

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON THE THREE GUNAS OR QUALITIES

OBJECTS, whether subtle or not, are made up of the three qualities—*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. In the ultimate state of “Isolation” or “Emancipation,” the qualities which are found in all objects, and which had so far affected and delayed the soul, are no longer mistaken by the soul for realities. The soul abides in its own nature unaffected by the great “pairs of opposites,” such as, heat and cold, good and evil, pleasure and pain.

In the book, *The Dream of Ravan*, the three qualities are described as the product of Eternal Unity, which reflects itself in time, and passing through the prism of Maya, divides into the multitudinous universe. The three qualities arise from *Prakriti* or nature. When spirit or reincarnating Ego is connected with the body or *prakriti*, it experiences the qualities which proceed from *prakriti*. The quality of *tamas* which springs from ignorance and confounds all mental faculties, imprisons the soul in the body, through sloth and idleness. The quality of *rajas* is of a passionate nature. In the *Gita* we are told that as the flame is surrounded by smoke and a mirror by rust, and as the womb envelopes the foetus, so is the universe surrounded by this passion. Its empire is over the senses and organs, the thinking principle and the discriminating faculty also.

These three illustrations cover three *gunas* (qualities) and three kinds of desires. There could be inert (*tamasic*) desires, such as sleep and idleness; active *rajasic* desires for power, name, fame,

wealth, love for gain, etc.; divine or noble (*sattvic*) desires, such as, achieving peace, happiness, knowledge and perfection. Fire is enveloped by smoke, but it is only partially veiled by it. Flame could be seen through the smoke, and a whiff of wind clears off the smoke and the flame becomes visible. So, even *sattvic* desire could veil the infinite glory of the Spirit. It is quite possible to be like Mejnour in *Zanoni*, who is pure intellect that has won its wisdom through detachment from the life of the senses. He is not touched by human passions, but his wisdom also is of no benefit to humanity, as he denies his relation with the world. He says, “I live but in knowledge, I have no life in humanity.” Bulwer Lytton describes him by saying, “He asks no charity and gives none—he does no evil and seems to confer no good.” Likewise, the Spirit or Truth could be obscured by our desire for glory and power. Here, there is more or less complete obscuration, as in the case of mirror covered by dust or rust. We are unable to see our reflection in the mirror covered by dust, and it needs to be wiped with a cloth. *Rajasic* desires are more difficult to overcome, as they are gross, egocentric, passionate and selfish—exhaustion of *rajasic* desires require consistent effort. Foetus enveloped by the womb shows complete obscuration of the divine by *tamasic* desires. It is only after nine months that the foetus develops into a full-grown baby, when it is ready to emerge out of the womb. So also, it is difficult to change *tamasic* nature and unfold the divinity within. All the lower desires—for wealth, comfort, name, fame, drinks and drugs, and all fleshly enjoyments—are composed of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. What we call fleshly appetites or desires of the body have their origin in thought. We might say that *rajas* quality “imprisons” the soul through consequences produced by desire-prompted actions. Likewise, *sattva* quality tends to “entwine” us through pleasant consequences.

The Dream of Ravana deals with the three *gunas* at length. It is a book based on the little-known philosophical episode in the *Ramayana*. Ravana had a dream, which when interpreted by the *rishis* implied that in the future Mandodari, Ravana’s wife, will no

longer be his wife, but another woman, called Zingarel will take her place. Mandodari, on hearing this, broke down with grief. To cheer her up, the *Rishis* told her of the three qualities. Mandodari was told that she was of *Tamasic* nature, and hence complemented the predominant *Tamas* quality in Ravana. But in future birth, when Ravana rose to the higher stage where *Rajas* will be predominant, then he would need as a companion someone who was of higher quality than *Tamas*, to spur him on. So long as the *Tamas* or Titanic nature was prevalent in Ravana, Mandodari was the necessary companion to take care of his physical needs and comforts. When he came home from the battle, she would sit and massage his tired limbs or sing a song and put him to sleep. Mandodari possessed what is termed as “dark plastic love,” of *Tamas*, devoid of passion or heroic sentiment, and unawakened to the light of knowledge. She possessed “simple, unreflecting, spontaneous kindness of nature,” which is necessary for one’s material existence, and therefore, will be needed by Ravana even when he advanced to a higher stage. Thus, it is evident that *Tamas* quality which pertains to brute matter and animal man is not annihilated, even when it is no longer *predominant*, but continues to exist, as fuel for higher emotions.

Hence, when Ravana passes on in his development to a more refined existence, it is only by placing a higher nature in relation with him that he can be fitted for the still higher sphere of ideal life nourished by spiritual love. That future companion of Ravana was Zingarel, who was supposed to have a purity and gentleness which would rebuke his Titanic coarseness. She was supposed to have an intuitive sense of right and truth, and many other noble qualities, so that with her help, Ravana could emerge purified, ennobled and refined, into a higher nature. In future, a strong bond will exist between Mandodari and Ravana, where she will minister to him as an attendant, and nurse him in his illness and in sorrow. The dream also foretells that Mandodari, will look after Ravana’s future wife Zingarel, too, with affection and almost maternal care. As she would serve them with love and affection, she would receive from them

kindness and help, and thus her further progress in the *Tamas* sphere of life would be helped by love.

“There is much practical advice for us here as to the attitude we should adopt towards those who serve us in a so-called low capacity. If we adopt this idea of mutual trust and respect, the result will be that those who minister to us as attendants now will grow towards the higher *gunas* in a natural way, and their devotion will be our recompense. Is it because we do not act in this way that there is so much unrest among the working classes, whose labour helps to give us comfort and to fill the coffers of their masters—for which service all they get is a meagre wage?” (*The Theosophical Movement*, March 1965)

Tamas, then, is necessary at all the stages of evolution. Matter and hence, physical body is not to be despised. In the same book we are told about two Rishis, Marichi and Ananta. Marichi performed severe austerities and maltreated his body, and looked like a skeleton. Rishi Ananta avoided all excesses and treated his body with care, looked clean, wholesome, serene and friendly, and it is Rishi Ananta who is called upon to interpret King’s dreams.

We all have Titanic nature like Ravana. The question is: How should the *Tamas*, which partakes largely of *Rajas* and in lesser measure of *Sattva*, be transformed into *Sattva*, or be controlled by it? How should the gross darkness and stolid stupidity of the tree or the animal be illuminated into self-consciousness, reflection, reason, knowledge? How should brute selfishness be changed into universal sympathy and love? We are told that this can only be accomplished through *Rajas*—the life of passion—the life of suffering, because every passion, including love, leads to suffering and sorrow. Growth from unconscious matter into conscious animal life involves physical pain, while emotional life of the soul leads to mental suffering. It is only when we encounter pain that we begin to question life, try to get knowledge, so as to alleviate or avoid pain and suffering. Gradually, we begin to acquire wisdom and compassion, as we go beyond the sphere of *rajas*, and awaken the *Sattva* quality.

In fact, Mandodari is told that *Tamas* is the necessary basis or *Adhishtan* without which *Sattva* and *Rajas* could have no place. The foundation of animal life and stable form are necessary for the other two qualities to have existence and expression. *Tamas* also partakes of good and contains within itself potentiality of both the *Rajas* and the *Sattva*, which must be evolved from it. Like the black flint of the desert, it is cold, dark and motionless but “within it is the movement, the fire, and the anguish of the *Rajas*, and the light and the joy of *Sattva*.” We are given an illustration: *Tamas* is the coal, without which there is no fire, no steam, no light. Further:

Through the anguish of the fire alone can the black coal of the mine become transmuted into light. And so the sorrow and anguish which result inevitably from the passions in the *Rajas*, or emotional life, constitute the purifying fire designed to purge away the dross of our Titanic nature, and transmute it into the pure *Sattva*, where purity goodness and truth are predominant.

Tamas is considered to be the great characteristic of brute matter, and besides representing inertia, insensibility, opacity, etc., it corresponds to dark purple or violet ray in optics, as also, to brutish, material and sluggish tendency, and to animal life and sensation. *Rajas* is the characteristic of moral life or soul; and corresponds to red ray, and to *emotion* rather than *sensation*. The *Sattva* is the characteristic of spirit; but it is spirit as opposed to matter and therefore, though it corresponds to bright, luminous and glorious, it is still bound in chains of individuality and limitation. It corresponds to orange ray in optics. Here the emotional has risen to reason.

The three qualities of *Prakriti* or Nature are the powers belonging to *prakriti* or matter. The Fourteenth Chapter of the *Gita* gives us the description of *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic* person, and speaks of food, charity, mental nature, mortification, sacrifice and death, also being of three kinds—*sattvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. Thus, for instance, when a person dies while *sattva* prevails, the soul proceeds to the region of the high beings. When the body dissolves while

rajas quality predominated, then soul is born amongst those who are attached to fruits of actions. Likewise, when a person dies while *tamas* prevailed, then the soul will be reborn into the wombs of irrational beings.

We have to make a note of the description of *sattvic* tendencies in various aspects of life, and first, try to become *sattvic* where we are not. We may eat *sattvic* food, but being immersed in *rajas* quality we fail to use food-*sattva* to develop *sattva* in steadfastness or in sacrifice. However, predominance of *sattva* also can be binding and obstructive to further progress. Moreover, *The Dream of Ravan* points out that if *Sattva* cuts itself off from *Rajas* and *Tamas*, and seeks to stand alone in proud isolation, then, its colour becomes “a deadly, venomous yellow, the colour of serpents, and dragons, and irredeemable *Brahma-Rakshasas*.” A person who cuts himself off from his fellows and from nature, may be said to be in such a state, which only culminates in stagnation.

When a person rises beyond the three qualities of nature, he combines in himself the three qualities or aspects of *Brahman*, viz., SAT, CHIT, ANANDA, where pure being, pure truth and pure goodness, are all merged into one. It is the sphere of pure *sattva*, which is beyond *sattva* quality, where there is neither matter, nor soul, nor spirit, but something which is all, and yet none of these. It is the trinity in unity, described as SAT, CHIT, ANANDA-GHANA, or “Solidarity of Being, Thought, and Joy.”

Saint Dnyaneshwar explains it by comparing the soul with the Sun, which causes many things, such as fading of the stars, disappearance of darkness, the opening of the Lotus, and yet sun is not touched or disturbed by any of these phenomena. So also, the soul inside the body is the fount of real power, and unconcerned with actions. All actions are effected by the qualities of nature. The qualities act only in the qualities, and the Self within is distinct from them, is not attached to action. When wisdom brings the realization of this, the man is said to be *Gunatita* or beyond *Gunas*.

STORIES FROM THE MAHABHARATA

ON ONE occasion Yudhishtira asked Bhishma with what kind of men friendships may be formed and with whom friendships may not be formed. Bhishma in response described various types of men, and among the persons who should be avoided, he said, the vilest are those who are ungrateful and who injure their friends. Yudhishtira then desired to hear in detail who they are that are called injurers of friends and ungrateful persons, and Bhishma recited to him the following story which, he said, was a very old one.

Once there was a poor Brahmana, Gautama by name, who lived in a region of the north where many non-Brahmanas lived. He himself did not know the kind of life that a Brahmana should live and was unacquainted with the scriptures.

Walking from village to village, asking for alms, one day he came to a place that looked very prosperous and he went to a large house to beg. This village was actually the habitat of robbers and hunters and the one whose house he went to was a rich robber. But he was in all other ways a good man, of a charitable disposition, and had respect for Brahmanas. He gave Gautama a large house to live in, provided him with the necessities of life, and gave him a young widowed low caste woman to look after him.

One day another Brahmana, who had been a friend of Gautama many years before when they were both young, came to the village for alms. He was devoted to the study of the sacred scriptures, was humble in disposition and frugal in fare, and had observed the *Brahmacharya* vows. When he entered the village he looked for a house in which a Brahmana lived, for he would not accept alms from anyone other than a Brahmana, and so he was directed to Gautama’s house.

It so happened that just at that time Gautama came back from the woods, carrying on his shoulder a load of dead cranes which he had shot, and the blood from their wounds had smeared his body. When the Brahmana saw this he was horrified and asked his friend

how he could do such a thing. How could he, a Brahmana, live this kind of a life? Reminding him of the duties of a Brahmana, he begged him to abandon this mode of living and to leave the village. Gautama felt ashamed of himself and told him that he was not a learned man and had taken up this life because he wanted wealth; but now that he had seen his old friend and had had it pointed out to him how evil his life was, he would give it up and would go away from the village the next day.

In the morning the Brahmana went on his way. Gautama left also, proceeding towards the coast. Going down this road he came to a level patch of golden sandy ground where a large banyan tree stood. Delighted with the spot, Gautama sat down under the tree to rest. When the evening twilight came, a bird returned to the tree under which he lay, for it was its home. The bird was a prince of cranes, possessed of great wisdom, very beautiful to look at and adorned with many brilliant ornaments. He had two names: one was Nadijangha, his heavenly name, and the other by which he was called on earth was Rajdharman. Gautama saw him come and was astonished to see such beauty. But he was also hungry and he desired to slay it so that he could eat its flesh.

Before he could do anything, however, Rajdharman welcomed him, saying that he could be his guest for the night. Gautama was very surprised to hear the bird speak, so Rajdharman explained that actually he was the son of Kasyapa, the great sage, by a celestial nymph. He offered hospitality to his guest by lighting a blazing fire, giving him food, preparing for him a bed of sala flowers and fanning him with his wings to drive off his tiredness. He then asked Gautama who he was and the cause of his arrival there.

Gautama told him that he was a poor Brahmana and that for earning wealth he was desirous of going to the sea. Rajdharman told him not to worry about that. There were, he said, many ways of obtaining wealth; by inheritance; by sudden accession due to luck or the favour of the gods; by labour; and through the aid or kindness of friends. And as now he had become his friend, he would

see that he obtained riches.

Morning came and when Gautama awoke refreshed, Rajdharman told him to go straight along the road and he was bound to succeed in his quest; for the way led to the city known by the name of Meruvraja where lived his friend Virupaksha, a mighty king of the *Rakshasas*, who induced by Rajdharman's request, would give the Brahmana as much wealth as he desired.

So Gautama went on his way happily, and in time reached Meruvraja. As he went he let it be known that he was a friend of Rajdharman and had come to see the king. Hearing this, messengers went quickly to Virupaksha, and the king sent for Gautama at once. He was taken to the king who asked to know who he was. Gautama only told him his name and race, but the king knew at once that he was not a student of the sacred scriptures nor a true Brahmana by nature, though one by birth. As, however, he had been sent to him by his dear friend Rajdharman, his duty lay in helping this man. On that very day the king was to entertain a thousand learned Brahmanas, and he told Gautama he too could attend the feast. After the feast, the Brahmans were told to take as much as they wanted from a large heap of ornaments of gold and silver and precious stones. Gautama, pleased and happy, took as much wealth as he could carry and went towards the same Banyan tree under which he had met the beautiful crane. Seeing that he was exhausted, Rajdharman fanned him with his wings and prepared fresh food for him.

As he rested, Gautama began to think of his journey back home. It would be a long one and the newly acquired wealth was heavy to carry. What would he do for food, he wondered. Then the evil thought came to him that the crane was a large bird and its flesh would feed him for many days. He looked for a while at the beautiful bird who was sleeping peacefully on the other side of the fire he had lit to warm his guest, and, wicked and ungrateful as he was, he got up and killed his sleeping host. Plucking off the feathers and the down, he roasted the flesh on the same fire that the bird had built for

his comfort. Then he took up the meat and his bundle of gold jewels and left the spot.

Now Rajdharman used to visit Virupaksha every day when he returned from his daily visit to the heavenly regions, so when he did not come the next day Virupaksha was worried. He was the more worried because he knew that Gautama was cruel, evil and without compassion. The king thought that it might enter into his head to kill the bird, and so he sent his son to find out what had happened. The son returned with the remains of the beautiful bird and the evil man. The king and the entire city were plunged in grief. The king ordered that Gautama should be killed and his body given to the *Rakshasas* to eat. But they refused to eat the flesh of one so vile. The body was then given to the robbers who were cannibals, but even they refused to eat the flesh of such an evil man. For every other sin there is expiation, but for an ungrateful person there is no forgiveness; nothing is so bad as ingratitude.

Virupaksha ordered a funeral pyre to be made, and what was left of the crane was placed on it and the pyre lighted. But it so happened that at that very moment, Surabhi, the sacred cow, appeared and poured down from her mouth froth mixed with milk upon the body of the crane, bringing it back to life.

At the request of resuscitated Rajdharman, Indra restored Gautama to life. Rajdharman embraced the Brahmana with joy, and sent him, together with his wealth, to his home. But a heavy curse was denounced upon him by the gods to the effect that that ungrateful sinner would sink into a terrible hell for many years. Bhishma then said to Yudhishtira that an ungrateful person can never have happiness nor should he ever be trusted. One who is ungrateful can never escape the terrible suffering he thereby invites upon himself. No one ought ever to injure a friend, for the bond of friendship is a sacred one. Everyone should be grateful and should seek to benefit the friends from whom he may have obtained favours. The wise should ever shun the ungrateful and the sinful.

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

THE PLEASANT—II

4. *From attachment arises grief; from attachment arises fear. There is no grief for one who is free from attachment. Whence, then, can there come fear? (212)*
5. *From affection arises grief; from affection arises fear. There is no grief for one who is free from affection. Whence, then, can there come fear? (213)*
6. *From indulgence arises grief; from indulgence arises fear. There is no grief for one who is free from indulgence. Whence, then, can there come fear? (214)*
7. *From desire arises grief; from desire arises fear. There is no grief for one who is free from desire. Whence, then, can there come fear? (215)*
8. *From craving arises grief; from craving arises fear. There is no grief for one who is free from craving. Whence, then, can there come fear? (216)*

IN THESE verses, we are given a list of tendencies which produce grief. Attachment (*piyato*) arises from our likes and dislikes. We are attached to that which we like. Affection (*pemato*) involves deeper emotions, particularly towards other beings—son, daughter, father, mother, a friend or any other individual. Attachment to sensual pleasures (*ratia*) leads to indulgence. Our personal desires (*kamato*), including the lofty feeling of love, contain the seeds to grief. Craving (*tanha*) is the thirst or longing. It is the thirst for life which brings us back into the world again and again. Attachment and affection are personal, what we need to cultivate is *metta-bhavana*—universal compassion and loving kindness.

While we are able to understand how our attachment, desires and craving can lead us to grief when they are not fulfilled, it is difficult for us to understand how affection or love can bring us grief. Love and affection are considered to be noble feelings, which make us rise above our self-centeredness to bring happiness to our

loved ones. When love is intense, one is ready to give one's life to ensure the well-being of the loved ones. And yet, this very love becomes the cause of intense grief when we lose our loved ones or when we go through the misery of helplessness when they suffer from terminal illness, old age, or when they fail to reciprocate our love and affection. It is because of personal attachment. Affection of a mother for her child is *personal* and it has an element of fear or grief in it. Once your object of attachment is withdrawn, you feel lost. True wisdom of a spiritual kind includes among other qualities, an exemption from self-identifying attachment for children, wife, and household, and a want of pleasure in congregations of men. *Sattvic* pleasure is disconnection from object of the senses. It is a detached concern. Affection is selfish. For the unselfish concern for others, we need altruism and impersonal love for all beings. If you think that your affection is impersonal, ask yourself whether you have same affection for the leper on the road or a cockroach!

In the article, "Occultism Versus Occult Arts," H.P.B. writes that even the love for a wife and family—the purest and the most unselfish of human affections—is a barrier to *real* occultism. She explains that in love of a mother for her child, or that of a husband for his wife, noble though it may be, there is still selfishness. "What mother would not sacrifice without a moment's hesitation hundreds and thousands of lives for that of the child of her heart?" While the heart is full of thoughts for a little group of *selves*, near and dear to us, what percentage of love and care will there remain to bestow on humanity?

9. *All people hold him dear who has both virtue and insight, who is established in the Law, who is truthful, and fulfills his own Karma. (217)*

Practice of virtue is recommended in every religion, because it purifies the instruments of body, mind and desire nature through which the Spirit can manifest itself. Virtue displaces vice and strengthens our character, provided we practice them with

understanding and not ritualistically. Pure in heart, see God, says the Bible. Purity comes from practice of virtues.

However, virtue alone is not sufficient. It will not make us wise. On the contrary, it can lead to pride and a sense of superiority. *Through the Gates of Gold* tells us that it is easy to become a gourmand in pure living and high thinking as in the pleasures of taste or sight or sound. The pure life and high thoughts are no more finalities in themselves than any other mode of enjoyment; and the man who endeavours to find contentment in them must intensify his effort and continually repeat it, all in vain. If he persists in his endeavour blindly, believing that he has reached his goal when he has not even perceived it, then he finds himself in that dreary place where good is done perforce, and the deed of virtue is without the love that should shine through it. By the practice of virtue he will fetter himself into one groove, one changeless fashion of life in matter.

But when virtue is accompanied by insight or spiritual discrimination, when man is established in the Law, is truthful and fulfils every duty, he is dear to all. Insight or spiritual discrimination comes from the spirit within through reflection, meditation and life's experiences. The true Adept *becomes*—he cannot be made. It is growth through evolution and involves certain amount of pain.

10. *He in whom the desire for the Ineffable has arisen, whose mind is permeated by that desire, whose thoughts are not distracted by lower desires, he is named "Bound up-stream." (218)*

An ordinary man oscillates between pleasure and pain, bound by thousand cords of desires. But the *Srottapati* who has entered the stream that leads to *Nirvana* has no other desire but to attain *Nirvana*. He reaches a stage called *Sakridagamin*, when he has only one more life to live. And in his last life he becomes *Anagamin* after which he would not be compelled to take birth. The note on the term "Bound up-stream" explains it thus:

The soul named “Bound up-stream” is the same soul who “Entered the stream.” He who was called *Sottapati* is now named *Uddhamsoto*. The failure of the *Sottapati* results from his identifying himself with the downward flowing current of life; he empties himself into the ocean of Liberation. But the discerning *Sottapati* knows that the stream flows down; so moving, he endeavours to seek the Source of *Nirvanic* heights by great and right exertion, by buffeting against the forces of the stream he reaches the grade where he is named “Bound up stream.” Two paths—Liberation and Renunciation—are implied.

However, for most men, desire for the ineffable is a mere abstraction as compared to the desires of the world. Desire for the ineffable is the desire for the eternal. When the Holy Ones speak of the ultimate bliss of *Nirvana*, it appears so abstract that we are unable to formulate intense desire for it. In the article, “Desire Made Pure,” H.P.B. gives us the steps by which this Herculean task can be approached. Forgetfulness of the personal self holds the key. Hence, one should begin by killing out the desire for worldly things—luxuries, amenities, amusements, etc. Next, one must cease from desiring for oneself such abstractions as power, knowledge, love, happiness or fame. You are aided in this process by the tough taskmaster which gives you all that you desired. But you discover that it all turns into dust and ashes in the mouth—taking you a step closer to the realization that satisfaction is attainable only in the infinite.

The practice of *Panchashila* (five Buddhist precepts), Noble Eightfold Path, *Yama-Niyamas* (rules laying down the preliminary discipline) of Patanjali, are all steps that lead you toward that goal. However, to each temperament, one road is easier than the rest. Hence each one must choose a path to start his journey. Thus, we have path of knowledge, path of devotion and path of action. Instead of quarrelling over which is the best, instead of remaining non-committal forever, instead of remaining forever in doubt and uncertainty, one must give oneself wholly to the doctrine to which

one’s heart responds.

11-12. *When a man, who has been long away, returns safe from afar and receives a welcome from kinsmen, friends and well-wishers; even so his own good deeds welcome him who leaves the worldly state and attains a higher plane; indeed his good deeds are his kinsmen. (219-220)*

These verses assure the aspirant that “nothing can vanish from this world of causes.” Your good deeds are like your kinsmen who await your arrival back home after a long journey to some far off place. They rejoice to see you safe and heartily welcome you. It refers not only to our state after death but also to re-birth and our ultimate journey to our home. The virtuous and good men enjoy long stay in *Devachan* or *Swarga*. Here, he spends enormous time in the company of the loved ones, doing all that he liked or wanted to do, in the perfect world of his own making. A mother finds herself surrounded by her little ones on whom she pours all her love, and lives in a state of perfect bliss. Her deeds are the *skandhas* that go to form the tabernacle, the next dwelling place of the immortal spirit. These, if good, would create conducive environment for the new journey. Our reincarnating Ego is called an exile who is forced to live in a land foreign to it. It is the pilgrim soul which is on a pilgrimage and will return home one day. Theosophy considers humanity as an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto. Buddha encouraged his disciples to continue striving. So did Shri Krishna, when Arjuna was overcome with doubt as to the fate of one who dies before reaching his goal. Krishna says that such a person after enjoying the bliss of *devachan* (*swarga*), for a long time, is born again on earth in a pure and fortunate family; or even in a family of those who are spiritually illuminated, and is thus brought in contact with the knowledge which belonged to him in previous lives. From that time he struggles more diligently towards perfection.

(Concluded)

SLEEP, DREAMS AND DREAMLESS SLEEP

I

WAKING, dreaming and dreamless sleep are described as three planes of human life, or three states of consciousness. Every theosophist who is in earnest ought to know the importance of these three states, writes Mr. Judge. All these different states are necessary for growth. In the waking or *Jagrat* state various organs of the body, senses and faculties get necessary exercise and development. Dream state or *Swapna* state is necessary for the physical faculties to get rest, where astral faculties become active and develop. Dream state includes states such as somnambulism, trance, visions, etc. In the dreamless sleep or *Sushupti* state, both physical and astral senses and faculties enjoy rest. In this state lower mind is more or less paralyzed, and Higher Ego is active, so that it can develop itself by appropriate exercise. For a Yogi, Adept, Mahatma or a perfected being it is possible to live in a still higher state of consciousness, called *Turya* state.

In the book, *The Dream of Ravan*, we are told that man is in SPIRIT-CONDITION in Turya State, a state of high spiritual consciousness, and is a state beyond Dreamless Sleep State. It is the state where *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* are reflected in Lower Manas, or Lower Manas is withdrawn into the upper Triad. In this state the individualized spirit lives the ecstatic life, where it possesses true knowledge and the universal, eternal, ever-present intuition.

Its opposite, which includes waking, dreaming and dreamless sleep, is called *Jiva-dasha* or LIFE-CONDITION. It is ignorance of real nature of things which precipitates man from the SPIRIT-CONDITION into the LIFE-CONDITION. *Jiva-dasha* and *Atma-dasha* are depicted as four states of consciousness or four spheres of existence, which could be visualized as four concentric spheres. The innermost sphere depicts Turya state and the Ego arising from this state enters the sphere of transition, which is the boundary of oblivion or dreamless sleep state, where it exists in Causal body. When Ego crosses this

boundary it enters dream-state, and exists in subtle inner body and comes under the influence of illusion. It believes in the universe of light and shadow, and is identified with astral body and the lower mind. In the outermost sphere, the Ego enters waking state and begins to identify itself with the body with its five senses or organs of perception, and five organs of action. Thus, as the individual spirit or Ego moves from Turya to waking state, the True Being is more and more forgotten and obscured through false identification.

Ordinary people experience only three states of consciousness. We may further divide the first two states into waking, waking-dreaming, natural sleep, leading to dream state. “Waking-dreaming” is a state when the senses are sinking into abeyance, when one is not yet asleep, and only a little awake, when the images of the waking state are thrown briefly on the screen of consciousness. We may call this a “critical state”—the state which exhibits properties of both the states, and not exclusively any one of them. As against this, “Natural sleeping” is the dividing line, the *laya* point, between the physical and astral planes. It is a door of *normal* entry to astral plane, just as “induced trance” is a door of *abnormal* entry to astral plane.

Almost one-third of our life is spent in sleeping. Yet, it is surprising that we succumb to this state each day with little or no curiosity. Why do we fall asleep every night? A man can survive without food for three weeks, but he cannot remain sleepless for that duration. Experiments have shown that when people were deprived of sleep, their power of concentration became less, and also memory was adversely affected. Sometimes it is sleep that is needed to put right a bodily or mental ailment. To a troubled student, Mr. Judge once advised: “Now sleep, I say; I command you to sleep. I have tried to help you to sleep...for sleep will do you good as nothing else can. It is sleep your tired nature on the outside wants, for sleep knits up the revealed thread of life and makes us young again.”

The real function of sleep still eludes science, but the reasons for sleep are becoming less enigmatic, wrote Jerome M. Siegel, professor of Psychiatry, and a member of the Brain Research Institute at the

University of California at Los Angeles Medical Centre. It has been found that lack of sleep gives rise to rare brain disease called *fatal familial insomnia*, gradually leading to death. Studies have shown that smaller animals like voles, rats and cats, with higher metabolic rates need more sleep than bigger animals. High metabolic rates generate “free radicals,” which are extremely reactive chemicals that damage or even kill brain cells. It is believed that reduced metabolic rate during dreamless sleep or “Non-REM sleep,” may give these damaged brain cells a chance to repair themselves (*Scientific American*, November 2003). During sleep there is a high level of responsiveness to the environment. The often cited example is that of a parent arousing at a baby’s whimper but sleeping through a thunderstorm. That shows the ability of the sleeping human brain to continuously process sensory signals and trigger complete awakening to significant stimuli within a few hundred milliseconds.

Another simple explanation offered for the need to sleep is that when the body becomes tired and *depleted* of vitality we fall asleep. But Theosophy gives just the opposite explanation. It says that we are more full of life energy when we fall asleep, than in the morning. As, this life energy exists around us like an ocean, and when we are awake the life waves rush into the body with greater intensity every hour. Our power to resist is limited, and so we fall asleep. Children are unable to resist the current and hence they fall asleep quickly. In sleep, equilibrium is reached, because during sleep we *absorb* life energy instead of resisting. While sleeping, the life waves adjust themselves to the molecules of the body; and when the equilibrium is reached we again wake up. Thus, during sleep, life energy is absorbed or assimilated by the healthy organs of our body and equilibrium is reached. The physical organs are rested and recharged. “If this periodical adjustment did not occur, the life current would destroy us. Any derangement of the body that tends to inhibit this adjustment is a cause of sleeplessness, and perhaps death,” writes Mr. Judge. Explaining the necessity for sleep, H.P.B. writes :

It is said by Occultism to be the periodical and regulated

exhaustion of the nervous centres, and especially of the sensory ganglia of the brain, which refuse to act any longer on this plane, and, if they would not become unfit for work, are compelled to recuperate their strength on another plane or *Upadhi*....As a man exhausted by one state of life fluid seeks another; as, for example, when exhausted by the hot air he refreshes himself with cool water; so sleep is the shady nook in the sunlit valley of life.

H.P.B. writes that during dream state, our Ego uses astral senses and must use other set of senses when it enters into deep sleep state. Thus, during sleep our physical senses get a chance to recuperate so that they are fit to act in waking state. In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 537-38) we are explained how the recuperation of the nervous centres takes place during sleep, on another plane. H.P.B. writes that the “Nervous Ether” of Dr. Richardson is the *animal vitality* diffused throughout nature. Animal tissues are said to absorb it according to their more or less morbid or healthy state and are regulated, strengthened and fed by it. It descends in a larger supply in the *Sushumna* ray of the sun which lights up and feeds the moon, and it is through her beams that it penetrates man and animals, more during their sleep and rest than when they are awake. It accumulates in nervous centres during sleep, and brings them, to their due tone. When the demand exceeds the supply, there is nervous exhaustion.

A different quality of *prana*, coming from the *Sushumna* ray of the Sun, reaching the sleeping man through Moon, seems to help in recuperating the strength of brain centres and sensory ganglia. Thus, as the man exposed to blazing sun feels refreshed in the shade, where the quality of sunlight is different, so also the man who falls asleep is refreshed by the life which reaches equilibrium during his sleep. This can be seen in the aura of the person. The one who is exhausted and is about to fall asleep, his aura is of intense golden-orange hue, composed of atoms whirling with an almost incredible spasmodic rapidity. As against this, the one who wakes up refreshed after sleep, appears to be bathed in rhythmical vibrations of life currents—golden,

blue and rosy.

Actual number of hours a person may sleep, varies from person to person. But sleep we must. A certain spiritual aspirant was told not to worry about the fact that he needed more hours of sleep, because sleep nourishes the body and gives the consciousness an opportunity to be free from attending to the senses and the organs. It appears that the quality of *prana* must be different from plane to plane. Also, each human being is born with a certain quality of *prana* or vitality, weak or strong, pure or impure, and having a certain rate of vibration. We require sleep because we are unable to draw to ourselves superior quality of *Prana* when we are awake. We may compare sleep to death. We are told that after the death of the body, soul goes to *devachan* or *swarga*, where it is rested. If the average man were to take birth in another body, immediately without going to the state of *devachan*, his soul would be completely tired out and deprived of the needed opportunity for the development of the higher part of his nature. However, for a spiritually advanced person, there comes a stage, when he could skip *devachanic* state altogether, or could do with shorter stay in *devachan*. Shri B. P. Wadia writes that a disciple may be helped out of *devachan* if he deserves to. There is no cause for worry for being fagged out without devachanic rest. He writes that if you proceed in the right way, a superior quality of *prana* will flow into you. Our motive, ideation, imagination change the quality of *prana*. Adepts have no need for *devachan*. Similarly, a spiritually advanced person does not require long hours of sleep. The Adept does not dream but simply puts his body to sleep. In the deep sleep state, we are in contact with our own higher nature and hence feel refreshed when we wake up.

(To be continued)

OVERCOMING THE SECTARIAN ATTITUDE

RELIGIOUS intolerance, fanaticism, and even wars are always rooted in religious belief, feeling and partisanship. It is easily proven that the more fervent the belief, the greater the passion, and the more militant the fanaticism. Real tolerance can never be born of belief. Knowledge alone gives it birth—but not knowledge of one's own religion only, gathered with a view to proving its noble superiority; for that is not real knowledge and is apt to strengthen blind belief and give intolerance a subtle shape. Even the comparative study of religions can be undertaken with a view to glorifying one's own creed and attempting to pull down other faiths. That kind of comparative study is not of any real benefit.

What, then, can be done to broaden the sectarian mind? To begin with, it will do no harm to a misguided man who claims any kind of superiority for his own creed to approach him in a way which might be called militant but which in reality expresses a challenging attitude. That way is a calm examination of his claims for superiority. What shall we say to one who asserts, "Mine is the superior religion"? Shall we tell him, "No, mine is better still"? To those who make claims for their own religion, it can be shown that there is not a single doctrine, not a single ethical teaching, which is unique to any religion. Wise sayings, ethical principles and metaphysical ideas are to be found in all faiths. The difference which a protracted examination will bring out is twofold. First, there is the difference in emphasis—in one religion the immanent aspect of Deity is stressed while in another the transcendent aspect; one gives greater prominence to service of Souls through Wisdom, another through Love. The second difference is that in some religions more of the doctrines and teachings have survived or accumulated—a fact which is both an advantage and a disadvantage—while in others only fragments are in our hands.

A comparative study of religions should lead to a very important discovery, which we shall call the Movement of Ideas. Ideas move

in two directions. In time, throughout the ages, ideas have moved, making human history. The makers of history are men who possess ideas. Those who leave their indelible impress on human history are Men of Spiritual Ideas. When we study the Movement of Ideas, going backwards from the twentieth century to the first of the Christian era, and backwards still, we find that never was there a time when culture and civilization did not flourish in some quarter of the globe. The dawn of human civilization recedes into the past, but where history loses her thread we pick it up in mythology, and backwards still we go, thousands, nay, millions of years. This is one Movement of Ideas. The second is an up and down movement: we come upon periods when civilization and culture have attained a marvellous height; at other times dark and barren periods are encountered. We are able to divide the interminable periods of human existence on this planet into cycles, during each of which mankind gradually reached the culminating point of highest civilization and then relapsed into abject barbarism. During the zenith hours of culture, Religion has not only inspired but also energized men and women to live according to its teachings: during the nadir hours, outer rites and blind beliefs have taken the place of that inspiration and energization. Herein we come upon the missing links between the missions of Great Instructors and Sages, as also upon the emergence of one sectarian religion after another.

A careful study of this dual Movement of Ideas thus brings us to the legitimate conclusion that the Source of Divine Knowledge is one; it is necessary to go to that Source if the distinctions of religions are to be understood and appreciated, and if the quarrels of religions are to be eradicated.

Going to the Source of Divine Wisdom we find that it is necessary to formulate the object and the mission of Religion for any and every man. The following basic ideas may be put forward, and they are necessary for a correct comprehension of our own destiny and duty which it is the mission of True Religion to supply. If sectarianism is to dissolve, if Religion is to become a living power from day to

day, then we must redefine its position and its function. Instead of asking which of the existing creeds is superior, or which method of approaching God and of realizing Peace is better, we have to learn to work along a different line. What is it that prevents us from understanding True Religion? It is our minds, which we have filled with narrow ideas of life, with small ideas of the nature of humanity and of ourselves. A discarding of falsity in religious matters is necessary, and the constructive method to be adopted is given in these three statements. A man or woman looking for True Religion, will find in them the right starting point:

- (1) True Religion must give us a basis for thinking and consequently for acting.
- (2) True Religion is a knowledge of one's own self and action in accordance with that knowledge.
- (3) If we were less than divinity, then we never could by any possibility understand Divinity.

People are brought up to look upon religion as a matter of rites and ceremonies, of going to the temple and co-operating with the priests. Again, people are not encouraged to investigate and ascertain what Soul is and what Spirit, but are called upon to believe that the fate of the Soul depends upon their fidelity to the creed into which their body is born.

Lastly, people are advised to pray to and to propitiate God and Gods, Powers and Principalities, Devas and Devatas, without any rational explanation about these forces of Nature. Above all they are not told that Krishna and Christ, Allah and Adi Buddha, are in their own minds, and that real prayer is nothing else but the communion between each man and his own inner Divinity. Man is not a child of sin, or a weak worm, but a ray of God, of the One God, that has many names.

The highest function of True Religion is to enable its votary to develop the right mode of communion between himself on earth and his own Higher Self in Heaven.

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: It appears that we, of present civilization, in general, are turning increasingly materialistic physically, as also, brilliant intellectually. This is called “progress” of civilization, because immense progress is made and the world has “shrunk” due to easy communication. Also, since “evil” as moral weakness has always existed, we have no yardstick to measure our collective moral progress. In view of the above, should we keep bewailing the “apparent” increase in materialism, and doubt the hope with which the present Theosophical Movement was initiated once again by the *Mahatmas* through H.P.B.? Instead of complaining, should we not appreciate the present scientific achievements, which have benefitted mankind? We must acknowledge that science has ushered in the “age of inquiry and reason.”

Answer: To progress one must combine knowledge with goodness. It involves consciously assisting nature, and for that we must understand her laws and obey them. Purity, honesty, and unselfishness bring *opportunity* for progress, while knowledge enables us to *use* that opportunity. Moreover, the yardstick or measuring rod for progress must measure humanity’s collective progress. True progress must be spiritual progress. If we are potentially divine, how have we been using the body and mind for the unfoldment of latent powers? From the Theosophical point of view whenever greater impetus and facilities are provided for developing and satisfying animal propensities, it is the reverse of progress. We find just that today. Newspapers, television, Internet, etc., besides providing information, are the means of arousing our

desires, which then leads to consumerism, and in those who have no means for satisfying these desires, either it leads to ambition and competition or to crime. Today, there is mindless affluence on one hand and abject poverty on the other hand. There is no denying that there has been an increase in the crime rate, as also in the suicide rate. There has been distinct deterioration in work-ethics. In every country greater efforts are required to be made to combat corruption.

When the Theosophical Movement was launched in 1875, a Master of Wisdom wrote that the white dove of “truth” was unwelcome, because of scientific materialism and religious dogmatism. All the achievements and inquiries of science notwithstanding, has science become open-minded? In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 387) H.P.B. gives examples of infants born with missing limbs—cases of imagination of mother affecting the children in womb. In one case, a woman witnessed the beheading and went into premature labour, giving birth to a headless child. Physiologists have recorded such incidences. While some have described them as “curious-coincidences,” only a few have been honest enough to admit their ignorance. Madame Blavatsky remarks, “How perfect an illustration is this of the methods of scientific men!—the moment they pass beyond their circle of *observed facts*, their judgment seems to become entirely perverted.” The situation has not changed much in our days.

If scientific enquiry has helped to stem dogmatism and superstition, it has given rise to unhealthy skepticism, as against true spirit of inquiry. The knowledge of modern scientists is limited, not only due to imperfections of instruments used, but because of their unwillingness to probe beyond the material. Neither Science nor religion admits the existence of the occult or super-material region, governed by laws. Religion attributes it to the will of the God, and science—not being able to weigh, classify, analyze the knowledge of the ancients—rejects it as a fraud and superstition.

Scientific enquiry has not opened man’s mind and heart to oneness of humanity. They have not contributed in making people

more charitable, kind, honest or truthful. This, they say, is not the domain of science! Science has been dealing with effects, while the real causes of human suffering remain untouched. Medical books are becoming bulkier, with additions of physical and psychological diseases.

“Civilization has developed the physical and the intellectual at the cost of psychic and spiritual,” writes H.P.B. Our age is called “dark age,” precisely because material advance has obscured the spiritual. Mere material progress in itself is not a sign of real advancement, but may have in it the elements of its own stoppage and destruction.

Messaging technologies like SMS, e-mail and e-cards, and best means of transport, etc. have shrunk the world, but then how is it that more people are suffering from loneliness today than ever before? With too much use of technology we have virtually forgotten how to handle our emotions. True progress, it is being increasingly recognized, is impossible without the development of the nobler qualities, without the moral elevation and the deepening of spiritual perception. Signs of deterioration are becoming more and more evident, and modern education is responsible for it to no small extent. It is not enough to have the best instruments in our hands, what we need is the discrimination to use them for the right purpose and in right manner.

Internet is both a bane and a boon. All the information is only a click of a button away. Our mind looks for quick ways of collecting information, by surfing the net. With computers and Internet we have acquired superficial and “inattentive” methods of thought, and seem to have lost the capacity to think deeply, calmly and seriously. When an acme of civilization is reached, as was in Egypt, Greece and Rome, with perfect development of intellectual, mental and material part of man’s nature, it is but an indication that the climax of sensuous perfection is reached. The purpose of civilization is to produce spiritual fruit (progress and perfection), an all-round developed humanity. History shows that unfortunately after the

civilization has flowered, in terms of technological and material advancement, the flower of civilization falls and dies, without producing spiritual fruit. It is because of indolence and incredulity of humanity, which refuses to believe that peace and happiness can lie in the direction other than material advancement, says *Through the Gates of Gold*.

Question: Is Vampirism a reality? What is the rational explanation for vampirism?

Answer: The Hindus, Greeks, the Servians and the Slavonian nations have always believed in vampires and vampirism. The slavonians know the vampires as *vourdalak*. There has been unanimous credence and similarity in details and descriptions from the people who live far apart from each other. The facts of vampirism are constantly being reported and have been testified by many eye-witnesses. Yet, scientists and the skeptics deny the phenomenon of vampirism point blank, while few others believe that such cases are produced by the Devil, who clothes himself with graveyard corpses, and roams in the night, sucking people’s blood.

Every belief, every custom springs from facts and causes which gave it birth. At the time of death, the astral body is withdrawn from the physical body, through the brain. The astral body along with desires and lower mind forms kama-rupic shell, generally known as ghost. Astral form has natural attraction for the physical body. At death, the astral form exudes from the physical, and is held near its old garment, *i.e.*, the physical body, by a double attraction, physical and spiritual, until the physical body has decomposed. (*Isis*, I, 476)

There have been a number of reports of death-bed visions, where people have seen the severing of the magnetic cord, which joins astral body to the physical. A doctor reported having seen the hazy fog-like human body a few feet above the physical body of his dying aunt. This he called spirit body. He also reported having seen a silverlike substance streaming from the head of the physical body and connecting to the head of the astral form. This was the magnetic

cord, which seemed alive and vibrant with energy. With each pulsation of the cord, the astral body became more alive and dense, whereas the physical body became more lifeless till at last the connecting strand of the cord snapped off, and the astral body was free.

However, so long as the astral form is not entirely liberated from the physical body, there is a possibility that it may be forced by magnetic attraction to re-enter it. Sometimes it will be only half-way out, when the corpse, which presents the appearance of death, is buried. In such cases the terrified astral soul re-enters the body, and then either the unhappy victim suffers the agony of suffocation, or if the person was grossly material during life then he becomes a vampire. In the latter case, the body that is buried lies in a cataleptic state, while the astral body robs the life-blood from living men or animals. The astral body is free to wander about, so long as it does not break the link which attaches itself to the physical body. The life-blood sucked from the victims is transferred to the physical form in the tomb, by the astral soul through the mysterious and invisible cord of connection, which perhaps, some day may be explained, writes H.P.B. She points out that the main difficulty in understanding is how these vampires can quit the tombs, and how they re-enter the same without appearing to disturb the earth in the least. She observes that we must understand that there is something like *half-death*, in which body is virtually dead. If such a person was averagely good, then the astral soul will disengage itself by gradual efforts, and when the last link is broken, it is separated forever from the physical body. It is only in the case of a grossly wicked person, in whom matter predominates spirit, that phenomenon of vampirism takes place. Both the Greek and Latin religions think it beneficent to have such bodies dug out and transfixed to the earth by a pole of aspen-tree wood. To put an end to it, however, the body needs to be exhumed and burned. (*Isis*, I, 449-52)

H.P.B. explains that there is another form of vampirism, wherein some individuals rob others of vitality. When we hold any object in

our hand we transfer our magnetism to that object. In a healthy and young person these magnetic emanations are strong while the same are weak in case of diseased or old person. When two such people come in close proximity of each other, there is transfer of magnetic fluid or vitality from the stronger to the weaker person, which may leave the stronger person exhausted. H.P.B. points out that breeders never herd together young animals with old; intelligent physicians forbid parents to have young children occupy their own beds. When David was old and feeble his vital forces were replenished by bringing a young person in close contact with him so that he could absorb her strength. As an extreme example, there is the case of Seeress of Prevest, Madame Hauffe, who repeatedly stated that she supported life merely on the atmosphere of the people surrounding her and their *magnetic emanations*. H.P.B. points out that the seeress was a *magnetic vampire*, who absorbed vitality of stronger people in the form of *volatilized* blood. (*Isis*, I, 463)

Of the ten precepts of Buddhism “taking what is not given,” is the second precept. It means not taking or appropriating that which another is not willing give. Interestingly, it includes not just things, property and wealth of another, but even taking the time or energy of another person against his or her wish. One forces oneself upon another person to such an extent, and compels him to listen to one’s complaints, or tirades or appeals for so long that one eventually reduces the other person to a state of physical prostration, emotional exhaustion, and even nervous collapse. At the end of such draining session, the person is often heard to remark, “I really enjoyed our little chat.” Human vampires of this sort are sometimes quite oblivious to the damage they have done, writes Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher. Then, there are emotional vampires who tend to drain us emotionally, as they are constantly seeking for approval, love and attention. Mostly, they are found among our friends, neighbours and loved ones. But we must learn to be prudent and conserve our psychic energy, while not being rude or unkind to them.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

A Siberian court refused to ban, in December 2011, a translated version of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which prosecutors had argued was “extremist” and promoted “social discord.” The verdict brought an end to six-month long legal battle, which had started when public prosecutor of Tomsk, Russia, had filed a case in the local court seeking a ban on the “*Bhagvad-Gita As It Is*,” with commentaries by Swami Prabhupada, the founder of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness). The prosecutors in the Siberian city of Tomsk had argued that the Russian translation of the *Gita* promotes social discord and hatred towards non-believers. ISKCON members have alleged that the Russian Orthodox Church was behind the court case as it wanted to limit their activities. The argument that the *Gita* promotes hatred towards “non-believers” is patently absurd. The *Gita* is one of the world’s great philosophical treatises and to ban it would have been an affront to world civilization. (*The Times of India*, courtesy TNN & Agencies, December 29, 2011)

The Russian call for a ban, subsequently dismissed by the court, on the distribution of the *Gita*, has missed the wood for the trees. The *Gita* is extremist, but not in the literal, physical sense. It would be more suitable to call it an extremist, metaphysical document, for you are not meant to read it as an algorithm that advocates physical, military action. “Hence, when you are told to kill all your teachers, caste brothers and friends, or to get rid of all those in command and control of your consciousness...the reference is to the established disorder that is inside of you, not outside,” writes Narayani Ganesh. In fact, we might compare Krishna’s advice to Arjuna with similar utterings of Jesus, who said: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” The “sword” is the sword of spirit, the word of God, with which you can slice through divisions. It is the sword which separates people of Christ from the men of the world. Likewise, when the Buddha reportedly said: “Cut off his head if Buddha crosses your path,” he did not

mean physical decapitation. But the implication is to remove all distractions that may obstruct your spiritual growth—be they your desires or even your guru. The allegory of the *Gita* suggests that in order to make room for “spiritual royalty” as personified by Krishna Consciousness, you have to oust all “political royalty,” represented by kings and queens and presidents. As a result, there remains in you the Self and your awareness of it, an epitome of love, which effectively puts an end to all war, all acts of terrorism, all hate and conflict, writes Narayani Ganesh. (*The Times of India*, December 29, 2011)

It is stated that the first Russian translation of the *Gita* was published in Russia way back in 1788, and so far, there is no record to show that the *Gita* created any discord or problem in the Russian Society during this long period. *The Bhagavad-Gita* is one of the noblest scriptures of India and one of the deepest scriptures of the world. “Inquirers ought to read the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It will give them food for centuries if they read with spiritual eye at all. Underneath its shell is the living spirit that will light us all. I read it ten times before I saw things that I did not see at first. In the night the ideas contained in it are digested and returned partly the next day to the mind. It is the study of Adepts,” writes Mr. Judge, revealing the value and the method of studying the *Gita*. Elsewhere, he asks us to read the *Gita*, and for that matter any scripture, by the *light of the spiritual lamp, i.e.*, we must use our intuitive faculty to understand the hidden meaning. The more we live the life in line with the guidance of our divine nature within, the greater is our understanding of such scriptures. The Spirit must be attended to and not the letter in reading of the scriptures, because some of them also contain deliberate blinds or glosses.

The Bhagavad-Gita is a portion of the *Mahabharata*, the great epic of India. Many are ignorant of the psychological system of the Hindus, which underlies every word of this poem, and hence argue that the *Gita* advocates war. The outer wars are but elongated

shadows of the war within. An actual war between two clans seems to have taken place, but as a last resort. It was only when the Kauravas, who had usurped the kingdom belonging to the Pandavas, refused to give back even as much land as might rest on the pin's head, in spite of several persuasions, that Krishna advised the Pandavas to wage the righteous war.

Allegorically, the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, is the conflict between man's lower and higher natures, which arises, as soon as one determines to walk the spiritual path in earnest. The Arjuna-like aspirant experiences opposition from two sets of forces. He experiences opposition from all his friends and relatives, who do not view life as he does, and who are wedded to the "established order." The other set of forces are his lower tendencies and faculties, which were so far, involved in material life. We are told that every true aspirant will have to fight this inner battle, and triumph.

Should we consider reading fiction or storybooks a sheer waste of time? Some people believe it to be all made up stuff, all lies, and say that those who read it are escapists from reality. Perhaps "storybook" readers are escapists in the sense in which Harry Houdini was, writes Jug Suraiya. Houdini would be locked into a steel trunk which would be submerged in deep waters. He would free himself miraculously and appear unharmed before his spectators. "What Houdini did on the physical plane, readers of fiction—often without realizing—do on the level of consciousness: escape from the chain-bound 'reality' of their own lives, their own ego." Creative fiction allows us to escape from our own consciousness into the consciousness of others.

When we read Mark Twain we become, for a while, Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer. This sort of "escapism" and exchange of consciousness is healthy because it is also an exercise in empathy, the ability to see things from another's point of view. We also get a

chance to appreciate that behind the veil of differentiation, all consciousness is interconnected. The "fact" behind the "fiction" is that creative fiction, like meditation, expands your consciousness, and at times allows you to explore forms of consciousness other than human. Nobel-prize winning novelist J. M. Coetzee has suggested that we must push out the boundaries of literature to explore other forms of consciousness. Animal stories should not have animals portrayed as disguised humans with human quirks and foibles. He said that the writer must assimilate the consciousness of the creature in question, so that if he is writing about a bat, he must think like a bat and communicate in "bat" language. Absurd and impossible as it may sound, "at its sublimest best, the 'storybook' can be a truly cosmic narrative, accommodating and transcending all of creation," just like the *Bhagavad-Gita*, writes Jug Suraiya. (*The Speaking Tree* [*Sunday Times of India*], January 22, 2012)

In the article, "The Tidal Wave," writing in the Nineteenth century, H.P.B. wrote, "What the European world now needs is a dozen writers such as Dostoevsky, the Russian author...he spoke boldly and fearlessly [through his novels] the most unwelcome truths to the higher and *even to the official classes*." Even through fiction, short stories and novels, writers in India and abroad have been able to draw attention of the people to political and social corruption and dire need for corresponding reform. Science-fiction books tend to transport us into the future, compelling us to exercise our imaginations. Likewise, in *Lucifer* for October 1887, H.P.B. draws attention to some interesting occult fiction, written during her time, such as, "The Romance of Two Worlds," by Marie Corelli; R. L. Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," to which we might also add Bulwer Lytton's "Zanoni," which are considered to form the key-note for mystic and theosophical literature, arousing intuition and imagination.

We are invited to read good literature as it helps to develop *imaginative sympathy*. We may read Shakespeare and Aeschylus who are said to have been under Nirmanakayic influence. It is

possible to learn through “imaginative sympathy,” without going through certain experiences ourselves. It is the learning and the change produced in the person as a result of that event that is important. That event can happen in our life or someone else’s life. Without ourselves being an orphan or even without encountering one in our life, we can experience that state, if we are sensitive enough, when we read, say, about the little girl Topsy, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, who says that she never had a father or mother, she just grew. In a sense, the nine *rasas* mentioned in Sanskrit literature—such as *Shringar rasa* pertaining to love, *Veer rasa* pertaining to courage, etc.—represent the basic types of experiences through which each one must pass. Our reading and responding to Kalidas’s play “Shakuntala” or Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet” is, in a way, experiencing *Shringar rasa*—the agonies and ecstasies of love.

Sanskrit is the most beautiful language on earth, containing the creative power in its sounds. Every word of this language seems to have been created consciously; chosen consciously, and has to be used consciously. The “conscious” nature of Sanskrit deepens awareness, and refines and perfects us at every level. The very word, *Samskritam*, means “polished,” “refined,” or “sculpted to perfection.” In Sanskrit, a word is not mere conventional symbol of ideas, but is itself the parent, and the creator of ideas. The words hold within themselves the secret of the roots from which they are derived. To master the relationship between the word and its meaning, one has to master the system of root-sounds and sound-ideas that form its wonderful structure, writes Dr. Sampadananda Mishra.

Dr. Mishra contemplated on the root-sounds of two Sanskrit words, *Shraddha* (faith) and *Sandeha* (doubt), and realized the deeper meaning hidden within. *Shraddha*, which is commonly translated to mean trust, faith, loyalty, respect or reverence, is constituted of two words, “shrat,” and “dhaa.” The root sound “dhaa”

stands for “putting, placing, bestowing, holding, having and causing.” Some of the derivatives of the root sound “dhaa” are “dhaatu,” “*dhaatri*” and “*dhasna*”. The word “dhaatu,” means constituent element or essential ingredient which holds things together. The words *dhaatri* and *dhasna* mean a vessel or a receptacle that holds things within it. The root sound “shrat,” in the Vedic sense, means “whatever is true to one’s aspiration.” When we combine the meaning of two roots, “shrat” and “dhaa,” *Shraddhaa* means to “hold unto that which is true to our aspiration.” When each and every movement of one’s being is in harmony with one’s highest aspiration, then one is truly faithful.

Likewise, *Sandeha* (doubt) is made up of two components, “sam” and “deha”. The sound “sam” is a prefix which means completeness, perfection or totality. “Deha” has been derived from the root-sound “dih,” which means “to gather, to collect, to grow or increase, and to conceal or cover.” The body is called “deha” in Sanskrit, because it is a cover for the soul, and conceals the soul within. Thus, *Sandeha* means perfect or complete concealment or covering. Thus, in a state of doubt, reality is completely covered or concealed and the consciousness is perfectly clouded.

The Sanskrit alphabet is more scientific, methodical and comprehensive than any other system of alphabet. In Sanskrit, all the sounds are articulated through five distinct places of articulation located in the mouth: throat, palate, cerebrum, root of the upper teeth, and lips, and accordingly, the sounds are either guttural or palatal or cerebral or dental or labial. The alphabets of Sanskrit language have *mantric* quality, and their recitation seems to create a natural *pranayama* and offers the same benefit as *pranayama*. Dr. Mishra aims at using Sanskrit for helping those who suffer from speech-related disorders and disabilities. “Resurgence of Sanskrit in all the fields of life will power the revival of the true spirit of India and unleash its soul-force,” believes Dr. Mishra. (*Life Positive*, January 2012)

Sanskrit, called *Devabhasa* or “the language of the gods,” is

considered to be a very old language. H.P.B. mentions that Babylonia was once the seat of the Sanskrit language and of Brahminical influence. Mr. Judge records a prophecy concerning the Sanskrit language, by saying that the Sanskrit language will one day be again the language used by man upon this earth, first in science and in metaphysics, and later on in common life. “The new language cannot be English, but will be one which is scientific in all that makes a language, and has been enriched by ages of study of metaphysics and the true science.” H.P.B. describes the potency of Sanskrit language thus:

In the Sanskrit, as also in the Hebrew and all other alphabets, every letter has its occult meaning and its rationale; it is a cause and effect of a preceding cause and a combination of these very often produces the most magical effect. The vowels, especially, contain the most occult and formidable potencies. (*S.D.*, I, 194)

Mr. Judge points out that groups of men can be aroused by expressions having mantramic quality, such as “do or die,” “Peace with honour.” Here, the effect is produced not by the *sound*, but by the words bringing up the ideas. But there are scientific *mantrams* that are not to be found in modern western languages but in ancient Sanskrit and other languages which preceded it. The laws governing their use are also to be found in those languages. The vocalizations of these *mantrams* can produce certain effects in the *akasa*, by means of which men, animals and elementals can be influenced even without the knowledge of the language. (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 154-58)

If a man has a talent and cannot use it, he has failed. If he has a talent and uses only half of it, he has partly failed. If he has a talent and learns somehow to use the whole of it, he has gloriously succeeded, and won a satisfaction and a triumph few men ever know.

—THOMAS WOLFE