

## A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### ACTS OF OMISSION AND COMMISSION

KARMA is the law of action and reaction; cause and effect. The law of Karma adjusts every effect to its cause and restores the disturbed equilibrium in the physical world and broken harmony in the moral world. For each of our actions, at the level of thought, word and deed, we receive the consequences. All our actions, good or bad, are acts of commission. We are fairly familiar with this aspect of Karma.

But there are also acts of omission. To “omit” means to “leave out,” or to “leave undone.” An act of omission is an action that is left undone, something which one ought to do. It may be one’s duty. Many a times we do not know the importance of performing tasks with care, which to us appear to be insignificant. Every little part in the machine is important for its smooth functioning, so also with human life. An incident in history shows that when a battle was lost, an inquiry was set up to find out the cause. The inquiry revealed that the battle was lost because the soldiers were discouraged, as the horse slipped, killing the General of the Army. And that because the horseshoe came off and that in turn was because the blacksmith had omitted to put the nail. So, the saying goes that “the battle was lost for the want of the horseshoe nail.” A small act of omission brought disastrous result. No duty is insignificant, and at times we are unable to see instantly the effect of our efforts. Hence the Master of Wisdom writes, “Ah! if your eyes were opened, you

might see such a vista of potential blessings to yourselves and mankind lying in the germ of the present hour's effort, as would fire with joy and zeal your souls!" So, let us watch for the small things in life. Let us not leave undone what should be done, nor do what should not be done; and more than anything, let us not do what is not necessary, for by doing the unnecessary we set in motion a new action which will not be harmonious.

How often do we emphasize impersonality and forget H.P.B.'s injunction "to rather sin through exaggerated praise than through too little appreciation of one's neighbour's efforts" (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 250). Many a budding writer or speaker has been put off from making further effort by the stony silence of others after his efforts, whereas genuine sympathy and encouragement might have been the very things he needed.

Omitting to resist evil, could well prove to be an act of omission. A few years back a group of militants entered a school in a certain country and mercilessly gunned down about 150 students and teachers. In an article that appeared in *The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, an Islamic teacher, pointed out that according to a verse in *Quran*, killing of an innocent human being is like killing an entire human kind. He observed that militancy has been going on in that country for many years, but people of that country remained indifferent to it because they thought that the militants were targeting others. But in such matters one cannot remain indifferent. According to a Hadith when God commanded his angels to demolish a town in which people were engaged in evil acts, the angels reported that there was a person in the town who worshipped God daily, and God's command was to demolish the town along with that person, "as he did not try to stop his people from doing evil deeds." Indifference means indirect involvement, which in God's eyes is as bad as direct involvement.

"Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin," teaches the *Voice of the Silence*. We are held responsible for our acts, both of commission and omission. When we omit doing a

merciful action, it becomes a "sin" of omission. We are told here a very profound truth regarding what constitutes unwholesome karma. Under the law of Karma, a morally wrong action is regarded as a sin that will bring bad results. But we incur sin also when we abstain from performing a morally right action. An act of omission in moral matters or when it comes to helping another is as punishable as an act of commission.

But can we say that whenever we commit a deed of omission, we commit an act of sin? It is not true that an act of omission always becomes a sinful act. Even while helping another we are advised to exercise discrimination, and use wisdom. H.P.B. says that it takes a very wise man to do good without causing incalculable harm. A wise man knows whom to remove and whom to keep in the mire and pain, which is the best teacher for that particular person. Thus, for instance, at a simple level, we may omit extending further help to a person, when we can see that it may make him a parasite or dependent on us. Likewise, we may omit to help because we do not have the necessary skill or knowledge, and may turn, for instance, a simple fracture into a compound fracture. H.P.B. has said, "When in doubt, abstain." Thus, a "sin of omission" seems to refer to cases where *we know we can help* and yet, out of laziness or selfishness or still worse, indifference, abstain or omit helping the person. Then it is equivalent to committing a sin. "He who turns a deaf ear to the cry of human misery; He who hears an innocent person slandered...and does not undertake his defence as he would undertake his own, is no Theosophist," says a Master of Wisdom.

"Inaction based on selfish fear can bear but evil fruit," says the *Voice of the Silence*. In India, especially, sometimes we find that a good religious person who wants to become free from the chain of births and deaths, is afraid to help people because he believes that in giving or receiving help from another, he creates a karmic bondage, which will force him to take birth again. He is afraid that he might act out of personal desire or out of emotions which would prove binding and may obstruct his progress. So, the *Voice of the*

*Silence* says, “To perish doomed is he, who out of fear of Mara, refrains from helping man, lest he should act for self.” In being kind to another person he feels that maybe he is being tempted by *Mara*, i.e., his emotional nature. *Mara* is personified temptation through man’s vices. To him, his feeling of kindness seems to exercise fascination and lead him away from the right path. Thus, in the olden days when untouchability was prevalent, if a person of higher caste saw a *Harijan* (low-caste) child crying on the roadside, he would be moved to pick up the child and find his mother, but he may feel that this kindness arising in him is itself a temptation which is making him do a thing which is not sanctioned by social laws. Thus a man who refuses to enter into kindly relationship with others is compared to a pilgrim who has come across a river after walking through the hot places, but is afraid of plunging and putting his whole body into the water for the fear of being swept away. Such a person is in the danger of dying of heat. Similarly, one who keeps calculating, “which way I would not be bound by *karma*,” finds that such calculation does not work.

Every act of service or kindness is not necessarily beneficial, and when performed without due deliberation can lead to dangerous consequences. “*Because—*” *For the Children Who Ask Why*, gives an example of a child, named Chester, whose mother will not give him money to buy candies and ice creams. His friend, Milton, feeling sorry, takes out money from his piggy bank and gives it to Chester to buy candy and ice cream. The result: Chester falls ill. Milton’s sister resists the temptation to tell her brother that mothers always know what is best for their children, and so he should not give money to Chester to buy candies. Partly because she is afraid that by telling her brother not to give money to Chester she might spoil her brother’s pleasure, and partly because she feels that her brother would not stop, even if she told him. The children’s aunt then points out that all of them had failed to “act for and as the *Self*.” In trying to make Chester happy, Milton overlooked the consequences of his action. The girl, who omitted to stop her brother, was told by her

aunt that if she had tried to do what she really knew was the right thing, then even if she was unable to stop her brother, her part in the disaster would have stopped right there. “When we do all we can to prevent some wrong thing, that is all we can do, for no one can really keep another from doing what he wants to do.” It is always the duty of those who know more to help those who know less. But too many people *omit* saying or doing what they know to be right, because they are afraid of offending others, and also afraid of being disliked by others. The ancient books say that the “sin of omission” is the worst of all sins. When people actively do something wrong they become aware of it by the results that follow. It is comparatively difficult to become aware of the sins of omission, because the law of Karma brings their results silently and secretly. Even in an act of omission, just like the act of commission, the law of karma will take into account the motive for action, the degree of development and knowledge of the person, and the load of his past karma, while it metes out punishment.

Generally we all have a strong herd-instinct and are only too ready to conform. We prefer to go with the flow and are afraid to swim against the current. It is our duty to raise our voice against every iniquitous law and social evil, even at the risk of being isolated, ostracized and persecuted. Those who fought against social evils such as slavery, child-marriages, cruelty to women, etc., possessed moral courage and braved every opposition. The key lies in forming public opinion in the right direction, by writing articles.

Every unwholesome action must be nipped in the bud. If we omit to put the “break” it goes on unchecked. When all children are making fun of a new teacher, one or two children choosing to abstain may prove to be of great help in building that teacher’s confidence. A housewife, who is a victim of domestic violence, must speak up. If she omits to take steps then she also becomes a sharer in the unwholesome action. Likewise, prejudices grow if we allow them to go unchecked. “To many of our prejudices are like pyramids upside down. They rest on tiny, trivial incidents, but they spread

upward and outward until they fill our minds,” writes William Martin. The same applies to rumours and gossip. Unfortunately, remarks H.P.B., human nature is so constituted that any good said of a person is immediately forgotten and never repeated, but one has only to utter a calumny, or start a story, then it is readily accepted, especially if it happens to be connected with some unpopular character. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 275)

It is true that tolerance is one of the highest virtues. But if it is a pseudo-tolerance, it can be harmful in the long run. There is a story in which a little boy stole a pencil. His mother did not reprimand him because she loved him too much. When he grew up, the boy went on to become a thief and a murderer. Finally, when he was being taken to the gallows, he met his mother. He told her that had she admonished him when he first stole a pencil, perhaps he would not have become a murderer.

Pseudo-tolerance may well be regarded as an act of omission. It is the duty of the discerning wise to blame what is blameworthy and admonish. The fearless and bold stand of Theosophy “to speak the truth alike without malice or prejudice” enshrines this principle, which arises out of a deep sense of duty to and compassion for humanity. If we come across a falsehood, we must have moral courage to speak up, gently but firmly. To those who dilute Theosophy or sacrifice truth for the fear of hurting the feelings of others because they have false idea of brotherhood, Mr. Crosbie writes:

This [brotherhood] does not mean indiscriminate acceptance of everything and everyone....Is it not the bounden duty of those who know, to hold aloft the White Standard of Truth? It must be so, else how could an enquiring one perceive it? Theosophy has to be held aloft in such a way as to confront errors of every kind, with their handmaidens of cant and hypocrisy. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 12)

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT IRELAND

ERIN’S ISLE has always been somewhat of a mystery. Its people are so different from the English just across the channel that one who spends some time in London and then crosses over to Dublin will at once see the vast gulf that in the matter of temperament separates the two peoples.

And anyone who studies the Irish, especially on the West Coast, and lives among them, will soon discover a deeply-seated belief in what is commonly called the supernatural that can only come from some distant past. Even the educated Irish are not free from this.

There is a willingness in the peasant to express belief in fairies, ghosts, and the like, which in the better classes is covered up from sight but still there. In the country districts people will stone the lights out of the windows of a newly-vacated house, and in the city the educated man may frequently be found who will say, when his attention is called to such an occurrence, “And why shouldn’t they? Do you want the devil to stay in the house? The theory of course is that the elementals of the departed tenants can only escape through the broken window panes unless they have been used—as is not always the case—to open doors.

Belief in fairies is the old Hindu belief in the “devas” or lesser gods. I know many educated people who have declared they often heard fairy-talking and singing. In fact, unless we take in the northern Irishman—who is not truly of that blood—we will never find a native of that land who is not born with a slight or greater touch upon borders of the unseen or with a belief in it.

It is called the Isle of Destiny and its hill-men will tell you that it has always been a “saintly island.” It teems with tales exactly duplicating those of Hindu yogis; the very grass seems to whisper as with the footfalls of unseen beings. One tradition is that in very ancient times, before the island of Albion rose from under the water, there was an ancient college—or *Ashrama* as the Hindus would

call it—on the island, where great adepts lived and taught disciples who from there went out to all lands. They stayed there until a certain great cataclysm, and then migrated to...In connection with this the following quotation from some remarks by H. P. Blavatsky in *Lucifer* (June 15, 1889) will be of interest, in reading which one can also profitably remember the Greek tradition that near Britain there was an island called Ierna to which men went in order to learn more about the secret mysteries. She says: “It is a tradition among Occultists in general, and taught as an historical fact in Occult philosophy, that what is now Ireland was once upon a time the abode of the Atlanteans, emigrants from the submerged island mentioned by Plato. Of all the British Isles, Ireland is the most ancient by several thousands of years. Inferences and ‘working hypotheses’ are left to the Ethnologists, Anthropologists and Geologists. The Masters and keepers of the old science claim to have preserved genuine records, and we Theosophists—*i.e.*, most of us, believe it implicitly. Official Science may deny, but what does it matter? Has not Science begun by denying almost everything it accepts now?”

—BRYAN KINNAVAN

[Taken from *The Path*, Vol. VI, February 1892.]

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Ireland is an island in the North Atlantic. It is separated from Great Britain to its east by the North Channel, the Irish Sea and St. George’s Channel. It is the second-largest island of the British Isles, and the third-largest island in Europe. It is believed that the earliest written records of Ireland come from classical Greco-Roman geography. Ptolemy in his work *Almagest*, refers to Ireland as *Mikra Brettania* (Little Britain), in contrast to the larger island, which he called *Megale Brettania* (Great Britain). In his last work, *Geography*, he refers to Ireland as *Iouernia* (or Hibernia) and to Great Britain as *Albion*. The earliest evidence of human presence in Ireland is dated at 10,500 B.C. It is held that Celtic tribes settled on the island in the 4th century B.C.

According to Theosophy, Ireland is the oldest of the British Isles and was the abode of the Atlanteans, after the last of the Atlantean continent, mentioned by Plato, was submerged. Esoteric philosophy shows that the whole of the Fourth or Atlantean Continent did not perish at once. Thus, “This event, the destruction of the famous island of Ruta and the smaller one Daitya, which occurred 850,000 years ago in the later Pliocene times, must not be confounded with the submersion of the main continent Atlantis during the Miocene period” (*S.D.*, II, 314). The main Atlantean Continent perished several million years ago. Poseidonis, the last remnant of the great Atlantean Continent, which is the “Atlantis” of Plato, and known as *Sancha dwipa* in the Puranas, perished around 11,000 years ago (*S.D.*, II, 407). It is inhabitants of the “Atlantis” of Plato, who took their abode on what is now Ireland.

We are in the fifth sub-race of the Fifth Root Race and this race has been in existence for one million years. The Sixth sub-race is being formed on the American Continent, which is described as the crucible or refining pot where men and women of every race are found to be living together and attacking problems of life together. A process of amalgamation is going on so that in the course of many generations there will be produced on the American continents, an entirely new (sub) race—with new bodies, new powers of the mind, curious and unheard of psychic and physical powers. In the article, “On the Future: A Few Reflections,” Mr. Judge seems to hint that both Ireland, an ancient Atlantean remnant, and England, a younger Isle, whose rising from the sea was watched by wise men from Ireland’s shore, are likely to play an important role in the formation of the new sub-race on the American continent. “Perhaps England and Ireland are the gateways for the Egos who incarnate here in the silent work of making a new race. May be there is some significance in the fact that more lines of steamships conveying human freight come to the United States from England, passing Ireland on the way as the last seen land of the old world, than from anywhere else....Perhaps the people of that old



land (Ireland) may have an important influence in the new race of America.” It is very significant that Mr. Judge himself was born in Dublin, Ireland, in the year 1851 and became a citizen of United States in 1872. Students would recall H.P.B.’s remark, “That’s a queer place, Judge, that Ireland. It is packed full of singular class of elementals.”

When asked to explain the meaning of the term Runic, H.P.B. writes that Rune is an Anglo-Saxon word, that stood in days of old for “mystery,” and related to magical letters. The word runic relates both to the language and the peculiar alphabet of the ancient Norsemen. The various talismans and charms used occasionally by the modern so-called “wizards” and “witches” in Ireland, who are supposed to have inherited the secret science of old, are covered generally with runic marks, and which can be deciphered by those who have studied occultism in its universal aspect. (*The Theosophist*, June 1883)

Ireland’s unique contribution to world architecture is Round Towers, which are tall structures, found at some 65 sites in Ireland, sometimes reaching the height of around 130 feet. The most curious aspect of these towers is that the doorways are usually a few feet above ground-level, and could be accessed by a ladder which in some cases could be pulled up into the tower to prevent unwanted people from entering. There has been much speculation as to the purpose of these towers. The old Irish name for them was *cloig-thech* or bell-tower. They are believed to have been used as granaries, sepulchers, hermit dwellings, depositories of religious relics, etc. But it appears that like the Pyramids of Egypt, the Round Towers were connected with Mystery-initiations. The candidates for initiation were placed in them for three days and three nights, wherever there was no temple with a subterranean crypt close at hand.

Mr. Judge mentions “towers” in his occult novels, printed in *Letters That Have Helped Me*. In “A Curious Tale,” he tells us that once the great Masters had settled themselves in Ireland, they were tending and keeping alive the fire in various towers. When the time

came for them to go away, they left behind strict injunctions to watch the fires, in every tower, and take care so that no fires on these towers should go out. The tale goes on that when the one who was entrusted with the task of watching the last burning fire became inattentive for a few moments—as he glanced at the fires on the other towers that had died—to his horror his own fire expired. Obviously, it refers to the fire of spiritual knowledge, which needs to be kept burning, and the task is especially daunting when the cycle is descending. Without getting distracted or despaired by other dying fires, one needs to pay attention to the “fire” entrusted to one’s care. The young man who was entrusted to watch the fire on the last tower was told that it was an old tower used by the immediate descendants of the white Magicians who settled on Ireland when England’s Isle had not risen from the sea. When the great Masters had to go away they warned that if the duties of life were neglected, if charity, duty and virtue were forgotten, the power to keep these fires alive would gradually disappear.

In another occult novel, entitled, “The Serpent’s Blood,” Ireland is described as an old magic island, where the great adepts had landed and established Truth. It was regarded as a spot “where should be concentrated spiritual power sufficiently strong to remain as a haven for several cycles, and that should be a base upon which in long ages after ages might be erected again the spiritual temple of truth.” The great beings remained on this island for many centuries and saw other lands arise from adjoining seas. They taught the people and from among them drew disciples. This Island came to be known as the “Isle of Destiny” because mysterious future events were foretold regarding this island by wise men. Then these adepts departed from the island, after establishing true religion and practices, which they knew will decay in time. But we are told that the centre of power would not depart from the Island until its destiny should be accomplished. “The power might be hidden, but it would remain latent until the time arrived,” writes Mr. Judge.

## THE IDEA OF GOD

EXISTENCE of a Supreme Power, popularly called God, is a belief which is inherent quality of the human consciousness. It is an intuitional feeling in man that the awe-inspiring regularity, rhythm, order, intelligence, and absolute harmony which reign in the vast universe and everywhere in nature down to the atom cannot be but due to the agency of an omnipresent and omnipotent force or power. Such a feeling is natural to man, the thinker, as he cannot but be the product of universal manifestation and inseparable portion of the Universal Being.

All the ancient religions and religious philosophies of the world treat, to a greater or lesser degree, of the nature of the Deity, of the universe and of man, of their mutual relation, and of the laws governing their origin, evolution and destiny. A comparative study of the world religions and philosophies shows that all of them couch their teachings in symbols, metaphors, metrical speech, myths and allegories which veil the true meaning they represent. The student has to have in his possession keys which unravel the esoteric sense of the symbols and myths, and a thorough grasp of the fundamental proposition of their epistemological systems. In absence of keys to symbolism, which only those initiated in sacred Mysteries are entrusted with, a student, however learned, is apt to be misled in his effort to understand the hidden sense of teachings in the sacred books. He may gain intuitive insights here and there but on the whole the uninitiated student can only derive the dead-letter sense and meaning of the ancient writings, the spirit thereof ever eluding him. So long as the initiated Adepts occupy seats of learning, and teach and guide rulers and common people, as happens during periods of relative enlightenment, true knowledge of the science of life and correct idea of Deity prevail in society. At other times contrary is the case when uninitiated priests substitute Adept teachers, heralding the downward cycle. Henceforth ritualistic worship and anthropomorphic cults flourish, as at the present time, degrading

the world.

It may be asked, what is the necessity of acquiring the right idea of God, as there are many atheists and agnostics who do not believe in God of the churches, and yet are good human beings, and even noble characters worthy of emulation? The answer is obvious. They are simply the outcome of human reaction against absurd ideas of God, which are an affront to human reason, propagated by leaders of institutionalized religions, and cruelties inflicted on society in the name of God. "It is this theological and dogmatic anthropomorphism which has begotten, and is the legitimate parent of materialism." (*Theosophical Articles and Notes*, p. 197)

The correct idea of Deity according to the Esoteric Philosophy is that there is but One Life—Absolute, boundless, immutable, infinite, anteceding conditioned existence to which IT bears no relation, and which, human thought, being finite, cannot conceive. It is the unknown, unknowable causeless cause, rootless root of all that was, is and ever shall be. In nameless THAT universes of duality arise, evolve, dissolve and disappear in regular cycles of manifestation and non-manifestation, like the ebb and flow of the tide in the ocean, according to the Karmic and cyclic law inherent in It—Deity and Law being one.

There are two "Ones"—the Absolute Principle, Unknowable; and the Spirit of the universe which radiates periodically from It and expands itself as manifested universe. The term God may be applied to the latter, not to the former from which it radiates (*H.P.B. Series No. 23*, p. 8). This manifested Deity, though appearing as many in its dual manifestation of spirit and matter, or subject and object, is in reality One and indivisible, the manifested symbol of the Absolute ONE, according to Esoteric philosophy. It is this ubiquitous universal One Life, Consciousness and Intelligence—one in three, and three in one—permeating all, is present as latent potentiality in every atom. The whole universal evolution is nothing but the tendency in the One Life to develop self-conscious realization of Itself by and through forms evolved by Itself in cycles of ascending

progression—from the elemental, mineral, vegetable, and animal forms, culminating in Man, as the crown of physical evolution, and individualization of that One Life as *Manas*, or Ego, the Thinker, the Real Man; the former constituting the vehicle or *upadhi* for the latter, with which, if he succeeds in permanently linking himself, becomes one with it—a god, and GOD.

The God idea and the longing of the human heart to realize it, therefore, is the natural tendency of the Ego, which is sojourning in the material world through cycles of rebirth by its own Karma to return to the source from which it emanated, with which it is essentially one, like a spark in the fire, or drop of water in the ocean. “Humanity is an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto.” The universe is an embodied consciousness, and it exists for the purpose of affording means for gathering of experiences by the embodied Ego, culminating at last, through many weary cycles of rebirth, in its emancipation from all conditioned existence and attaining perfection of self-conscious existence in Spirit—divinity.

The return path of the human self, enmeshed as it is in a material body, subjected to desires and passions, and delusions of earthly personality, is an arduous and uphill work. Out of many thousands who may be striving for perfection, teaches the *Gita*, perhaps one may succeed. It does not mean, however, that it is impossible, but that with the acquisition of right knowledge and persevering right effort protracted through many rebirths one may succeed. The very first step in this direction is acquisition of the right knowledge and philosophy of Self. Mr. Judge observes, “Man, made of thought, occupant only of many bodies from time to time, is eternally thinking. His chains are through thought, his release due to nothing else.” (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 141)

So long as we hold ideas and cherish beliefs which are contrary to the reality and truth of true Self, and to the reality and fact of Universal Brotherhood, so long we remain bound by Karmic chains through many weary rebirths to the end of time. This is very important. Theosophy teaches that the race mind is no longer in its

child state but has progressed far enough in its evolutionary growth when it must put away childish beliefs on blind faith and on external authority, and take knowledge, practice Self-reliance, and live, think and act on the lines of that knowledge. Thought has to be directed with power towards Self which is One—Self of All. It is like an archer, who will miss hitting the target if his aim falters even by a slight degree. In the spiritual archery it is the mind, or thought, that is the arrow which must be directed by the archer, the embodied self, to hit the mark—the universal Self—to become one with it. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that perfect knowledge of the true Self and of universal brotherhood must be acquired if we are to make true progress. Mr. Judge teaches, “If knowledge be refused, this violation of our being will result in the grossest and vilest superstition or the most appalling materialism” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 20). It is the false ideas about God which, if persistently held against all reason, common sense and intuition, which leads mankind to such a catastrophe. It is the prime cause of human degradation and suffering.

It is the belief in the existence of a personal god outside of us whose intercession in our favour may be invoked through prayers, supplications and ceremonies, and the belief that it is possible to escape the consequences of our sinful thoughts and actions, or the belief that professing faith in a dogma of the church even at the last moment of death, would wash away the effects of our sinful acts, which generates intense selfishness, cowardice, immorality, irresponsibility, warps the intellectual principle, and begets worst kind of materialism which destroys the soul.

The only God man may know is within himself, through and by himself—his higher divine consciousness which is also at the same time absolute justice, or Karma, which unerringly brings the effects of every one of our thought and act to bear on us for our weal or woe. By a knowledge of the workings of the law of our being we can shape our character, forge our destiny, not only for ourselves but for human family with which we are one and inseparable. There



can be no individual progress apart from the development and progress of all for which every individual is duty bound to strive.

True religious living is ceaseless effort to conform to the behests of the Higher Self, and aspiration to become one with the Supreme. It must be remembered that God in man is not a personal anthropomorphic God of monotheists but an impersonal and universal spirit that shines in all beings, as one sun illuminates the whole world, and absolute Justice—Karma—the heart of which is Mercy. Devotion to God means identifying oneself with and devotion to humanity as a whole, as the real Self of each is the Self of ALL. “He is thyself, yet infinitely stronger and wiser than thyself,” says *Light on the Path* (p. 10). The embodied Spirit, Monad, sojourning in forms, is the “indwelling force” which acts consciously, whereas the Universal Spirit—*Paramatma*—is universal Force which is impersonal and “unconscious” because Absolute Consciousness. A meditation on the following inspiring passage from *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* (p. 134) give us the correct idea of God, Man’s relation to “Him,” and his duty:

All growth depends upon the indwelling force, because on this plane of ours it is this force alone which acts consciously. The universal force cannot be regarded as a conscious force as we understand the word consciousness, because it would immediately become a personal god. It is only that which is enclosed in form, a limitation of matter, which is conscious of itself on this plane. This Free Force or Will, which is limitless and absolute, cannot be said to act understandingly, but it is the sole and immutable Law of Life and Being.

It is the mission of this impersonal Universal Force, or Will, represented by the Dhyani Buddhas, to guide and shape man if he surrenders his Will to It. (*ibid.*, p. 129)

## EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS MASTERS—IV

THE DESCENT of Kali Yuga obscures and wipes out our spiritual memory. Judge has something very valuable to say about this in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*. Our inner Wisdom is obscured and, worse, even wiped out and we are apt to act as if we never cared for chelaship in the long past. Disciples of the same Master, in serving Him are creating, sustaining and strengthening the great bond between themselves—a bond only one remove in grandeur from the Mighty Bond between the chela and the Guru Himself. Keep this bond of the spiritual family in your consciousness.

Companionship and secrecy are the two ingredients of chelaship. We all move together and are made to assimilate those we like and those we dislike, causing the growth of the unselfishness and impersonality.

About preparatory work for Chelaship: it is like the matriculation examination; in one way, the most difficult, for it is preparatory for a change of venue; an entering into a new plane where one feels an awkward stranger. The fundamental inner principle is not grasped: outer habits and mundane ways are not to be handled first; unless the mind and the heart undergo a change, outer changes of diet or dress will not help. When people are trying to control speech, they begin with their tongue and lips; the result really is a failure. Silence does not mean our becoming dumb. Mental silence is a preliminary necessity. The seeking by the lower self of the existence of the Higher, to study the nature and power of the latter, *is* the first step. Therefore, *Viraga* becomes the first step.

In chela-life there is no “thus far and no farther.” Understand this metaphysically. Chelaship is a mental attitude to begin with. This attitude is that of the embodied soul which soon learns that the real embodying vehicle is not physical but astral. The idea to be impressed on the consciousness is that of the *continuity* of the discerning power in one state of that consciousness or in another.

This continuity is a highly important factor; on it depends the life of and ultimate success in Chelaship.

Chelaship brings about as a *necessary* experience—despair. Is not that stage described as *Vishad-Yoga*, *i.e.*, union with despondency? It is the place of experience from which *Vairagya* can be developed. Love for his tribe and hatred for the Kauravas had to be overcome by Arjuna. The survey of the armies has a significance. Therefore, we must not be afraid of despair, but must learn to overcome it in the right way. The gospel of chelaship is the 12th chapter—those pairs are meaningful.

Lesser mysticism corresponds to lay-chelaship; higher, to real chelaship. Aspiration, higher desire, is the beginning that we make, which means we deserved it under Karma. Next, we learn the qualifications, what is wanted and expected of us, and we must labour to deserve a real response. Take your own case; your aspirations constitute a first step in Their direction and They have promised: “Take one step in our direction and we will take one in yours.” Do you suppose They have not kept to that in your case? Reflect upon this in and with your heart. It *is* a big subject and a highly important one. Follow up your study with “Occultism Versus the Occult Arts.” But do not be frightened by the serious warnings. Go to Judge: constructive teachings are what he gives—telling us what to do. Do not drop this topic; pursue it patiently and confidently.

At every stage of evolution there is the principle of “Nature unaided fails.” In the human kingdom, at critical times, we get help from the Lunar, and then from the Solar, Pitris. The human kingdom would not be what it is now but for the Teachings imparted and implanted in us, and if a cyclic effort were not made time and again. So also, in chela-life. The chela *is* left alone and yet at the eleventh hour and the fifty-ninth minute there is the gracious help. The Initiations into the Mysteries also show this. Unless we oppose and build a wall, consciously or unconsciously, They are ever ready to help. By correspondence the same is true of our own inner being—the Ruler Immortal.

Do not fancy that the Guru feeds the chela with knowledge. He helps the chela to seek out knowledge, to take knowledge. If the chela goes wrong in his surmises and deductions, then the Guru by a hint or two adjusts the mind of the chela and enables him to resume his journey of the mind-heart. Tests and trials of chelaship exist. We err when we think that heat and cold are feelings in themselves; they are not. *We* feel them because we have bodies. Similarly joys and sorrows are felt and known because we have a feeling nature and a mind nature. The Master shows the way to come to that terrace where we separate ourselves from heat and cold, pleasure and pain, fame and ignominy. The first to be overcome is the last of the pairs. Heat-and-cold body-feeling is the last to go.

As to knocking at the door: to dare is one of the qualities required. Taking the kingdom of heaven by violence implies that chelaship is not for ready-made saints. Sinners are brought to repentance and ill minds are made whole. Of course, humility has always to be there or one is done for. Chelaship extends through many lives. Seven years are mentioned but that was in the old days when the Guru was physically near to run to. In this day and generation probation itself lasts for more than one life.

There were others besides Damodar and Judge who succeeded. But you are not correct in your deduction that in the early years discipleship was comparatively easier of attainment. The one and only difference is that in every century-cycle during the first 25 years the Masters' effort is open and talked about, and during the remaining 75 years privacy, secrecy and silence are more thorough and become so increasingly. [H.P.B. writes: “... during the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by those ‘Masters,’ of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity in a marked and definite way” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 304)]. They were then talked about and They worked through H.P.B. and other chelas more openly. But the very nature and technique of discipleship make it impossible for it to be relaxed. No one ever escaped probation; no one can escape it; but it is possible

to be a probationer and the person not know it in his waking brain consciousness; *e.g.*, a person may have become a probationary chela in one life and have made good progress; he goes to *Devachan* or even returns immediately to a new body; in the measure of his progress he *continues* his probationary life in that new body and brain. So, it is well to remember that the woes and ways of chelaship are many and varied.

As to the period of probation: it is not changed; it was seven years then and it is seven years now. But then as now, people do not get through and seven becomes 70 and extends to more than one life. Life itself is the tester; “‘Great Sifter’ is the name of the ‘Heart Doctrine,’ O disciple.” Occultism or the Secret Doctrine tests as events occur in our lives, day by day. We do become tired by the onslaughts which life and living bring to us. To endure, to learn and thus to grow the probationer has the use of the Heart Doctrine. He is told what to do. His “sins of omission and commission” have to be met with the Teachings. People lose their enthusiasm; earnestness, dependent upon enthusiasm suffers. Spiritual stamina needs to be replenished.

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Heavy-laden is my soul with her own ripe fruit;  
 Heavy-laden is my soul with her fruit.  
 Who now will come and eat and be fulfilled?  
 My Soul is overflowing with her wine.  
 Who now will pour and drink and be  
 cooled of the desert heat?

Would that I were a tree flowerless and fruitless,  
 For the pain of abundance is more bitter than barrenness...

Would I that I were a well, dry and  
 Parched, and men throwing stones into me,  
 For this were better and easier to be borne  
 than to be a source of living water  
 When men pass by and will not drink....

—Kahlil Gibran

## THE SYMBOLOGY OF FISH

ACCORDING to Oxford Dictionary, a symbol is a thing that represents or stands for something else. Especially, it is a material object representing something abstract. The fish symbol figures in religion or mythology of almost every nation. The fish charms are given as gifts to the newly-weds in China, as symbol of fidelity and unity, because fish, specifically the koi fish, swim together in pairs. The fish also symbolizes fertility and abundance because of their ability to reproduce in speed and volume. In Buddhism, *ashtamangala* are the eight auspicious symbols that are considered to be the offering made by the gods to the Buddha, after his enlightenment. Two golden fish is one of these eight symbols. As the fish swims in water without the fear of drowning, so also, the Buddha has no fear of drowning in the ocean of *samsara*. Hence, the fish symbolizes living in a state of happiness and fearlessness. According to the *Quran*, the fish is a symbol of Knowledge and of the eternal life. The word “nun” in Arabic means fish.

The *Ichthus* is a symbol consisting of two intersecting arcs, such that the ends of the right side extend beyond the meeting point, so as to resemble the image of a fish. This symbol was adopted by the early Christians as a secret symbol, known also as, “Jesus fish” or the “sign of the fish.” *Ichthus* is a Greek word for fish, and is an acronym. The five letters forming the word are the initials of the Greek phrase, *Iesous Christos Theou Uios Soter*, which translated in English mean, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.” The Gnostics had a nickname for the neophyte on trial, and that was *Ichthus*, the “fish,” writes H.P.B.

The early Christians used the *Ichthus* symbol to recognize churches and other believers, when they were persecuted by the Roman Empire. Many of Jesus’ original disciples were fishermen by profession. So we have assertion of Jesus, “Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Jesus and his disciples catch the souls from the ocean of *samsara* (life) by imparting right

knowledge. For instance, Orpheus also was described as “fisher of men.” “Orpheus was a generic title, the name of one of those early instructors of the Third Race, which passed from teacher to pupil for untold generations,” (*Theosophy*, February 1939). He is said to have gone round the world teaching the nations wisdom and sciences, and establishing mysteries.

In Hinduism, the first incarnation of Vishnu on earth, is *Matsya* or fish Avatar. In *Isis Unveiled* (II, 274), H.P.B. says that *Matsya-Avatar* symbolizes the period when the earth was covered with water. According to the story in the “Mahabharata,” while Vaivaswata Manu was engaged in devotion on the riverbank, a fish appears and pleads to be saved from a bigger fish. He saves and places it in a jar, where growing larger and larger, he tells him of the forthcoming deluge. H.P.B. points out that it is the well-known “Matsya Avatar,” the first *Avatar* of Vishnu and many other things besides. Vishnu orders a ship to be built, in which Manu is said to be saved along with the seven *Rishis*. H.P.B. explains that the seven *Rishis* stand for *seven Races*, the seven principles and various other things. In one sense, it refers to the Atlantean flood, and Vaivaswata, the great sage on Earth, who saved our Fifth Root-race from being destroyed along with the remnants of the Fourth or Atlantean Race. (*S.D.*, I, 139-40)

Explaining the symbology of the Fish, H.P.B. writes that the “fish” and the sea, or water, are the most archaic emblems of the Messiah, or incarnations of divine wisdom, among all the ancient people (*H.P.B. Series No. 2*, p. 13). In *Isis* (II, 256-61), H.P.B. tells us that the Christians used the symbols of Lamb, the Good Shepherd and *the Fish* to represent Jesus. In Kabala, the King Messiah is called the interpreter and revealer of the mystery. In Talmud, the Messiah is designated as Dag or Fish. This name “Dag” is derived from the Chaldean “Dagon” or the man-fish, who appeared as an interpreter and instructor to people. Dagon is the Babylonian term and it is the Chaldean man-fish Oannes.

According to the *Bhagavat Purana*, which presents modified

version of the *Matsya* mythology, at the end of the *kalpa*, there was a deluge, when the demon Hayagriva stole the Vedas from the sleepy Brahma. Vishnu takes the form of *saphari* fish, dives into the ocean and recovers the Vedas. In another version of the *Bhagavat Purana* text, Vishnu in his man-fish *avatara* not only recovers the Vedas from the demon, but also saves the seven sages, and seeds of all animal and plant species, teaching highest knowledge to the sages, to prepare them for the next cycle of existence.

H.P.B. points out that both “Messiah” and “Dag” (fish) must apply to the Hindu Vishnu. Vishnu who appeared to humanity in his first avatar as a Fish, will again appear in his tenth avatar as Messiah to lead the blessed people onward, and restore to them the primitive Vedas. In the temple of Rama, he is represented just like “Dagon,” having the body of a man issuing from the mouth of a fish, and holds in his hands, the lost *Veda*. He instructed the people during day and disappeared in the waters during night.

In the article, “Lamas and Druses,” H.P.B. writes that “Dagon” is the Chaldean word which means Holy Wisdom, and that is incarnated in their messenger, called Oannes, the Man-fish. Just like Vishnu, Oannes, or Man-fish, rose out of waters, several times, and taught the Chaldeans useful arts and everything else. H.P.B. writes:

Oannes is the emblem of priestly, esoteric wisdom; he comes out from the sea, because the “great deep,” the water, typifies, as we have shown, the secret doctrine. For this same reason Egyptians deified the Nile....They even held the crocodiles as sacred, from having their abode in the “deep.” The “Hamites,” so called, have always preferred to settle near rivers and oceans. Water was the first-created element, according to some old cosmogonies....The Chaldean priests wore a head-gear like a fish’s head, and a shad-belly coat, representing the body of a fish. (*Isis*, II, 458)

In the *Theosophical Glossary*, under the term “Oannes,” we are given the explanation of dual existence on land and water. This



Being (Oannes) was accustomed to pass the day among men, teaching; and when the Sun had set, he retired again into the sea, passing the night in the deep, “*for he was amphibious,*” *i.e.*, he belonged to two planes: the spiritual and the physical. For the Greek word *amphibios* means simply “life on two planes,” from *amphi*, “on both sides,” and *bios*, “life.” The word was often applied in antiquity to those men who, though still wearing a human form, had made themselves almost divine through knowledge, and lived as much in the spiritual supersensuous regions as on earth. We are reminded of what H.P.B. tells us about many spiritual entities who have incarnated in man and still continue to exist as independently as they did before, in the infinities of Space. (*S.D.*, I, 233)

Fish is the symbol of transformation or spiritual regeneration. “The whole of the *New Testament* is an allegorical representation of the Cycle of Initiation, *i.e.*, the natural birth of man in *sin* or flesh, and of his second or spiritual birth as an Initiate followed by his resurrection after three days of trance,” writes H.P.B. Jesus himself came to the river Jordan and is baptized by John. H.P.B. explains that the name of Jordan, according to Hebrew scholars, is derived from the Hebrew *Jar-ed*, to flow down or descend. If we add the letter *n* (in Hebrew *nun*) to Jared, it becomes Jar-Dan or fish-river. *Jar* means flowing river. Jar-Dan means “river of Dan,” or Judgement. Jesus, the *man* and the neophyte, is born of Mary, *Mar*, the waters, like every other man, and it is his first birth. Water symbolizes matter and also purification. At his second birth he enters and stands in the river Dan, or fish. So Jesus, the *man*, entering the water (the type of the spiritual womb of his second birth) enters Jar-Dan. Emerging from it, he became Christos, the glorified Initiate. (*Notes on the Gospel According to John*)

Each zodiac sign has a special symbol or a glyph that is associated with the mythology behind it. The tenth sign of zodiac is Capricorn or Makara. Makara, says T. Subba Row, is an anagram for *Kumara*. These are the mysterious beings that preside over the constellation of Makara, and who endowed man with the light of mind. H.P.B.

points out that in its esoteric sense, the term Makara does not mean crocodile and this can be seen if we compare with the animal associated with the tenth sign of Zodiac. It is the animal depicted as having the head and forelegs of antelope and a tail of fish. Hence, the tenth sign of zodiac is taken to mean a Shark, a dolphin, etc.

Interestingly, the Buddha compares the human mind with a fish. “Like unto a fish snatched from its watery home and cast on land, the mind trembles and quivers leaving the dominion of Mara” (*The Dhammapada*, verse 34). In an ordinary person, his mind lives in the domain of Mara—the personified temptations that make him live for his own pleasures or perhaps for the happiness of his loved ones. He is at home like a fish in water. But when an ordinary man realizes the higher purpose of human life, he makes efforts to escape from the prison. Because he is leaving the familiar ground to venture into new territory about which he has not much experience, he is restless like a fish cast on land. This is the transition state wherein the person has not yet found firm footing in the new ground, has not yet become familiar to feel comfortable in the new territory.

“Pisces” is the Latin word for Fish. Pisces or *Meenam*, the twelfth sign of zodiac, is the sign of fishes. It is symbolized by two fishes swimming in opposite directions, but connected by a cord. This symbol has been variously interpreted by the astrologers. At a simple level it denotes duality. Pisceans often feel that they are being pulled in different directions, making it difficult to make concrete decisions. But a pair of fish tied by a cord may also represent harmony between two entities, or between two aspects of human nature. This sign is “symbolized by the pulls of the opposition, the desire to travel in the opposite directions simultaneously.... It symbolizes the end of the old year and heralds the beginning of the new one, torn between... the hidden and the open, between the physical actuality and the spiritual reality,” writes Jerry L. Keane.

According to Alan Leo, Pisces being the last sign of the zodiac, we may think of progression through all the signs. Then Pisces may represent, on the one hand, those who had succeeded in extracting

the virtue from each of the preceding signs, and on the other hand, those who had *failed* to accomplish this entirely. In the Indian astrological system this sign is called *Antyaya*, or the end, the cessation of duality, and the merging of the individual into the universal. Probably, this happens for those who are able to extract the lessons and virtues from the preceding signs. If one fails to achieve this then one remains “a bundle of inconsistencies tied with the cord of discontent,” writes Alan Leo.

Interestingly, the zodiacal sign of Pisces is connected with the Messiahs. For the zodiacal sign of Pisces or *Meenam*, H.P.B. points out that the term Dagon means fish as well as a prophet or a Messiah. She observes that the Christians have tried to connect the zodiacal sign of Pisces (symbolized by fish) only with Jesus Christ. But Jesus was only one of the several world-reformers. The zodiacal sign of Pisces and the constellation is connected with *all the* spiritual saviours, past, present and future, who give out light to dispel darkness. It is erroneous for the Christians to claim that when the Sun entered the sign of Fish, Jesus was born. We might say that he was made to be born at that time by the Church fathers, knowing the connection of that constellation with Messiahs, whereas the real time and year of the birth of Jesus are totally unknown. There is the story of three Wise men who were guided by a star to reach where new-born babe, Jesus was kept. Kepler maintained that at the moment of the “incarnation,” all planets were in conjunction in the sign of *Pisces*, which was called by the Jews (the Kabalists), the “constellation of Messiah.” It is in this constellation that the “*star of the Magi*” was placed. We must also keep in mind H.P.B.’s remark, “No occultist, no astrologer of Eastern birth, will ever agree with Christian mystics, or even with Kepler’s mystical astronomy, his great science and erudition notwithstanding; simply because, if his premises are quite correct, his deductions therefrom are one-sided and biassed by Christian preconceptions.” (*S.D.*, I, 653-54)

## SAINT TUKARAM—LIFE AND TEACHINGS

### II

SINCE THE TIME that the manuscript of *abhangas* surfaced on the water, after being thrown into Indrayani river, it is known as “*bhijki vahi*” or the “immersed book” of Tukaram. He was able to draw more and more people and put them into direct contact with the Divine, by singing these *abhangas*, and thus reducing somewhat, the monopoly of the Brahmin-priests to be mediators between God and the laity, through rituals and ceremonies.

When Rameshwar Bhat, who had accused Tukaram of stealing his poems, went to Pune, on the way, he rested at the garden of a fakir named Angada Shah. Rameshwar bathed in cool waters of a spring in this garden, and was cursed by this fakir for polluting the water. As a result, he suffered from an almost incurable skin disease. People started saying that it was but just punishment from Lord Vithal for having tormented his great devotee, Tukaram. However, Rameshwar paid no heed to it at all, and went to Alandi, the place of Saint Jnaneshwar’s *Samadhi* and meditated there until God showed him the way. It is said that Saint Jnaneshwar appeared to him in a dream and ordered to seek shelter and surrender at Tukaram’s feet. Thereupon, he gave up his pride and fell at the feet of Tukaram, who lifted him gently. It is said that at his very touch the disease was cured. Thereafter Rameshwar became his devoted disciple.

The first meeting of Tukaram with Shivaji, the founder of Maratha kingdom, is vividly described by Savitribai Khanolkar. Tukaram reached the height of his fame as a true saint of Maharashtra, which was side by side with the attainment of Shivaji in his own sphere. The records of those days show that the two of them had met on several occasions, but Shivaji wanted to put Tukaram’s virtue to test before accepting his words and teachings. The story goes that one night, when Tukaram was busy with his devotees, the messengers of Shivaji came to the door-step with valuable gifts. They met Tukaram’s wife and told her that the great King had sent

the gifts for Tukaram's family. The gifts included expensive silk clothes and ornaments. When Tukaram came out having finished his *kirtan* (singing of devotional songs), he saw his wife and children dressed in expensive clothes. He told his wife, "Do you think I value gold more than a piece of clay? Take off these unnecessary articles, none of them will enter my house." As he returned the gifts to the messengers, he begged their forgiveness for having refused the costly gifts of the generous King. He told them that if he were to accept riches, he would surely lose his devotion to God. "Everything, including one's body must be sacrificed in the quest for realization. My Vithal (God) is all the riches I hanker after and I need nothing more," said Tukaram. Shivaji, who was watching these happenings, came forward and humbly touched Tukaram's feet.

When Shivaji insisted that Tukaram should accept him as his disciple, he was told that Swami Ramdas was better suited to become his Guru. Ramdas had the wisdom of a sage and also the know-how of the world. He believed in active religion whereas Tukaram was a mystic and nothing existed for him other than the Lord. Mr. Judge mentions that when an aspirant who has made sufficient spiritual progress, may come across a person that has advanced far on the spiritual path. He may apply to this person and say, "May I be accepted, and may I be a chela of either thee or some other?" That person applied to then perhaps says: "Not to me; but I refer you to some other of the same class as yourself, and give you to him to be his chela; serve him." The chela then goes to the person recommended, and both deliberately agree to it. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 45)

Shivaji maintained his relationship with Tukaram and enjoyed being with him in the temple where he sang devotional songs. It was on one such occasion when Shivaji was lost in listening to the devotional songs that news reached him that a Muslim Sardar and his soldiers had surrounded the place. There was no route of escape for Shivaji, who touched the feet of Tukaram and told him about his predicament. It is said that Tukaram sang the devotional songs with

greater intensity, so that at last the Lord was pleased to grant his prayers, and a miracle was wrought. Soon *several* Shivajis were seen escaping through different doors of the temple, in many directions. The enemy attempted to pounce on each, chasing them to a great distance, when suddenly they found that they had disappeared. All this allowed ample time for the *real* Shivaji to safely escape. (*Saints of Maharashtra*, pp.151-55)

His life account shows that Tukaram did not easily attain to spiritual illumination and ultimate Self-realization. He had to pass through several tests and trials and agonizing pangs of separation from his beloved Lord. He pined for God like a lost child, putting up with untold hardships and humiliations. Finally, when he had the vision of God, he said that at last he had seen "the feet of the Formless Person."

The followers of Saint Jnaneshwar formed themselves into a group called *Varkaris* (the pilgrims), who were on an incessant pilgrimage of life, the goal of which was union with the Divine, to be achieved through pure devotion. According to Dilip Chitre, a poet and a writer, Tukaram's younger contemporary Bahinabai has used the metaphor of a temple to describe the *Varkari* tradition of *Bhakti* (devotion). As visualized by her, *Varkari* tradition was single architectural masterpiece produced by four great saint poets and their followers. She says that Jnaneshwar laid its foundation, Namdev built its walls, saint Eknath gave it a central pillar, and Tukaram became its "crown" or "spire."

*Tukaram Gatha* is a Marathi language compilation of his works, which is believed to have been composed between 1632 and 1650. It is also called *Abhanga Gatha*, and the Indian tradition believes that it includes some 4500 *abhanga*s. An *abhanga* generally consists of four couplets, of which the second couplet contains the central theme of the *abhanga*. They cover a wide range of human emotions and life experiences. Tukaram puts *bhakti* (devotion) at the centre of his spiritual life. In one of his verses, he declares that "God has no form, nor any name, nor any place where he can be seen; but

wherever you go, you see God.” In the *Gita* Shri Krishna says, “The illuminated sage regards with equal mind an illuminated, selfless Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and even an outcaste who eats the flesh of dogs.” Tukaram recognizes this and recommends practicing it. But in a rather humorous way he also warns us that when you show respect to others, it may not always have same impact on all, and may not produce a favourable reaction. But we must continue to see god in all things. Thus, we have a fun poem, with a rather serious message, in which Tukaram says, “I could not lie anymore, so I started to call my dog, ‘God.’ First he looked confused, then he started smiling, then he even danced. I kept at it, now he doesn’t even bite. I am wondering if this might work on people.”

Children behave un-self-consciously. It appears that the extent to which we are able to overcome the ego, the sense of “I,” we get closer to the childlike state. In some vernacular languages the word for “child state” is derived from the root which also means smallness. All saintly people urge us to become childlike. Saint Tukaram also writes in one of his *abhangas*: “*Lahan pan Dega Deva, Mungi Sakharecha rawa*,” meaning thereby, “Endow me with childlike state so that I can be as small as an ant, and enjoy eating particles of sugar.” It means extreme humility which desires no greatness, but rather seeks to be humble, even insignificant. We must strive to achieve greatness and excellence, but must not *feel* great. “That power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.” The *abhangas* goes on to say that we must seek to be “smaller than the small,”—ready to bend and be self-effacing, because “*Mahapure zade jati, tethe lavhale wachati*.” In other words, those who are unbending, proud and inflexible are like tall stout trees, which are destroyed in a great storm, but the humble and unassuming are like the grass which is saved even during great storm and wind, because ready to bend.

(To be concluded)

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

There are multiple aspects to the concept of Minimalism. Traditionally, we resort to periodical cleaning and decluttering of our houses of unwanted objects, and such a practice does help to clear up our minds also, to a certain extent. But then we clutter our minds by collecting ideas, by borrowing concepts from the books we read, and by seeking new experiences by travelling, and so on. We are “bound” when we seek objects or experiences, and of late our focus has shifted from seeking objects to seeking experiences. Also, such pursuits fail to produce a sense of fulfilment. We may come to a stage where we stop seeking objects and start seeking knowledge. Then we may buy a lot of books and clutter our minds with borrowed ideas and concepts. Our entire life would not be sufficient to even turn the pages of the books available these days. We have to learn to rely on our own experiential insight.

Paradoxically, minimalism can be practised without giving up anything, as the journey to minimalism begins with one’s mind, by learning to keep one’s mind detached and clear. We can learn to balance between “maximalism” and “minimalism.” Such are the true renunciates who live minimalist life for themselves, and at the same time give maximum back to the humanity they are serving.

There is no need to give up objects or experiences as long as one learns to live with them, mindfully. A quiet, decluttered mind can lead to decluttering of space, but the converse is not true. “*Tyag na take vairagya vina*,” is the line from a poem in a vernacular language, and it seems to suggest that outer relinquishment is only temporary without inner detachment. Even if you periodically give away unnecessary belongings, if the hoarding mentality is not addressed then you will begin to hoard again the non-essentials.

To enjoy life fully, we must learn to live in the present moment, with whatever it brings, pleasant, unpleasant or neutral experiences. Even when we are ready to rid ourselves of physical possessions and mental concepts, we tend to clutter our minds and our path with



diverse spiritual techniques and tools. “One does not require to give up any objects, experiences, reading, travelling, or seeking; one just has to do it with awareness,” writes Badal Suchak. (*Life Positive*, January 2019)

Minimalism, in true sense, implies living a simple life of self-discipline. We live in an age of sensual pleasures and their continuous enjoyment, where artificial stimulation and multiplication of wants is seen as the sign of progress. True discipline must be from within, without. In disciplining of mind and body, Gandhiji advocated avoiding of two extremes—indulging the senses and forcefully suppressing them. He pleaded for *deliberate* and *voluntary* restriction of wants. “A thing not originally stolen must nevertheless be classified as stolen property, if one possesses it without needing it,” said Gandhiji. This doctrine of non-possession he applied also to thoughts. He said, “Throwing away possessions without the eradication of desires is not the way.” A person who gives up any desire outwardly, but longs for that thing inwardly, is described in the *Gita* as, a “false pietist of bewildered soul.” All discipline stems from mind. The daily exercise of self-examination, makes us aware of our material and non-material possessions. We must seek to discard false ideas, feelings of regret, expectations and anticipations, and strive to *apply* the ideas held theoretically, till they become part of the fabric of our being. To signify the giving up of the non-essentials in life, the Hindus have *Mundan* ceremony—shaving the head. The sincere aspirant has much to unlearn before he can learn. We are all pilgrim souls, travelling together to reach the final goal of Nirvana. For this spiritual journey, we have to prepare our luggage, so that we carry with us only those things which are necessary and useful. The Bhikkhu is asked to empty the boat to travel fast.

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Recently, in two lectures delivered at Indian Science Congress (ISC), at Jalandhar, India, scientists, including the vice-chancellor of a state university, made claims about achievements of ancient

Indians, leading to a controversy. It was claimed that Ravana from the Ramayana had 24 types of aircrafts and that Sri Lanka at that time had airports, referring to a text known as “Vaimanika Shastra.” At this symposium papers were presented on “Engineering applications of ancient Indian botany,” and “Advances in surgery in Ancient India,” claiming that ancient Indians had made fantastic inventions predating ideas in the West in the Early Modern period. It was claimed that the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are not mythology but history and just because we are unable to understand it today, we cannot say that it is not science, write I. P. Singh and Siddhartha Sarma. (*Sunday Times of India*, January 6, 2019)

Mainstream scientists have expressed their displeasure over these claims, and feel the need to make clear to laymen that such claims are not true. Scientists, academics and groups like the Breakthrough Science Society (BSS) are resorting to hard data and petitions to counter such attempts to propagate “pseudo-science,” which is defined as “anything that uses scientific jargon but not the process of science.” Some of them regard the proposal made in the past, by the government, to introduce astrology into university curriculums, as the first state-backed attempt to propagate pseudo-science. It is felt that when ridiculous claims about ancient flying machines are made, they are not based on hard evidence but on knowledge gleaned from religious texts. It is a matter of concern that many urban, educated, working professionals fall for the theories that mix history, science and legend. Some of them feel that Indians need not resort to fake, unsubstantiated claims to have pride in their history, as India has a very strong place in global scientific history, and has been home to great thinkers as Ramanujan and Bose, write Sharmila Ram and Chethan Kumar. (*Sunday Times of India*, January 13, 2019)

The term *Science* is derived from *sciens*, present participle of *scire*, “to know.” Science is a word which covers all forms of knowledge. Behind the visible, tangible world, there exists an invisible, but real world which has not yet been explored by our science. Hence, there exist occult (hidden or secret) chemistry,

physics, psychology, as well as physiology. The knowledge of modern scientists is limited, not only because of their unwillingness to probe beyond the material realm, but also due to inadequacy of the instruments to probe invisible or hidden aspects of man and cosmos. Science—not being able to weigh, classify and analyze the knowledge of the ancients—rejects it as a fraud and superstition.

Theosophy teaches that ancient or archaic India is generally described as ancient Aryavarta, which was a wider and larger country as compared to modern India. There was Upper, Lower, and Western India; the latter of which is now Persia-Iran. Tibet, Mongolia and Great Tartary also formed part of ancient India (*Isis*, I, 589). It is this ancient Aryavarta that was known as the Alma-Mater or the cradle of civilization. H.P.B. points out that Egypt owes her civilization, especially the art of building, to pre-Vedic India. Similarly, the Babylonian civilization was imported from ancient India. The knowledge possessed by ancient Indians is divided into *Sruti* or Revelation; *Smriti* or Laws and Tradition; *Itihasa* and Purana, *i.e.*, History and Mythology. *Itihasa* or History consists of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in which are narrated actual historical events, having also philosophical and mythical aspects. *Ramayana* is the mystic narrative of the struggle between Rama, the first King of the *divine dynasty* of early Aryans, and Ravana, who is symbolical personation of Giant Race of Atlanteans. “It is from the Fourth Race (Atlanteans) that the early Aryans got their knowledge of ‘the bundle of wonderful things’ ... It is from them that they learnt aeronautics, *Viman Vidya* (‘the knowledge of flying in air-vehicles’), and therefore, their great arts of meteorography and meteorology. It is from them again that the Aryans inherited their most valuable science of the hidden virtues of precious and other stones, of chemistry, or rather alchemy, or minerology, geology, physics and astronomy,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 426). Mr. Gerald Massey, a great Egyptologist of the 19th century, held that mythology is the repository of man’s most ancient science, which, when truly interpreted once more, will give death blow to false religious beliefs and dogmas it has

unwittingly given birth to.

The wise Solomon said that there is no *new* thing under the Sun. H.P.B. quotes Ragon who says that most of our modern inventions for which we claim glory, are, after all, things with which people of antiquity were acquainted. Those things, which were lost through wars, floods and fire are being *rediscovered* once more by our modern thinkers. (*H.P.B. Series No. 1*, pp. 5-7)

Does luck really exist, or is it all a matter of perspective? Should the person who survived two deadliest bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, in 1945, in spite of being in the vicinity, be considered lucky? Generally, survivors of terrible plane and automobile crashes, or patients with dreaded diseases who live past their predicted expiration date, are described as hugely lucky. It is puzzling, because one would think that someone really lucky would not have been in a terrible wreck or suffer from an incurable disease, in the first place. Such situations pose questions about the nature of luck: Is it something real or is it purely subjective, and therefore must vary from person to person, depending upon how *they* see the situation? A study was conducted to find out if there was any correlation between optimism and pessimism, and the concept of luck and unluck. It was found that though both optimists and pessimists agree upon what constitutes good versus bad luck, they varied in their judgements of the severity of the bad luck components. The more pessimist a person is, the more unlucky he considers the bad luck component. On the other hand, a strongly optimistic person, will not see the miserable parts of life as being all that terrible. In another experiment it was discovered that when events were presented positively, they were considered “lucky,” 83 per cent of time, but when cast negatively, they were considered “lucky” only 29 per cent of time. Also, luck is thought to be a matter of what is outside of our control. A gambler, athlete, job seeker or a stockbroker frequently uses the words “lucky” and “unlucky,” but “their luck might well be, in a very strict psychological sense, entirely of their

own making,” writes Steven Hales, a professor and chair of philosophy at Bloomsburg University, in Pennsylvania, in an article published in *Aeon* magazine.

There is a feeling that a “lucky” person is the one who is favoured, failing to realize that the “luck” which manifests in advantageous surroundings or in having all things going smooth and right is the result of Karma of this or previous lives. Often, it results from the attitude of complete resignation to whatever comes in life. “Lucky” people are often those who are not anxious but display faith in the law. “Anxiety” puts an invisible obstacle in the path of what we want done. In the absence of anxiety, there is clarity of perspective and it facilitates to turn the tide in a favourable direction. At times, it is not as if the person is advantaged, but he has the knack of turning to his advantage whatever comes his way. The most arduous task is done with such pleasure that it can make others feel that he is lucky to be doing it.

We must not be in a hurry to judge everyday circumstances as “lucky” or “unlucky.” Often, an obvious setback proves to be an opportunity in disguise, and *vice versa*. While it is true that so-called luck or advantages are the result of Karma, whether they are conducive for spiritual progress or not is determined by the way we handle them. It appears that seldom have we the wisdom to use the advantages beneficently. On the other hand, what the world considers as disadvantage is the real “advantage” from the point of view of soul. Struggle, adversity, poverty, etc., help in gaining strength and building of character.

It therefore depends on us how we define personal luck or ill luck. One person who “misses the bus” may growl at his bad luck, another who is used to taking everything in his stride moves on without wasting energy in wailing or becoming ineffective. Even when good fortune smiles on him he is doubly cautious to use the opportunity advantageously for himself and for others, since the higher goal of life is ever kept in sight.