candidate or party comes to power, all is not lost. Democracy is strength of the people to express their will. In case there are policies or laws framed with vested interest—more likely to be detrimental to human welfare—then, as H.P.B. suggests, the duty of a citizen would lie in the direction of forming public opinion. If we have the moral stamina, we need not even wait for the majority. As Thoreau suggested—for abolition of slavery in America—if a single honest man ceased to hold slaves and was willing to face the consequences, then it would be a step towards the abolition of slavery. A minority is powerless only when it conforms to the majority.

We all learn by “trial and error” and inwardly learn from our mistakes. We are all expected to “try” and “make ourselves fit to be the better able to help others.” No one is expected to be perfect all at once. It is the discriminative faculty that helps us distinguish between the essentials and non-essentials for the purpose of integral development. Mr. Judge suggests that if the motive is kept pure and altruistic, many of the mistakes can be ironed out in time.

Question: We sometimes read or hear of such unusual occurrences as the statue of some holy figure like Mary, the mother

of Jesus, shedding tears, talking, etc. What is the theosophical explanation for such abnormal phenomena?

Answer: There is more to man and nature than meets the eye. If there are physical laws governing the physical realm, there are laws governing the super-physical and invisible realm with which we are not acquainted. Such abnormal occurrences are neither supernatural nor fraud. “There is no miracle. Everything that happens is the result of law—eternal, immutable, ever active.” However, certain phenomena are considered miraculous as they are outside the purview of modern science. The *rationale* of such phenomena has been given in *Isis Unveiled*.

In the article “Animated Statues” H.P.B. explains that the word *fetish* was derived from the Portuguese word *feitico*, meaning, “enchanted,” “bewitched,” or “charmed.” Every miracle working image, tomb or statue of a Saint, Virgin or Christ, in the Roman Catholic and Greek Churches, has to be regarded as a *fetish*; as those images or statues do become “the receptacle or dwelling” for a longer or shorter time of God or an “angel of God,” when the miracle is wrought. As a result the statues could walk and talk and even prophesy. In antiquity, people believed that such statues were endowed with the prophetic gift and could tell the people in whose possession they were, “all that was useful and salutary to them.” “Philo of Biblos shows that the Jews consulted *demons* like the Amorites, especially through small statues made of gold, shaped as nymphs which, questioned at any hour, would instruct them in what the querists had to do and what to avoid.”

In the article “Transmigration of the Life Atoms,” H.P.B. explains that the mesmeric or magnetic fluid that is transferred from one man to another or to an inanimate object is *life itself*. She writes:

“Indeed it is life-atoms” that a man in blind passion throws off, unconsciously, and...he does it quite as effectively as a mesmerizer who transfers them from himself to any object consciously and under the guidance of his will....Hold any object in your hand, and it will become impregnated with your

life atoms, indrawn and outdrawn, changed and transferred in us at every instant of our lives. Animal heat is but so many atoms in molecular motion. It requires no adept knowledge, but simply the natural gift of a good clairvoyant subject to see them passing to and fro, from man to object and *vice versa* like a bluish lambent flame. (*H.P.B. Series No. 25*, pp. 34-35)

Based on this principle it is easy to understand the science of *theopoea*. H.P.B. mentions that there has existed from antiquity a mysterious and awful science called *theopoea*, of endowing the symbol of gods with temporary life and intelligence. H.P.B. explains:

Statues and blocks of inert matter become animated under the potential will of the hierophants....

Left to itself the life-principle will blindly follow the laws of nature....But, guided by the will of the adept, it becomes obedient...and produces physical and psychological miracles, well-known to mesmerizers. Infused in inorganic and inert matter, they create an appearance of life, hence motion. If to that life an individual intelligence, a personality, is wanting, then the operator must either send his *scin-lecca*, his own astral spirit, to animate it; or use his power over the region of nature-spirits to force one of them to *infuse* his entity into the marble, wood or metal; or, again, be helped by human spirits. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 616)

Ancient hierophants could animate the statues and make them act and speak like living creatures. As per historian Titus Livy's account, after the conquest of the city of Veii, when a Roman soldier requested goddess Juno to change her abode from Veii to Rome, she answered in the affirmative. After which the statue of the goddess lost its immense weight and seemed to follow them to Rome of its own accord (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 614). H.P.B. mentions that it was not only in antiquity that idols and statues of gods acquired intelligence and locomotive powers; the same has been witnessed even in the nineteenth century. There have been newspaper accounts of the statue of the Madonna of Lourdes running away from the parish to the nearby woods and being

brought back. Usually such occurrences are followed by a series of "miracles"—healing, prophesying, letter-dropping from on high and what not.

However, much of such miraculous happenings connected with animated statues, claimed to have happened, should be accepted with caution. For, human imagination and cunning often carry away many innocent believers into superstitious awe.

THE Dalai Lama replied:

I think there are two kinds of desire. Certain desires are positive. A desire for happiness. It's absolutely right. The desire for peace. The desire for a more harmonious world, a friendlier world. Certain desires are very useful.

But at some point, desires can become unreasonable. That usually leads to trouble....Self-satisfaction alone cannot determine if a desire or action is positive or negative...All the nonvirtuous actions—lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, and so on—are committed by people who may be feeling a sense of satisfaction at the time....

I think excessive desire leads to greed—an exaggerated form of desire, based on over-expectation. And when you reflect upon the excesses of greed, you'll find that it leads an individual to a feeling of frustration, disappointment, a lot of confusion, and a lot of problems.

One thing that is quite characteristic of greed is that although it arrives by the desire to obtain something, it is not satisfied by obtaining. Therefore, it becomes sort of bottomless, and that leads to trouble.

Although the underlying motive is to seek satisfaction, the irony is that even after obtaining the object of your desire, you are still not satisfied.

The true antidote of greed is contentment.

—*The Art of Happiness*

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Happiness is an attitude of mind. “Do you realize that happiness is truly an inside job? It frees the heart from hatred and the mind from worry....Happiness is something you decide ahead of time, so deposit a lot of happiness in your Memory Bank and make constant withdrawals,” writes Eckhart Tolle (*Sunday Times of India*, November 21). If we carry unspoken resentment towards a person, we are contaminating ourselves as well as others around us. *We* are responsible for our inner state, which is contagious. He writes:

Your unhappiness is polluting not only your own inner being and those around you but also the collective human psyche of which you are an inseparable part. The pollution of the planet is only an outward reflection of an inner psychic pollution: millions of unconscious individuals not taking responsibility for their inner space....

Anything that is done with negative energy will become contaminated by it and in time give rise to more pain, more unhappiness. Further, any negative inner state is contagious: Unhappiness spreads more easily than a disease. Through the law of resonance, it triggers and feeds latent negativity in others, unless they are immune—that is, highly conscious.

Inner peace and contentment are the keys to happiness. It is useless to seek happiness by changing locations, as we carry with us our inner atmosphere. We invite unhappiness by our inflexibility and rigidity in thinking and behaviour. We must cultivate the capacity to revise our map of reality by incorporating new information.

We are connected on the inner plane and are affecting others around us by our thoughts, feelings and actions. Mr. Judge explains how our negative inner state contaminates the minds of others. Thus:

The thought [having become an active entity by its association with an elemental] is attracted wherever there is similar vibration, or let us say, a suitable soil, just as a winged

thistle-seed floats off and sows itself in this spot and not in that, in the soil of its natural selection. Thus the man of virtue, by admitting a material or sensual thought into his mind, even though he expel it, sends it forth to swell the evil impulses of the man of vice from whom he imagines himself separated by a wide gulf, and to whom he may have just given a fresh impulse to sin. Many men are like sponges, porous and bibulous, ready to suck up every element of the order preferred by their nature. We all have more or less of this quality: we attract what we love, and we may derive a greater strength from the vitality of thoughts infused from without than from those self-reproduced within us at a time when our nervous vitality is exhausted. It is a solemn thought, this, of our responsibility for the impulse of another. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

Mr. Crosbie suggests that our cheerfulness and depression are both contagious. What should be our inner attitude in the midst of adverse circumstances? He writes:

We must, then, assure ourselves that nothing can possibly overwhelm us. It is better to assume a cheerful attitude, to cultivate in one's self a feeling of confidence, and endeavour to impart it to our nearest. Our anxiety and inner fears, as well as our outward expression of them, may go a great way in depressing those who love us and whom we love. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 10)

As for changing the external environment for inner peace, Mr. Crosbie writes:

True strength lies *within* and can only be aroused and used by ceasing to think that anything in particular of an external nature is *necessary* for us, in the ordinary acceptance of the word. (*Ibid*, p. 125)

At a conference hosted by the Aspen Institute in August 2004, several distinguished scientists participated in the discussion about Albert Einstein's impact on science, society, and culture, E. L.

Doctorow, a great American novelist, described the nature of Einstein's creative genius. Writing in *Discover* (December 2004), Doctorow states: "Creative genius in both science and the arts is a heightened state of perception that transforms the very pulses of the air into revelations." Einstein's explanation of his genius, "In science...the work of the individual is so bound up with that of his scientific predecessors and contemporaries that it appears almost as an impersonal product of his generation," is more than an expression of modesty, says Doctorow. Einstein grew up in a culture where many scientists in Europe—Albert Michelson, Edward Morley, Hermann Helmholtz, etc.—had been indirectly hinting at the theory of relativity by questioning the concepts of absolute motion and absolute rest. These concepts were the building blocks and provided Einstein with the tools with which to think. The English poet and essayist Matthew Arnold says that the work of literary genius is the combination of the power of man and the power of the moment, *i.e.*, of a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere.

Creativity is the result of a flash that occurs at impersonal moments when the personality and the psyche is "released from itself in the transcendental freedom of revelation." Henry James describes the literary genius as the novelist's ability "to guess the unseen from the seen." Doctorow writes:

Whether the creative mind feels it is dutifully transcribing a silent dictation, or that its work appears almost as an impersonal product of a generation, or that it is serving as a medium for the voice of God, what is always involved is a release from personality, liberation, an unshackling from the self.

A genius is not made but is born. It is the fruition of the Ego's efforts in past lives and cannot be explained in terms of heredity. The intuitive flash of an artist or a scientist is the result of a temporary conjunction of *Manas* with *Buddhi* and the receptivity of the brain cells helps to receive and manifest the impressions from within without. H.P.B. explains the phenomenon of genius thus:

What we call "the manifestations of genius" in a person, are only the more or less successful efforts of the EGO to assert itself on the outward plane of its objective form—the man of clay—in the matter-of-fact, daily life of the latter. The EGOS of a Newton, an Aeschylus, or a Shakespeare, are of the same essence and substance as the EGOS of a yokel, an ignoramus, a fool, or even an idiot; and the self-assertion of their informing *genii* depends on the physiological and material construction of the physical man. No Ego differs from another Ego, in its primordial or original essence and nature. That which makes one mortal a great man and of another a vulgar, silly person, is, as said, the quality and make-up of the physical shell or casing, and the adequacy or inadequacy of brain and body to transmit and give expression to the light of the real, *Inner* man; and this aptness or inaptness is, in its turn, the result of Karma. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 13*, pp. 2-3)

Theosophy affirms Einstein's view that the scientific work of an individual is the "impersonal product of his generation." The process of creativity is described in *Through the Gates of Gold*:

If the mind of man is turned upon any given subject with a sufficient concentration, he obtains illumination with regard to it sooner or later. The particular individual, in whom the final illumination appears is called a genius, an inventor, one inspired; but he is only the crown of a great mental work created by unknown men about him, and receding back from him through long vistas of distance. Without them he would not have his material to deal with. Even the poet requires innumerable poetasters to feed upon. He is the essence of the poetic power of his time, and of the times before him. It is impossible to separate an individual of any species from his kin. (p. 12)

Some time back there was a debate in the United States: should the public schools teach the Darwinian theory of natural selection, or the antievolutionary theory known as Intelligent Design (ID), or both? The ID theory is the revival of an argument made by British

philosopher William Paley in 1802, that unlike the stone, a watch appears purposely assembled and would not function without its precise combination of parts. Hence, “the watch must have a maker.” Paley argued that along similar lines, the complexity of certain biological structures implies *design*. Darwin’s answer to Paley’s argument was that natural selection could create the *appearance* of design. Stephen Meyer and Jonathan Wells, defenders of ID theory from the Discovery Institute in Seattle, argue: “Biological life contains elements so complex—the mammalian blood-clotting mechanism, the bacterial flagellum—that they cannot be explained by natural selection.” ID theory proposes that we must be products of an intelligent designer, but that “designer” is not God, writes Evan Ratliff (*Wired*, October 2004). George Gilder of Discovery Institute argues that the cell is not a simple lump of protoplasm as Darwin believed, but it is a complex information-processing machine. A human body contains 60 trillion such cells. Even mutations occurring in cells, at a very fast rate, could not have brought about such complex structure as a human being. He observes:

Intelligent design theory begins by recognizing that everywhere in nature, information is hierarchical and precedes its embodiment. The concept precedes the concrete. The contrary notion that the world of mind, including science itself, bubbled up randomly from a prebiotic brew has inspired all the reductionist futilities of the 20th century, from Marx’s obtuse materialism to environmental weather panic to zero-sum Malthusian fears over population.

The evolutionary theory put forward by Theosophy admits of both intelligence and pattern. The whole Kosmos is guided, controlled and animated by an endless series of Hierarchies of sentient beings or conscious Divine Powers who are agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws and they are “intelligent Beings who adjust and control evolution.”

In the article, “Which is Vague, Theosophy or Science?,” Mr. Judge quotes Haeckel, who explains that Darwin replaced a

conscious creative force working in accordance with a designed plan, by a *series of natural forces working blindly—without aim and without design*. Mr. Judge describes this as a wild and fanciful theory. There is not a single proof in the present life, in any of the lower kingdoms, of blind forces beginning work without design and finally producing a beautiful design, visible in the smallest form we see.

H.P.B. explains that the Darwinian theory of natural selection is a pure myth when resorted to as an explanation of the origin of species. Natural selection is the phrase for describing the mode in which the survival of the fit and elimination of the unfit is brought about in the struggle for existence. All “useful variations” are perpetuated and progressively improved. However, natural selection cannot explain “what CAUSE—combined with other secondary causes—produces the “variations” in the organisms themselves.” (*S.D.*, II, 648). “The true solution of the mystery is to be found in the impersonal Divine Wisdom, in its IDEATION—reflected through matter.” (*S.D.*, II, 299 fn.)

Modern man has forgotten the art of enjoying the beauty of nature and of living in harmony with it. To stay in tune with ourselves, we must stay in tune with Nature and its rhythm, writes Shammi Paranjape (*The Times of India*, December 17). Further:

Appreciation of the beauty of God’s creation nourishes our inner spirit because Nature is a reflection of God and revering Nature is to revere the Creator: It was the belief that God is *sarva-vyapi* [omnipresent] and resides in every atom of creation that impelled our ancients to worship Nature and its five elements.

Ultimately, Nature is the best teacher. Sathya Sai Baba says:

Humanity is a limb of Nature and Nature is the limb of the divine... Imbibe wisdom from the sky, the clouds, the mountains, the rivers, the seasons, in fact from all beings and things.

Education is no book affair. The universe is the university for those who care to watch and learn.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. explains the real meaning of Nature and Pantheism. She explains that Nature is not just visible physical nature. She writes:

When we speak of Deity and make it identical, hence coeval, with Nature, the eternal and uncreate nature is meant. Our DEITY is neither in a paradise, nor in a particular tree, building, or mountain; it is everywhere, in every atom of the visible as of the invisible Cosmos, in, over and around every invisible atom and divisible molecule; for IT is the mysterious power of involution and evolution. (p. 64)

To those who work in harmony with Nature, she lays bare all her hidden treasures. Says *Light on the Path*:

Inquire of the earth, the air, and the water, of the secrets they hold for you. The development of your inner senses will enable you to do this. (p. 13)

WELL, let us say nothing is good and nothing is bad, but all is *opportunity*—the very best opportunity, because the soul knows what it needs for increasing its powers and keeping its energy. We sometimes do not recognize our opportunities, for they are occurring every moment of the time. Every single event is an opportunity—even the passing of people on the street and the thoughts and feelings they stir up in us; whatever we feel toward others, our relations with them, our touch with them, our family relations, our social, our business, and our national relations—all these are opportunities to be taken advantage of in every way; every one of them constitutes Karma. Our touch with Theosophy is a Karmic opportunity.

—ROBERT CROSBIE