

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

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THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India  
email: ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in ♦ Phone : 22039024  
website: www.ultindia.org

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### ON DOUBT

A GRAPHIC description of *Kali-Yuga*, also called Dark Age or Iron Age, given in *Letters That Have Helped Me* (p. 37) shows that we live in an age of iron, in the forest of iron trees, with branches of iron and leaves of steel. When winds blow through them, they produce a dreadful grinding sound, which tends to silence the still small voice of Love, and we imitate it mistaking it for the voice of God, and increase the terror. It is the sound or vibrations of selfishness and self-centredness, as opposed to that of love and brotherhood, which results in the feeling of despair and an agony of self-doubt, which exists everywhere. So, we doubt each other, we doubt our own capacities, and also spiritual truths.

Doubt is defined as a feeling of uncertainty; an undecided state of mind and an inclination to disbelieve. There are two types of Doubt: (a) Healthy or legitimate and (b) Unhealthy, unforgivable from spiritual point of view. That is why, at times, doubts are praised and at times condemned, leaving us confused. As long as one doubts, there will be curiosity. Curiosity stimulates enquiry and enquiry begets effort. This kind of doubt is intellectual honesty. No one who calls himself “Man” has the right to continue with his blind beliefs. We must “doubt” and hence question our blind beliefs. Credulity and unquestioned cynicism are but two sides of the same coin. Both are forms of mental laziness which avoid critical thinking. Questioning is the middle path between gullibility and cynicism,

and that is the steep path of an honest skeptic. There lies more faith in an honest doubt than in thousand creeds of the world. Healthy skepticism or honest doubt leads one to an ongoing quest for truth.

Where the element of reason is in our doubt, it is of the right kind. For instance, when we engage a new servant, it is our duty to find out if he is honest; we may have our doubts; we watch dispassionately and find out that he is honest. But after that, if we continue to be suspicious, at every turn, every time, then that is unhealthy. Likewise, an honest enquirer has the perfect right to doubt Theosophical teachings, in a healthy sense. His first duty is to examine the teachings, and try to find out if there is a flaw in their consistency or reasonableness. But what would we say of a person who having studied, having examined and understood, goes on doubting? The initial doubt was legitimate, but having verified the teachings intellectually, there must not remain any room for doubt, as to the veracity of the teaching. Buddhism speaks of ten fetters which bind a spiritual aspirant and prevent him from further progress. One of them is *vicikitsa* or skeptical doubt, which is the doubt or indecision of a person who always wants to sit on the fence, all the time wavering, without any commitment.

“Beware of change! For change is thy great foe,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. Change is essential for spiritual growth, but we must take care that it does not begin to apply to things we want to preserve. For instance, once we have decided, after due deliberation, to follow a particular discipline, there should arise no conflict in our mind. Once settled, it must be like Pythagoras’ theorem, verified and accepted by an advanced mathematician. Before accepting the theorem, he has tested it, and hence, does not verify every time he makes its application. Similarly, once having accepted the moral principles, we must have courage to practice them even in the face of opposition from the family, society, religion, etc.

There is another form of doubt, where one seeks tangible proof, for being completely convinced. Thus, a “Doubting Thomas,” is a skeptic who refuses to believe without direct personal experience.

It refers to Apostle Thomas, who refused to believe that the resurrected Jesus had appeared to the ten other apostles, until he could see and feel the wounds received by Jesus on the cross. The skepticism of modern materialistic science falls in this category. Science refuses believe in the existence of God, Soul, Rebirth, Astral body, Astral matter, etc., for the lack of tangible proof. Mr. Judge writes, “Unless we deny the immortality of man and the existence of soul, there are no sound arguments against the doctrine of preexistence and rebirth” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 84). Theosophy puts forward several arguments in support of rebirth. Also, there are instances of people who have remembered their past lives. However, “to get convinced of the fact of reincarnation and past lives, one must put oneself in *rapport* with one’s real permanent Ego, not one’s evanescent memory,” writes H.P.B. In the absence of first-hand experience, the antidote to doubt could be belief based on reason, and then belief based on intuition.

Conviction is illuminated or enlightened belief, which flows from *knowledge based on evidence and experience*. H.P.B. says, “conviction” breeds enthusiasm. The kind of conviction which gives rise to true enthusiasm, cannot be shaken, and is contagious. One enthusiastic person can touch several others around him communicating his zest and fervour. Such a person may appear to make an appeal to “reason,” but what goes with his exposition is “enthusiasm” which touches the *heart* of the listener.

Conviction rooted in knowledge leads to *unshakeable faith*. The first element of success on the path of discipleship is *unshakeable faith* in the Masters and in the Law of Karma. Adepts wrote and said to H.P.B. that where student-aspirants did not doubt the existence of Masters of Wisdom, were not afraid of being ridiculed or challenged, by religion or science, and therefore openly proclaimed the existence of these exalted beings, they were in a condition to receive help from Them. The importance of firm faith in the Masters, on part of the one who aspires to become a victorious disciple has been expressed by H.P.B. in her article, “The

Theosophical Mahatmas,” thus: “He who believes in what he professes and in his Master, will stand it and come out of the trial victorious; he *who doubts*, the coward who fears to receive his just dues and tries to avoid just being done—FAILS.” The latter part of the statement implies the need of firm faith in the law of Karma. Since the Law of Karma is just and merciful, there cannot be a misshapen day. So, instead of complaining or grumbling there must be acceptance or resignation. “One little period passed without doubt, murmuring, and despair; what a gain it would be,” writes H.P.B. We might even go a step further and say, “This is not only what I deserved, but what in fact I desired.” This is an attitude of supreme surrender, of unswerving faith in the Law of Karma. With such an attitude, we will not resort to any prayers or propitiatory ceremonies, to cause to deviate the course of the Law and dodge the karmic consequences. It is total acceptance that “my own comes back to me.”

H.P.B. says doubt is not exactly an unpardonable sin, but still, it is very dangerous, because eternal wavering leads one to wreck. We can likewise consider “self-doubt” to be a weakness which comes in the way of reaching worldly as also spiritual goals. Self-doubt is a lack of confidence in oneself and in one’s abilities and capacities. The one who doubts his capability of becoming a painter, a musician, a teacher, a wrestler, either refuses to take the first step, or refuses to try on account of failure. Would we have ever learnt to walk properly, if after several failures, we as children had given up trying, doubting our capacity to walk? The only real failure is the failure to “try.” The right attitude towards failure can help us to reach the goal. Thomas Alva Edison made 1000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. When a reporter asked, “How did it feel to fail 1000 times?” Edison replied, “I did not fail 1000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1000 steps.” Shakespeare rightly observes, “Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt.” The “good” that we might win, is not only some worldly goal, but also spiritual goal of

self-actualization, or actualizing what is lying potentially within us.

There are two selves in us—personal self and Spiritual or Real Self. We tend to derive our identity from our body, ideas, feelings, education, etc., which is personal self, and necessarily of limited capacity in an ordinary person. Our self-worth is generally measured by others, and also ourselves, on the basis of this “derived” self. There are experiences in life that open our eyes to the fact that our identity runs deeper than our appearance, our achievements, our ideas or feelings. The Real Self is like petrol in the car. Though petrol in the car is not *directly* connected with the movement of the car, it is also true that even the best driver cannot drive the car without the petrol. So also, the power to do anything is present as a potentiality or latency within the Spiritual Self, and it is possible for us to draw upon that power. The more we free ourselves from identification with the personal self, the better able we are to express or actualize that which is lying as potentiality. That *special* skill, *special* virtue or *special* power that the other person possesses, “I” also possess. “I” am not a poor, miserable sinner, either. I have the *potentiality* of creation, preservation, destruction and regeneration. Overcoming doubt, in one sense, is overcoming a wavering attitude and assuming a firm position. This is of great importance when we are pursuing some spiritual discipline, because an attitude of firmness, arouses a superior quality of energy. “We should cease doubting our power to accomplish. If we doubt, it will be like trying to shoot an arrow with a loose bow-string—no force, and no certainty of direction. When the bow-string is pulled taut, and let go, there is *no hesitation* in the arrow. It goes where pointed and with the strength of the pull.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 116)

And yet, a certain amount of healthy doubt or distrust as to one’s own knowledge, conclusions and judgments, is necessary. Till we have reached “intuition with certainty,” we are not likely to reach a hundred per cent correct judgment. While we earnestly try to examine all the ideas presented to us by other people, which appear to be true, we should try to find out if they really have some truth in them.

However, if we fail to find truth in them, we should neither be in a hurry to accept these ideas, nor be in a hurry to reject them, but “largely doubt our judgment at all times,” and lay aside the idea, “as fruit not ripe for us yet.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, pp. 18-19)

All doubts arise from our lower or personal nature. Interestingly, “The greatest error in occultism is to doubt one’s self, for it leads to all doubt. The doubts of others, which we have, always spring from the inward doubt of self” (*ibid.*, p. 162). This profound statement gives us a hint that the only way to transcend doubt is to learn to stop identifying ourselves and others with the personality. We have to get beyond the personal “I.” Are we aware of that aspect in us which is unaffected by praise or blame, adversity or prosperity? Prof. C. S. Lewis writes that if you could only see the person as he really is then you would want to fall at his feet and worship him.

In the *Book of Confidences*, the householder speaks to the Sage and laments that he despairs nothing more than his loss of faith in human nature. The Sage replies that it is only the foolish man who places his faith and trust in *persons*. “Human nature is not to be trusted; this the Wise of all the ages know.” The Sage then makes him see that there is THAT in every human being which can be trusted—which stands behind his human nature, which is the Witness, the Spectator, the Knower, the Judge. It is the source of exhaustless and eternal Power, the Power to take the better course. When we place faith in “That” which underlies the human nature, we may take heart that “however much my friend may betray me, I can have faith that someday, somewhere, he will repair the evil done to me and to all beings, however long ago. *That* is impartial; *That* expects nothing; *That* cannot be added to nor taken from; It ever is, the Source of Faith.” He should not close his eyes to human pitfalls, but learn from his own nature to deal with other human natures as he would find them, and when his faith was firmly established, he could be sure that the betrayals of all the world cannot affect his supreme faith.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE BODY SNATCHER

“THE BODY SNATCHER” is a short story by the Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson. It was first published in the *Christmas “Extra”* issue of the *Pall Mall Gazette* newspaper, in December 1884. The title of the story refers to the taking of the dead bodies or corpses, and in the story, these are being taken to the anatomy department for the purpose of dissection. Sometimes it is difficult to find bodies. The story highlights the point that often, “how” the bodies are obtained is overlooked, as long as they are available for the students to dissect. Every night four friends sit talking at an Inn. One of them, Fettes, an old Scottish man, is known to people as an educated man, with some knowledge of medicine. One night, an eminent doctor from London, named Wolfe Macfarlane comes to the inn to treat some important local person who has taken ill. Fettes recognises the name and angrily confronts the doctor, asking him to leave. His friends are surprised but have no clue to his strange behaviour. Before confronting the doctor, he says, “This man, perhaps, may have an easy conscience and a good digestion,” but confesses that he himself had not been a good, decent Christian.

Later he tells them that he was a promising young student studying medicine in Edinburgh. He and Macfarlane had attended medical school together, under the famous anatomy professor, “Mr. K.” Fettes works as the sub-assistant and it is his duty to receive bodies that are brought for dissection and pay the pair of shifty and suspicious men who supplied them. He has been instructed not to ask any questions as to where the bodies came from, because these bodies were in short supply. The Professor said, “They bring the body, and we pay the price....Ask no questions for conscience sake,” and lightness of his speech never caused suspicion that the bodies were provided by the crime of murder.

However, one morning Fettes recognises the body being delivered as that of a woman he knew, and had seen the day before. The marks on her body showed that she had met violent death.



Fettes is horrified and consults his immediate superior, the class assistant, named Wolfe Macfarlane, who was “clever, dissipated and unscrupulous to the last degree.” When supplies (of dead bodies) ran low, Fettes and this assistant Macfarlane would go out to graveyards in that assistant’s gig (a two-wheeled one-horse carriage) and bring bodies for dissection. When Macfarlane examines the marks on the body of the woman, he says, “it looks fishy,” but convinces Fettes to let the matter go. He plainly confesses that “practically speaking, all our subjects (bodies for dissection) have been murdered,” but they should keep quiet to avoid bringing trouble to Mr. K., and also to themselves.

One afternoon, Fettes meets Macfarlane at a tavern, along with a man named Gray, who treats Macfarlane in a rude manner, making it obvious that he has control over the young doctor. But he takes a liking to Fettes, and tells him about his shady past. Later Fettes learns that John Gray is a local cabbie, who supplies Macfarlane with dead bodies for anatomical research. But when cemeteries are increasingly guarded, Gray turns to murder to provide Macfarlane with fresh bodies. Gray therefore blackmails him. He tells Fettes that Macfarlane hates him, and says that like the young boys play knife, Macfarlane “would like to do that all over my body.” Fettes replies, “We medicals have a better way than that. When we dislike a dead friend of ours, we dissect him.” The next day Fettes does not see Macfarlane or Gray. But then in the early morning after that, Fettes wakes up to receive the delivery of the dead body, brought by Macfarlane. When Fettes looks at the face, he is horrified to see that it is Gray’s body lying on the table. But Macfarlane coolly asks him to make him his payment, and enter the transaction in his book to keep his accounts straight, and also gives money to Fettes and advises him to spend it carefully so as not to raise suspicion. “A horrible sense of blackness and the treachery of fate seized hold upon the soul of the unhappy student.” Macfarlane tells him that there is no going back, and that in order to survive he must act with courage. When Macfarlane left, Fettes saw with inexpressible

dismay, that from concession to concession, he had fallen, to become Macfarlane’s paid and helpless accomplice. And yet, after a few days, Fettes recovered, as the body was dissected and the evidence of murder was gone.

Sometime later, when Mr. K. experiences shortage of bodies, Macfarlane and Fettes are asked to go to a graveyard in a rural area, some distance away, where an old farmer’s wife is being buried. As they are driving back with the body seated between them, they begin to feel nervous and stop to take a better look. The sack, soaked by the rain, clings tightly to the corpse showing its outline clearly, which is that of male body. Fettes whispers, “It was a woman when we put her in.” When they open the sack to see the face, they scream in terror as they discover that the body between them is that of Gray which they thought they had destroyed.

The title of the story refers to the practice of “body snatching,” or the secret removal of corpses from burial sites. The purpose of body snatching, in the nineteenth century, was to sell the corpses for dissection or anatomy lectures in medical schools. Those who practised body snatching were often called “resurrectionists” or “resurrection-men.”

The story is thought to have been inspired by the infamous 1828 serial “anatomy murders” committed by William Burke and William Hare. These two persons committed a series of 16 killings over a period of about ten months in 1828, in Edinburgh, Scotland, and sold the corpses to Robert Knox, for dissection at his anatomy lectures. Knox was an anatomist who had qualified as a doctor in 1814. In the early nineteenth century Edinburgh was a leading centre of anatomical study. At that time, Scottish law required that corpses used for medical research should only come from those who had died in prisons or were suicide victims. The increase in demand, led to the shortage of corpses, and that in turn led to an increase in “body snatching.” Consequently, Burke and Hare murdered people to supply bodies, and make more money. They were caught and Burke was tried in 1828. It is generally assumed that the two “shifty

and suspicious men” or “ruffians,” in the story, who supplied corpses to Mr. K, are based on Burke and Hare, while the character of “Mr. K.” is based on Robert Knox. The *Anatomy Act* 1832 opened a new avenue for the procurement of dead bodies for anatomical studies in the form of voluntary body donation.

The two most important themes in the story are morality in science and guilty conscience, leading us to consider whether there is any alternative to dissection. The story brings out that science should draw a line between being useful and being immoral. End does not justify the means. Dissections have been used for centuries to understand anatomy, or studying the structure of human body and its parts. It is also used to instruct medical students in performing surgery. It appears that adequate knowledge of anatomy can aid proper understanding of cause and remedy of diseases.

There have been social and religious taboos to dissection of human bodies, and it is looked upon as desecration of the body. When a person dies, it is recommended that the body should be disposed of without much delay, following the method prescribed by one’s religion. The human body is held in high esteem, regarded as an instrument or vehicle for the soul, enabling soul to take experience, and is often described as a “temple” of the divine or God within. It is in a body alone that final goal of evolution, *viz.*, realization that we are truly divine, can be attained. Carlyle quotes Novalis, who says, “There is but one temple in the universe, and that is the body of man. Nothing is holier than that high form.... We touch heaven when we lay our hand on a human body!” (*S.D.*, I, 212). We do not possess any right of absolute ownership of our bodies. In the article, “Musings on True Theosophist’s Path” Mr. Judge writes: “Remember this, that you own not one thing in this world. All...you possess is given to you only while you use it wisely. Your body is not yours, for Nature claims it as her property.” Thus, it is absolutely necessary to cultivate a reverential attitude towards human body, both when it is alive and dead.

Even if we agree that dissection of human body is justified to

understand anatomy and for human health, *how* the *cadavers* are procured is equally important. When we say the means are more important than the ends, it implies, among other things that *how* we do something is more important than *what* we achieve. But often, when we are focused on achieving certain “end” or result, we tend to pay little or no attention to method or means employed to achieve the desired end; bent on achieving “by hook or by crook,” or “by fair or foul means.” And often the unfair and unethical means are justified saying, “the end justifies the means.” It is a controversial phrase, which seems to suggest that for achieving a good end one can go to any extent, and even use violence, if necessary. But ends cannot justify the means, as there are certain fundamental principles such as “right,” “good,” “absolute justice,” etc., and we cannot justify violating them just because we have some good goal in mind.

The philosopher Immanuel Kant said that it is immoral to use another person merely as a means to an end, and that people must under all circumstances, be treated as *ends in themselves*. This means we should not use other individuals as means to benefit ourselves or others, and that a human being is *intrinsically* valuable.

Happily, today science has been exploring alternatives to dissecting corpses. These alternatives include computer programs, three dimensional models, films and other forms of technology. Thus, for instance, use of computer technology in a certain medical school, involves using software that combines X-ray, ultrasound and MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) for display on a screen as large as a body on a table. In the “virtual anatomy” approach, students wear three-dimensional glasses, and can observe, step by step, parts of the virtual body, using a pointing device. Once a basic understanding of anatomy is obtained, some surgeons take an opportunity to teach anatomy while performing operations, whenever possible. Likewise, the evolution of technology in recent years has produced virtual cadaver dissection.

In the story, one of the friends observed that Macfarlane looked younger than Fettes, and Fettes seems to attribute it to Macfarlane’s

“easy conscience.” Conscience is defined as consciousness of the moral goodness and badness of one’s own conduct or motives, together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good. In *“Forum” Answers* Mr. Judge throws some light on questions pertaining to conscience. “Conscience seems to be a faculty which may be stilled or made active. In my opinion its source is in the Higher Self, and as it comes down through plane after plane it loses its force or retains power according to the life and education of the being on earth.” Its expression could be partially or totally blocked depending on the ideas, habits of thought and ideologies followed by a person. A savage who kills, or the religionist who indulged in religious persecution for the sake of God and Christ, are both acting according to what they call their *conscience*, but limited and tainted by education or lack of it, and right or wrong beliefs. “In those cases where men are doing wrong according to what they call their conscience, it must be true that they have so warped their intuition as not to understand the voice of conscience.”

Like any human organ, the inner voice grows in strength or atrophies according to the proper use or disuse of the same. At first, it is just a faint voice of warning, checking our impulses, but gets clearer as we pay heed to it. The lower must look up to the higher for guidance. If the channel—*Antahkarna*—between the lower and higher nature, is not allowed to get choked with weeds of personal concerns, fancy, useless accumulations, then the action of the Higher becomes more marked or pressing and may even goad us onward along the path, at times even against personal inclinations and worldly noises. “If we fix for ourselves the rule that we will try to do the very best we can for others, we will generally be led right,” writes Mr. Judge. Apart from the voice of our higher nature, conscience is also built up of the bitter-sweet “lessons” of life, learnt from our experiences. The memory of these lessons becomes part of our nature and warns us against repeating the former mistakes and folly, if we respond to this “warning faculty” in us.

## STRAY THOUGHTS ON LIFE

LIFE—what is it? We are, as it were, in a train which takes us on and on to its destination—death—where we enter another train which carries us to its destination—life. But how little we know of the scenery we pass through and the fellow travellers we meet! We look out of the windows, never at the spot we are passing, but always at that which we have passed or are coming to, and as quickly as a train travels, our impressions come and go.

Normally a traveller travels because he has to reach a destination, and normally he has prepared himself for the journey, though some, indeed, have no forethought and have to be helped by the other travellers—like the man who boasts he travels light, with as little luggage as possible, but accepts the rug of the more heavily laden traveller when it is cold! We miss a lot of the scenery at night and fail to see the landscape beautifully lighted by the radiant moon; so, we retain awareness only during half the journey! Are we attentive even during that half? How often do we lose our awareness during waking life! The Buddha points out that if a man holds himself dear, he must diligently watch himself and keep vigil during one of the three watches. “Watching oneself” and keeping “vigil” implies that we have to be mindful of our every action throughout the day and also meditate and reflect on the noble teachings of the Great Ones during one part of the night rather than sleeping away all the time. The term “vigil” is associated with nocturnal devotions or prayers. It is active wakefulness of spiritual activity as against watchfulness of worldly activities.

Indeed, what is life made up of and what is it for? How shall we keep awake all day and be “awake” in the sleep condition? And “awake” in the death condition? These are questions which need deep thought. Sometimes we tend to become confused by all the instructions given to us, so that we use none of them. Let us engrave in our hearts the facts we know and apply one or two until we have proved them. But *we must apply them*.

## THE LAW OF CHARITY

THE TERM Charity, *Dana* in Sanskrit, has a connotation much greater and deeper than the meaning ordinarily attached to it in the popular usage. It is a noun, in the ordinary sense, descriptive of an organization set up to help and raise money for those in need; and a verb referring to the voluntary act of giving help, typically in the form of money, to those requiring help. Many are organizations actively involved in dispensing charity to the needy in society, and countless are individuals who in their private capacity are helping those in need or voluntarily giving their own money, time, and labour for a social cause. Charity is truly a virtue and a benevolent act, the impulse to which proceeds from the higher and the nobler aspect of human nature.

While the idea of charity is ordinarily associated with voluntary dispensing of help and assistance in objective and material terms, there is another form of charity that is purely subjective. It is the charitable attitude of mind, a non-judgmental, unvengeful, forgiving, and altruistic disposition of character. The latter kind of charity is of greater importance as it is most conducive, to human happiness and social well-being. It is therefore of utmost importance that the cultivation of the virtues of goodness, charity, trust should form the pivot of the system of education so that they become a living power in the life of individuals and the principal feature of the social ethos. If this is neglected, the opposite of these—selfishness, indifference, ill-will—the baser qualities of the lower nature of the human being, which are the root and source of human unhappiness and misery, and every kind of social evil, will become the ruling tendency in human nature. If we neglect to raise ourselves morally and spiritually the passions of our lower nature will drag us down.

For charitable deeds to bear good fruits we must understand and act in accordance with, the subtle moral and spiritual laws of our being that govern human life and higher progress. This is not

generally understood. Very often charity done in the wrong way is productive of more harm than good not only to the benefactor and the beneficiary but to the society at large also. This is generally not known. We greet each other and exchange gifts on special occasions and seasons. Very commonly seen acts of charity are individuals reaching out to the needy with money or material. Philanthropists voluntarily give their time, money and energy for various social causes. Religious organizations are supported by offerings of money and labour by scores of devotees of the particular faith.

All these acts of benevolence *prima facie* are praiseworthy. Many such charitable works are recognized and the philanthropists are honoured and rewarded by the state and the non-state organizations. Every religion lays down deeds of charity to be a mandatory religious duty. Surely, but for such philanthropic acts of charity which are natural to the human being, the world would have been poorer than it is now.

We must, however, pause and reflect, before acting on the impulse to give in charity, whether the act will truly benefit the recipient and do good to ourselves. The common belief is that it does good to both and what matters is the act of giving. But in the opinion of the wise, however, it may not be productive of good to either party if the benevolent act is not in accordance with *the law of charity*. A good outcome to a charitable deed depends on the gift made on the right occasion, in the right season, the worthiness of the beneficiary, the manner of giving, and, most importantly, the right motive on the part of the giver. If these criteria are not satisfied the act of charity will not be beneficial in the true sense. To those well acquainted with the philosophy of the Three Qualities, this is quite plain. It is clearly laid down in the Seventeenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

“Those gifts which are bestowed at the proper time to the proper person, and by men who are not desirous of a return, are of the *sattva* quality, good and of the nature of truth.” The right season, the right occasion, and the worthiness of the recipient of the gift are of importance. The manner of giving, with due attention, with



sincerity, goodwill, and benediction, and with a motive wholly devoid of even an iota of desire or expectation of a return either from the act of giving or from the beneficiary, are to be diligently attended to if the gifts which we dispense are to be productive of good.

It is equally important to know, what is the wrong way of doing charity, in order to avoid harmful outcome from it. “But that gift which is given with the expectation of a return from the beneficiary or with a view to spiritual benefit flowing therefrom or with reluctance is of the *rajas* quality, bad and partaketh of untruth. Gifts given out of place and season and to unworthy persons, without proper attention and scornfully, are of the *tamas* quality, wholly bad and of the nature of darkness” (*Gita*, XVII). The spiritual value of a gift is wholly lost when there lurks in the heart of the benefactor a desire for recognition or expectation of earning religious merit. Insincerity in giving, the reluctant bestowing of a gift, or for outward show or out of hypocritical social convention or custom, and without any thought as to the real need or the worthiness of the recipient are all productive of harm. We may each surmise for ourselves how much of the charity we do is really worthy of the praise of the gods.

Often help extended to some who we feel are in dire straits brings out only ingratitude and other vices which had been kept in check by the very adverse circumstances of their life, which indeed was their best teacher and redeemer. Such instances are illustrations of the merciful aspect of Karma in that the very adversity in which some are situated keep their latent vicious tendencies subdued, which otherwise would be actively manifesting, causing more harm to them and to others. Therefore, indiscriminate help given to such, without a knowledge of the nuances of the Karmic law, will result in harm to the benefactor and beneficiary.

It is the experience of many social activists that some people cannot be helped out of the wretched condition in which they are situated as they seem to revel in it as a result of the acquired Karmic tendency ingrained in their nature. Therefore, it is evident that it

requires wisdom to do charity in the right way that is truly beneficial.

Theosophy teaches that we must act individually in works of charity with a personal touch and sympathy with the beneficiary, to meet not only his actual physical or emotional need but with a word in season and with understanding that is helpful to his spiritual life. It is said that gratitude felt by the one so helped does more good to the beneficiary than to the benefactor. It is advisable to thus always act individually than indirectly through contributions made to organizations. Large amounts spent through organizational channels for the benefit of the needy *en masse* very often does more harm than good, generating adverse national Karma. The good that we may do to others, if it is to be of any true worth, should be unobtrusive and entirely confidential such that the left hand should not know the help extended with the right hand.

The foregoing is the charity—which is sacrifice—made with material things for physical benefit. It is called *Dravya Yajna* in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Greater, more potent, and far more beneficial than this is sacrifice made with spiritual knowledge—called *Jnana Yajna*. The principle and the essence of this practice is stated in a single verse in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: “Every action without exception is comprehended in spiritual knowledge...” (IV, 33). It is the knowledge of the all-seeing, all-comprehending True Self, which is One, and of the Absolute Universal Justice, called Karma, both being synonymous. It is Universal Brotherhood in action, charitable attitude towards one’s friends and enemies alike, uncomplaining acceptance of circumstances of life as one’s just desert, and taking in the lessons of life implicit in the experience. It is the highest virtue, the royal road to human perfection.

Whatever might be one’s attainments, however laudable, it is of no avail if the virtue of charity is lacking. No man who is imbued with the reality of universality of true Self as all in all, and with the justice of the Karmic Law, will ever indulge in unwarranted criticism, or speak ill of others or of their actions, nor retaliate even in thought against anyone who may offend. A person, or a personality, is a

product of Karma, a momentary appearance in time and space of a jot of the vast store of unexpended Karmic energy of the Eternal Divine Ego, the Real Man. None, except a Sage, can ever know the precise Karmic causes of the actions of any person and of the usefulness of the experience he is undergoing for his soul development. Therefore, condemnation of any person or his actions by us, when it is not mandated on us as a duty, would be an infraction of the just Law, thus inviting on ourselves just retribution. He who criticizes others or dwells upon others' defects becomes a sharer of it. One who judges or condemns others will be judged and condemned in his turn. Besides, it is hypocritical too, as none of us are free from defects of human nature. "Judge not lest ye be judged" (*Matthew*, VII:1), was a wise admonition of Jesus.

Criticism of actions, of policy, of a doctrine, of a plan or a program, if made impersonally, without bias, in a gentle tone, with knowledge of facts, and on the basis of universal principles, and with a view to eliminate error and render the same to better accord with the general good, are constructive, educative and reformatory. Such constructive criticism is a vital element in civil society that promotes collective human happiness, true progress and evolution. In the family life of individuals, as between the parent and the child, between members of a family, as also between friends and acquaintances, indulging in harshness of speech, evil speaking, backbiting, gossip, are to be as diligently avoided as one would be wary of stepping on a snake. It is productive of engulfing evil that vitiates humanity and a sure recipe for unhappiness and sorrow. It is the duty of parents to correct children from error by, perhaps, gentle admonition, and principally by personal example in the virtue of charity.

In view of the implacability of the Law of Karma, forgiveness of mutual offenses, and rendering good for evil are the paramount duty of every human being. If, instead, we take the law into our own hands and retaliate against the one who offends—either by word or physical act or by way of vengeful thoughts and ill-will—

not only do we hurt ourselves but, set in motion the Karmic Law which will compensate the victim of our retaliatory act with reward and punish us who delivered the chastisement.

No offense can ever be done against us—whether as individuals or as a community or a nation—which we have not by our own action in the past, individually or collectively, had caused it to fall upon us, the offender being the unconscious agent of Karmic retribution, and who was perhaps not a victim of our past transgression. In all such events the wise one will not retaliate but forgive, and, in turn, do something good and beneficial to the offender. By such a wise course of deliberative action, the wise man leaves it to the just Law to bring about harmonious adjustment of the strained relations which will be beneficial in the long run to the contending parties.

Thorough knowledge and wide dissemination of the Law of Charity and of the modes of working of the Karmic Law—of which unfortunately so little is known—is at the root of individual human happiness, social harmony and international peace, concord and camaraderie.

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I HAVE never met a person, I do not care what his condition, in whom I could not see possibilities. I do not care how much a man may consider himself a failure, I believe in him, for he can change the thing that is wrong in his life anytime he is prepared and ready to do it. Whenever he develops the desire, he can take away from his life the thing that is defeating it. The capacity for reformation and change lies within.

—PRESTON BRADLEY

## EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

### LETTERS OF PERSONAL COUNSEL—VI

TURNING to the noble motive you have of serving the Masters: it is fine. It is the right starting point. Without service, spiritual life may end in what the Buddha has said of the enlightened Bhikkhu who, while living, moves about like a lonely rhinoceros and, when he drops his physical body, becomes a Buddha of selfishness and joins the peace of *Nirvana* for a long period of years. The service motive leads to the right path, the Path of Renunciation, and it is good that you have this service motive in your consciousness.

Your decision is not unwise—to get a job, to continue with your study of Theosophy, to do what you can to live your inner life while you contact the outside world with a new attitude which Theosophy brings to you. In one place Madame Blavatsky has written in a letter to Mr. Judge the following: “What is this about ‘the soldier not being free’? Of course no soldier can be free to move about his physical body wherever he likes. But what has the esoteric teaching to do with the outward man? A soldier may be stuck to his sentry box like a barnacle to its ship, and the soldier’s Ego be free to go where it likes and think what it likes best....No man is required to carry a burden heavier than he can bear; nor do more than it is possible for him to do.”

This gives you a good basis for your own life. Under your plan your task will be, in order of importance, first to develop a centre of consciousness within yourself with the aid of Theosophical study, and to utilize the existence of your Lodge to give your services to the Cause to the best of your ability. Secondly, to earn your own livelihood so that you may be independent to live your own life, waiting for whatever Karma may bring to you in the future. If you live within yourself, outer events will shape and mould themselves after a proper pattern and every time you will have an opportunity to learn and to grow. Thirdly, you will fulfil your duty towards your sick mother, especially as your sister will be leaving your home and

your mother will be all alone. While you are performing your duty to her, to your employers and to yourself, do not overlook that all this can be done from a real, inner point of view. If you are not financially self-supporting you will have to earn your livelihood, but there again one of the steps of the Noble Eightfold Path of the Buddha is Right Way of Livelihood.

I hope that in this letter you will find some aid and guidance. I send you my greetings and best wishes for success in your examination and in your efforts to reorient yourself in the greatest of lives which comes from the service of the greatest of causes.

It is good to know that you have been feeling a kind of divine discontent for some time past; that is good sign in itself though often it is an uncomfortable period psychologically speaking. You will remember the beautiful poem entitled “The Pulley” by Herbert and how this divine discontent was the last ingredient put by God in the making up of man. The allegory has of course a great deal of truth. Men and women in their animal nature, both bad and good, go on without the spark that stirs them to a better life. The recognition of the real meaning of self-conscious existence accompanies this divine discontent. If our esoteric philosophy does one thing more than any other it is the privilege it brings of revealing that life is purposeful, that all things good and bad have a meaning and that there is a goal and an objective towards which we may deliberately go. It is, therefore, a matter of good fortune for you that you have been able to see the purposefulness of life in the midst of this discontent.

It is not difficult to perceive how very full your life is—home, husband, children; Lodge and Service. But in every phase of our waking life the Light can illuminate us. *The Bhagavad-Gita* refers to the “Constant Enemy of Man” in the triune shape of Lust, Wrath and Greed; but it also teaches that there exists a Constant Friend of Man in the body itself. The body is creative in and through every organ; is preservative, for the body contains life-atoms which are vehicles of beneficence, of the good we have assembled in past lives; and there is the destructive force which is dual—death-dealing

or life-giving, *i.e.*, regenerative. Therefore all deeds and words of ours by remembrance and recollection can become rhythmic vehicles of peace and light for us and for all concerned. We are not only miserable sinners, though each one of us carries the stamp or mark of his past crimes and sins; we are unfolding Gods with power at our command—power of thought and will, of aspirations. Every ambition of ours can by understanding become an aspiration. Now, we get opportunities for this practice hourly. The difficulty is our memory; we have to learn to recollect and so to bring memory to our service—memory of what? Of the Great Esoteric Wisdom, and within us is the assimilated aspect of that Wisdom, which acts as Reminiscence. I am writing at some length about this important principle because its use makes the joy of life; living has become a burden for so many. Right application means right endeavour, and that is creative.

As to disappointments: they are always with us. There is a right esoteric way of handling disappointments. “Regret Nothing,” says Judge; but unless we live the life of divine discipline we shall become lazy and careless. But if we act because of a better understanding of Karma and turn every disappointment into an opportunity for the practice of Detachment, the *Viraga Paramita*, we gain greatly. Be calm in your mind and it will develop understanding because of the love in your heart. We cannot *effect* improvement in others; we can only help them to effect self-improvement. Knowledge has to be obtained and then applied. But do not look for or expect disappointments; and also, when pleasing encouragements manifest themselves rejoice and be thankful.

(To be continued)

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EVERY saint has a past, and every sinner has a future.

—OSCAR WILDE

## GOD AND DEVIL—SOME REFLECTIONS

### III

HUMAN beings have free will and therefore the power of choice, and with that comes the moral responsibility. Karma has two aspects: (1) action and reaction on physical plane, and (2) moral responsibility. The former is applicable to all beings. To walk the path of enlightenment and perfection involves making definite choices. The distinction between the ordinary humanity and the student of occultism, desiring to reach adeptship, is brought out in *Light on the Path*. The ordinary humanity or masses of men go through life waveringly, not having definite goal and hence their Karma operates in a confused manner. But the one who wishes to walk the path of occultism is brought to the tree of knowledge, and is compelled to make a definite choice. “No longer is he capable of the indecision of ignorance.” Knowingly he takes steps on the right or wrong path and every step produces great karmic results. Hence, the portion of humanity that has not decided to walk the path of occultism and therefore make a definite choice between good and evil is the lay majority or “useless portion of humanity.” The phrase is coined from Eliphas Levi’s statement: “To be immortal in good one must identify oneself with God; to be immortal in evil, with Satan. These are two poles of the world of souls; between these two poles vegetate and die without remembrance the useless portion of mankind.” The segregation of humanity into three groups takes place after the “Moment of Choice,” when humanity as a whole will be compelled to make a choice between good and evil, when they have a fully developed and active *Manas* (mind)—with complete powers and knowledge. This will take many millions of years. Those who choose neither good nor evil will remain unconscious till the next Planetary *Manvantara*. Those who choose good will become “gods” or part of the race of the “Buddhas” or perfected beings, in the Seventh Round and the Seventh Race. Those who choose evil and take the left-hand path, will become “devils,” and become co-workers with nature in her work of destruction.

In a sense, the process of evolution is the journey of Spirit towards



becoming Self-Conscious Spirit, by passing through mineral, vegetable, animal and then human kingdom. “Spirit *per se* is an unconscious negative ABSTRACTION. Its purity is inherent, and not acquired by merit” (*S.D.*, I, 192-93). Thus, Spirit is pure, but it is automatic purity, like that of a child, not acquired by merit. It can “acquire” purity and self-conscious godhood only after coming to man-stage and attaining self-consciousness. This concept is put very simply in the article, “The Origin of Evil,”: “Eastern wisdom teaches that spirit has to pass through the ordeal of incarnation and life, and be baptized with matter before it can reach experience and knowledge. After which only it receives baptism of soul, or self-consciousness, and may return to its original condition of a god, plus experience, ending with omniscience.” As a result of experience, or addition made of the fruits of Karma, Spirit becomes absolute *conscious* deity.

*Vishnu Purana* gives accounts of three wars, which are mentioned in every cosmogony. These accounts are purposely mixed up by sage Parasara, the author of *Vishnu Purana*, to keep esoteric tenets hidden from lay people. The description of these wars given in Chapter XVII of Book III of *Vishnu Purana*, has been quoted by H.P.B. in the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 419-23). We read that there was a battle between gods and demons which lasted for one divine year, or approximately 3,110,040,000,000 years, in which the demons defeated the gods. This is the first war which took place before building of the Solar system. The gods and demons refer to personified cosmic powers, as it is the period prior to the formation of the Solar system. The duration of the war is important as it signifies the time taken for the formation of the Solar system. The account goes on to show that since the Daityas or demons were doing their assigned work in accordance with the Vedas, the gods could not defeat them. It probably implies that for manifestation to take place, for homogeneity to turn into heterogeneity, one of the two forces has to necessarily predominate over the other, which in the present case was the force represented by Daityas.

After this war the defeated gods pray to Vishnu, and pleased with their prayers Vishnu appears riding on Garuda. The gods tell him that the demons have seized upon the three worlds and they take away the offerings which rightfully belong to the gods, and all this they do *without violating the precepts of the Vedas*. Since they practice the religious penance and perform the duties due to them, the gods say that they were not able to destroy them. They request Vishnu to instruct them in a plan or scheme by which they can destroy the demons. Then, Vishnu emitted from his body, an illusory form, called *Mayamoha*, and told the gods that this deceptive vision will cause illusion in the minds of the demons, and they will be led astray from the path shown by the Vedas, and then you can kill them. Using this device or *Mayamoha*, the gods proceed to the earth where the Daityas were engaged in penances. Then the great delusion assumed the form of an ascetic and asked them why they were performing the penances: to win merit in this world or in the other world. They answered that it was for obtaining reward in the hereafter. The delusive being tells them that he will teach them of the duties, performing which they will obtain heaven or liberation. By many misleading arguments he led the Daityas away from the path of the Vedas. The description shows how the Daityas were persuaded to abandon ceremonials, sacrifices, worship of gods, etc. which they used to perform earlier as per ordinances of the Vedas. Thus, the Daityas were unsettled by the great Deceiver, or Reason. So long as they followed the precepts of the Vedas, they were protected by the armour of righteousness. But when they abandoned the precepts of the Vedas, they were defeated by the gods.

When the gods were able to defeat the Daityas, it refers to the second war. But, H.P.B. says that since the gods, after their defeat in the first war, are shown in the book to rush to the northern shore of the Milky Ocean, and that milky ocean is the Atlantic Ocean, and since many other seas, rivers, etc. have been mentioned, as they pray to Vishnu, this statement belongs to the *third War*, that took place at the close of the Fourth Race, between the Atlantean

Race sorcerers and the adepts of the Fifth Race. She says that Parasara has purposely mixed up the account of two wars. The second war took place at the time of “creation” of man. This mixing up of the accounts of two wars by Parasara could be a deliberate attempt on his part to mislead or confuse the ordinary reader so that the real meaning remains veiled. Use of symbols and analogy, of myths and blinds were the methods by which esoterically important facts were kept hidden from lay people.

In the light of the above remark, it is easy to see that the interpretation of this story is difficult, without the “key.” Yet, on the subject of deceit and cunning we may say that it can be connected with *Mayamoha* or delusion. *Maya* is illusion, which is of perception, such as, seeing the sun rising in the east and setting in the west. Delusion is *Moha*. Delusion is of the conception. Our perceptions are coloured by our conceptions and our preconceived notions. Hence, Shri Krishna says in the *Gita*, “the deluded despise me in the human form.” When a person temporarily forgets the real nature of things, he is deluded and that may ultimately bring about his destruction. This form, *Mayamoha* emitted from the body of Vishnu may be taken to represent the power of producing glamour or enchantment. But in another sense, it may represent illusive power of matter. As H.P.B. points out, evil is not immanent in matter, but in *illusion* produced by matter. Hence, *Mayamoha* deluding the Daityas may be taken to imply that even god-like beings, when on earth, are helpless against the illusion of matter. H.P.B. writes: “Unless a God descends as an *Avatar*, no divine principle can be otherwise than cramped and paralysed by turbulent, animal matter. Heterogeneity will always have the upper hand over homogeneity, on this plane of illusions, and the nearer an essence is to its root-principle, Primordial Homogeneity, the more difficult it is for the latter to assert itself on earth.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 179)

Certainly, the deceiving of the Daityas is not to be taken literally. H.P.B. says that the Hindus, whose sages have given the highest philosophies to mankind, had the knowledge of right and wrong.

Even a savage can differentiate between good and bad to a certain extent, and deceit from sincerity, then it stands to reason how Daityas *who never transgressed the precepts of the Vedas* could have not seen through the deceit of Vishnu. Also, here it is Vishnu, who is the great Deceiver. Therefore, this story of the fall and defeat of Daityas must be interpreted allegorically, because deceit and cunning are never considered as divine virtues. It is by false reasoning that theologians have introduced dogmas and degraded the original teachings.

The allegory has a deeper meaning. As seen earlier, this account of devas approaching Vishnu and he deceiving the Daityas, etc. is regarded by H.P.B. as referring to third war, or the war between Fifth Race Aryan Adepts and the Fourth Race Atlantean Sorcerers. The deceiver is “Reason,” or intellect. We know that based on wrong premise one can come to wrong conclusion. One of the things that the “ascetic” or “deluder” tells the Daityas is that all intelligent people accept only the assertions founded on reason. Thus, intuition is compromised. The dual nature of Rakshasas or Daityas may perhaps be understood in the light of the explanation given by H.P.B. Thus: “Great intellect and too much knowledge are a two-edged weapon in life, and instruments for evil as well as for good. When combined with Selfishness, they will make of the whole of Humanity a footstool for the elevation of him who possesses them, and a means for the attainment of his objects; while, applied to altruistic humanitarian purposes, they may become the means of the salvation of many.” Also, she says that “esoteric philosophy identifies the pre-Brahmanical Asuras, Rudras, Rakshasas and all the ‘Adversaries’ of the Gods in the allegories, with the Egos, which, by incarnating in the still witless man of the Third Race, made him *consciously* immortal. They are, then, during the cycle of Incarnations, the true *dual Logos*—the conflicting and two-faced divine Principle in Man” (*S.D.*, II, 163-64). Thus, the fall of Daityas may symbolize fall of solar angels or *Manasaputras* into generation.

(Concluded)

## THE DIVINE CENTRE

THE ESOTERIC meaning of the word Logos (Speech or Word, Verbum) is the rendering in objective expression, as in a photograph, of the concealed thought. “The Logos is the mirror reflecting DIVINE MIND, and the Universe is the mirror of the Logos, though the latter is the *esse* of that Universe. As the *Logos* reflects *all* in the Universe of Pleroma, so man reflects in himself all that he sees and finds in his Universe, the Earth.” (*S.D.*, I, 25)

Hence, we have the progressive reflection from the “Divine Mind” to “Logos” to “Universe.” In other words, from *Parabrahm* to Unmanifested Logos to Manifested Logos to Man to an Atom. All being a copy of the ONE, hence we get the “Many from the One.” However, this kaleidoscopic vision of “the many” is just an illusion caused by the limited perception of man.

“Thus, to the eye of the Seer, the higher Planetary Powers appear under two aspects: the subjective—as *influences*, and the objective—as mystic FORMS, which, under Karmic law, become a *Presence*, Spirit and Matter being One, as repeatedly stated. Spirit is matter *on the seventh plane*; matter is Spirit—on the lowest point of its cyclic activity; and both—are MAYA.” (*S.D.*, I, 633)

Similarly, in Man *Atma* is reflected in *Buddhi* which in turn is reflected in *Manas* and so forth till our Physical body. Essentially, it implies that *Atma* is “The Only Reality.” Everything in the manifested universe is relative from the perspective of the observer. So, there is a consciousness or spirit aspect, and a matter aspect in the manifested universe. Our Principles form the “Consciousness Aspect,” and each of these principles has a vehicle, and these Vehicles form the “Material or Substantial Aspect.” Also, *Atma* stands to *Buddhi* as Spirit to matter and so forth for the sevenfold division of Man. However, Mind being a manifestation of *Atma* on our plane, individualized, identifies itself with its vehicle. As per “Kabalistic Axiom,” at the level of *Atma* we have “I-ness,” at the level of *Buddhi* it becomes “I Am That I Am” and the same at the Manasic level becomes “I

Am I,” the cause of separateness and self-identification in us. In Theosophical terms, we speak of “personal I” at the level of lower mind or *kama-manas*, then “Individual I” at the level of *Buddhi-manas*, and in the state of *Samadhi*, when all merge into *Atman*, we speak of “Universal I.”

In this manner, we see the reflection of THAT in All. In one sense, every form is an expression of THAT, the degree of the likeness varies. How do we understand this? The Universe being an aggregate of consciousness of varying degrees is the outcome of the periodical “Divine Resonance.” Hence, “Atoms are called ‘Vibrations’ in Occultism; also ‘Sound’—collectively.” (*S.D.*, I, 633)

Spirit or Eternal Breath is Motion, and this motion animates matter (homogenous Prakriti, Matter being *Eternal*) on all differentiated planes of Manifested universe. Eternal Motion (the Life-Impulse) is *Svara (Nada)* or Vibration, the basis of the Pythagorean Music of the Spheres. “Thus, Vach, Shekinah, or the ‘music of the spheres’ of Pythagoras, are one.” (*S.D.*, I, 432)

In this manner, by endless combinations, modifications, and individualizations of the Forces of Nature, the Divine Mind exhibits periodically, aspects of itself to the perception of finite minds. This is analogous to a bud blooming and becoming a fully bloomed flower and then rebecoming a bud ready to bloom yet again cyclically.

“Nothing is permanent except the one hidden absolute existence which contains in itself the noumena of all realities. The existences belonging to every plane of being, up to the highest Dhyan-Chohans, are, in degree, of the nature of shadows cast by a magic lantern on a colourless screen; but all things are relatively real, for the cogniser is also a reflection, and the things cognised are therefore as real to him as himself... Whatever plane our consciousness may be acting in, both we and the things belonging to that plane are, for the time being, our only realities. As we rise in the scale of development we perceive that during the stages through which we have passed we mistook shadows for realities, and the upward

progress of the Ego is a series of progressive awakenings, each advance bringing with it the idea that now, at last, we have reached 'reality;' but only when we shall have reached the absolute Consciousness, and blended our own with it, shall we be free from the delusions produced by Maya." (S.D., I, 39-40)

In *The Voice of the Silence*, Nada is explained as the "Soundless Voice" or the "Voice of the Silence," which seems to mean a spiritual state of sound, vibration, or motion. This inner motion is the noumenal cause of all manifestation or phenomena, as Nada becomes the cause of the universe.

There can be no sound without vibration, for the former is the consequence of the latter. Since *Sabdabrahma*, the power of sound is the source or cause of the world of phenomena which energizes the *Sagunabrahma* (material universe) while the neutral *Brahma* (*Parabrahm*) being soundless. This means that the whole universe and every form in it including Man is vibrating at a specific frequency. What determines our frequency? Our Thoughts, Speech and Action determine our frequency; hence our duty is to resonate and attune to "The Divine Frequency."

From the "One point"—Laya center (Universal Divine Centre in the Macrocosm) we have the "Divine Resonance" projected, propelled and then Fohat, animates, vivifies and electrifies the whole of the manifested universe. Similarly, in Man the Divine Resonance radiates from the "One Point," the "Heart"—"the center of Spiritual Consciousness." This is the Divine Center where we need to consciously reach thus attuning our frequency to "THAT," (Universal Divine Centre) thus harmonizing with the All. In order to reach the inner core of our True Being, the Laya Centre in each one of us, we need to practise and perfect the seven Paramitas. We need to retrace from "I am I" to "I am That I am" to finally "I-ness" only then will the bud of *bodhicitta* bloom in us and we will be able to attune our heart and mind to the "great mind and heart of all mankind."

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Could Sita, wife of Lord Rama, become a role model for modern women? In the epic *Ramayana* we see Sita as having an independent spirit that refuses to bend to any external force, and does not let go of her self-respect, as taught by her father. Sita is seen to strike a balance between her inner voice and her social responsibilities towards others. She sets an example of true sense of independence, by showing that an individual can stand firm even in adversity when confronted by a whole kingdom. Significantly, at the time of her marriage her father blessed her saying, "May you bring happiness, wherever you go," which indirectly meant that she should be happy within, in mind and heart, because only then can she make others around her happy. The message for the modern woman is that she can do the same by being alive to her aspirations and goal, and not necessarily by sacrificing herself.

For Mahatma Gandhi Sita symbolized strength and a woman's ability to protect herself, not depending on men for safety. Sita was abducted by Ravana, but according to him, Sita was like a "lioness in Spirit" before whom Ravana became "as helpless as a goat." "Her own purity was her sole shield and she succeeded where many others might have failed." It was of her own free will that she chose to accompany her husband, Rama, when he was exiled, and embrace an ascetic life of want and privations. And yet, after Rama rescues Sita from Ravana, he rejects her because she had stayed in the house of another man for so long. She undergoes trial by fire to prove her faithfulness and emerges unscathed.

Sita, a model for endurance and sacrifice has been presented as an example for Indian women to emulate. "Women today are multifaceted," but we do notice that as sisters, daughters and mothers they are making their own sacrifices. At some level, women have "the power of being the Shakti that created Ram. ... And every time, it is not necessary that they follow the path of Sita. In fact, regardless whether she is compared to Sita or Kunti, each woman should make



her own identity, judgment and choices. Whether fiercely loyal to her family or strong-willed, she should be true to herself, her dreams and her expectations from life,” writes Dr. Swati Jindal Garg (*Bhavan’s Journal*, December 15, 2020)

*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are the two epics which constitute part of *Itihasa* or History, in which are narrated actual historical events and happenings, in which, the psychological, the mythical and the philosophical moral is carefully drawn. *Ramayana* tells us of gods and goddesses who descended from heaven and incarnated in bodies of flesh and blood for a definite purpose. Rama was an incarnation of Vishnu, and so was Sita an incarnation of Laxmi who came to do her duty and fulfil her mission.

As we read through *Ramayana* we see that there are a few characters, who wrought havoc through their *personal attachments*. We witness in case of Sita, peerless in morals, a transformation from personal attachment to impersonal love, so that the central message of her incarnation is this mighty virtue of *Impersonalized Love*. To be with her lord and husband, Sita went into exile; but she had to learn the lesson of separation so that she might impart it to us; she had to free herself from personal attachment. However lofty, however grand, however legitimate and lawful and even dutiful, was her love for Rama, it had still in it the touch of the personal and she had to get over that. That is why the Law of Karma, which is called the sifter of men’s hearts and duties, produced the test, and she was abducted by Ravana. Sita was separated from Rama! It was terrible agony. But it was a purificatory process and prepared her for the great initiation, the trial by fire. After her rescue from Ravana, although Rama was convinced of her purity and chastity, his subjects were suspicious. When the cloud of suspicion was upon her, it was a chastened and impersonal Sita who spoke—not claiming Rama’s company but seeking the door of death.

What is the lesson? Love ever causes suffering when it has the tinge of personality in it. By magnanimity, by chastity, let us transform our love; let us impersonalize and universalize it. It is that particular

message which we badly need today. The power to make our love pure, chaste and impersonal comes from knowledge and wisdom.

Metaphysically, the pairs of Radha-Krishna, Rama-Sita, may be taken to represent, among other things, *Purusha* and *Prakriti* or Spirit and Matter, and reminds us that the Manifested Universe is pervaded by duality. Spirit without matter, or matter without spirit would only be an empty abstraction. Since the energy of *purusha* or spirit expresses itself through *prakriti* or female, all the goddesses, or consorts of gods, are worshipped as *Sakti*.

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Mind rules over matter, and the quality of mind is directly related to the quality of life. It appears that our mind functions at four different levels, which can be categorised on the basis of levels of consciousness and intention. Understanding and applying this model to one’s own mind one can shift to a higher level with awareness. To explain the first level of mind, called *Unconscious non-intention*, a metaphor of a dry leaf is used. A dry leaf has no active mind and also no intention of its own. It makes no choice, has no intention, but is rather blown away anywhere, unconsciously, by the wind. This mind is *tamasic* in nature, in a state of inertia.

The second level of mind is called *Unconscious intention*, which is the state of mind in which we are influenced by others’ intelligence, such as, we rush to shop when we hear of a discount being offered, irrespective of whether we need those goods or not. We are made to think that by owning goods we will be happy. We are under the influence of someone else’s intention. Likewise, we are influenced by another’s intention, when for instance, we are influenced by our parents’ values, or, give in to peer pressure or unquestioningly follow the norms of the society. In these instances, we are driven by the intention and will of others.

The third level of mind is called *conscious intention*. This state of mind results when we begin to understand that mind is like clay, and a skilled potter can shape it into pots of a variety of shapes.

Here, one tries to be free from outside influences and shapes one's life based on one's own will and intention. For such people the quality of life will depend upon the quality of their intention. Some people use conscious intention to acquire wealth and success, and others for even harming other people. But a few others use it to serve the world. In the case of conscious intention, there is constant self-effort, which may result in stress and karmic entanglement.

The fourth level is that of *conscious non-intention*, which involves letting go of egocentric desires and intentions, and cultivation of the feeling of oneness with the Universe. One begins to care less for oneself and is intuitively guided to do the right thing. "One experiences synchronicity, Grace, and bliss in every aspect of life. It is a *sattvic* state of mind of 'conscious non-intention,' driven by joyful surrender to the Higher Will," writes Badal Suchak. (*Life Positive*, October 2020)

Man has a free will, but that will is influenced by external as well as internal influences. The four levels of mind or four mental states cover diverse human beings in their evolutionary journey. The two extremes of unconscious and conscious non-intention cover *passive receptivity* of mediums and *receptive passivity* of a chela or disciple. A medium is a person who is influenced by others to such an "abnormal extent," as to lose all self-control, and has no power of will to regulate his own actions. However, a medium can give up control over himself either consciously or unconsciously, voluntarily or involuntarily. For instance, a *chela* (disciple) may consciously and voluntarily submit his will, *i.e.*, put himself in *receptive passivity*, to receive communication from his Master or his Higher or divine Self.

The person in the first level of mind is a "medium," and is necessarily an excessively passive person. The more passive he is, the more successful he is as a medium. But in another sense, almost all of us are mediums, because our thoughts and emotions, and hence actions are influenced, in some way, either consciously or unconsciously by another. For instance, a speaker or writer may awaken noble sentiments or arouse bestial and low feelings, and likewise, television, movies and

newspapers could influence people for better or worse. We oscillate between unconscious and conscious intention. In this, conscious intention plays a great role in reaching us to the final stage. We are continually influenced by the ideas of people around us. Theosophy teaches that our thoughts and feelings are impressed in the astral light, which act as a hypnotizing agent. "From our birth we are surrounded by those who suggest certain ideas to us as true, and we follow these suggested ideas. There is very little *original* thought anywhere.... Whatever system of thought is presented to us, that we adopt.... The foundation upon which the suggestion rests is taken for granted, even in the most important things in life" (*Universal Theosophy*, p. 108). Interestingly, the power of suggestion is used also by spiritually perfected beings, but when they suggest certain ideas as being true, they also provide us the means of verifying them. We are left to test these ideas and suggestions before accepting. The application of these ideas leads to the recognition of real nature of man and universe, and the spiritual identity of all that exists, resulting in attunement with the divine.

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The key to happiness lies in our ability to maintain our balance at all times. An entity attains wholeness when its opposing constituents are in equilibrium. Since the outer world is beyond our control, we can only strive to balance ourselves, our mind and body, through appropriate choices and responses to outer stimuli. Mind and body are interconnected to such an extent that the mind is called the subtle aspect of the body, while the body is considered the gross aspect of the mind, and therefore, imbalance in one affects the other. It is of great value to understand the opposites and how to deal with them, especially when we encounter pain. The Self within is pure and desireless, but we sow the seeds of desires and expectations, and thus begin to separate ourselves from the desireless Self, which is our true nature. We seem to move from abstract to concrete, and our actions tend to get more and more aligned with the desires.

We pursue happiness, pleasure and success and seek to avoid

unhappiness, pain and failure. The dualities of birth-death, winning-losing, trust-betrayal, are like two sides of the same coin or reality, which tend to merge together like yin-yang. Happiness, for instance, carries within it the seed of pain and *vice versa*, and each of them carries the potential of transforming into the other. Thus, suffering results when we only pursue pleasure, fame, comfort and avoid the opposite. “All we need is to embrace both, recognition and rejections, success and failures, without rejecting any facet, and address them appropriately when they arise...and on facing difficulties and challenges, persevere, be patient and optimistic...maintaining equanimity in all circumstances is the key,” writes Dhruva Bhargava. (*The Speaking Tree*, January 27, 2021)

Equal-mindedness is called Yoga, says Shri Krishna in the *Gita*. Yoga in the true sense means to unite with one’s Higher Self. Equanimity is necessary in all spheres of life so that the harmony between the divine and the human, and between the human and the personal may be preserved and life’s aim and purpose may be fulfilled. In trying to maintain equanimity, the mind, instead of falling prey to *Kama* rises triumphant towards *Buddhi*. True equal-mindedness has to be rooted in spiritual insight and *viveka-vairagya*, i.e., detached attachment based on spiritual discrimination.

In our search for pleasure, we find that pain is a co-ruler with pleasure. It is a package deal, so to speak. In this continuous war between pain and pleasure, we hope that someday pleasure will win, and then we will be happy forever. There are those rare few who are able to see that just as there is pain concealed beneath pleasure, there is also pleasure, nay, happiness and bliss concealed beneath pain. They begin to value pain and adversity. A spiritual person is affected by pleasure and pain, but does not allow them to shake him or influence his decisions in any way. We can do this by assuming the position of an observer. Then, while one aspect of our consciousness may be involved in painful or pleasurable experience, the other aspect becomes a witness. It is then that we are able to learn from both pain and pleasure.