

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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EXPERIMENT AND EXPERIENCE

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THE SPIRITUALIST, the psychical researcher, the “healer,” the “yogi,” and the “occultist” point out the weakness of Theosophy because it discourages experiments with the unknown laws of nature and the experiencing of the invisible. This cry is echoed by not a few who call themselves Theosophists, and they ask — “What is wrong with observing in a practical way the Third Object of the Movement and developing our own hidden powers?”

Before an answer is attempted the actual words of the Third Object must be examined. It does not advocate or advise the development of hidden powers, but “the investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man” — the investigation of the *laws* of Nature which are not explained by modern science, and thus the furtherance of the very cause of that science along right lines. Similarly, the Third Object does not call upon the student to develop his latent psychical powers, but once again to investigate the laws governing them. The safe way pointed out by Theosophy is the way which is used by us in acquiring ordinary knowledge: theory before practice. Theoretical knowledge is followed by the knowledge of how to make an experiment, and then only the actual experiment is made.

The lure of the invisible, the sense of the marvellous, are romantic and attract not a few natures. They have many opportunities and ample scope to satisfy themselves in a healthy and legitimate way. Below we give no less than fourteen subject-objects of experimentation; let the student who romances about his latent psychical powers experience:

- (1) The existence of his own kama, passion-power.
- (2) That that passion has a life and a will of its own.
- (3) That bodily purity is of two kinds — (*a*) skin-deep and (*b*) magnetic.
- (4) That vital or energetic action is of two kinds — (*a*) æsthetic and (*b*) spiritual.
- (5) That thoughts wander.
- (6) That the Controller of thoughts exists and is superior to them.
- (7) That using thought, that Controller modifies feelings.
- (8) That using thought, that Controller modifies pranic currents.
- (9) That using thought, that Controller modifies bodily health.
- (10) That the Controller has an Inspirer.
- (11) That impulses are not intuitions and hunches are not premonitions.
- (12) That all symbolic dreams are not prophetic and that every nightmare is a taleteller.
- (13) That “sitting for meditation” and “going into the silence” mean more than just “sitting” and more than mere “silence.”
- (14) That the Universe within projects a shadow which men call the Natural Universe.

The Theosophist, unlike the Spiritualist, must note the spook within, the ghost within himself, the return of the dead to his living head and heart, and chase them all out of himself.

The Theosophist, unlike the Psychical Researcher, deals with laws and not with phenomena; thus, he goes straight to the heart of truth, while the Psychical Researcher goes round and round.

The Theosophist, unlike the “healer,” recognizes that ills and evils do exist, and uses counteraction on the plane of the ailment itself. Thus, he does not transplant disease-germs for future use, but takes his time to eradicate the disease, root and branch.

The Theosophist, unlike the “yogi”-claimant, does not try to run away from the world of the flesh and the devil, but subdues these within himself, and then bears the yoke of true Service for the good of all.

The Theosophist, unlike the "occultist"-boaster, does not try to become a sky-walker, a clairvoyant, a kundalini-waker, but labours for the Souls of men in secrecy and silence and helps by wisdom and purity, giving with his right hand what his left does not detect.

All these five types (and there are others) have their own ways and modes whose places and prices are known in Theosophy. They all pertain to side issues, and the work Theosophists have on hand and the end they keep in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave them the time or inclination to take part in side issues.

DIVINITY does not principally esteem the tongue, but the deeds of the wise; for a wise man, even when he is silent, honours divinity.

It is more painful to be subservient to passions than to tyrants themselves.

It is better to converse more with yourself than with others.

If you are always careful to remember that in whatever place either your soul or body accomplishes any deed, divinity is present as an inspector of your conduct, in all your discourses and actions you will venerate the presence of an inspector from whom nothing can be concealed, and will at the same time possess divinity as an intimate associate.

Believe that you are furious and insane in proportion as you are ignorant of yourself.

True goods are never produced by indolent habits.

Esteem that to be eminently good which, when communicated to another, will be increased to yourself.

The unjust man suffers greater evil while his soul is tormented with a consciousness of guilt, than when his body is scourged with whips.

By everywhere using reason as your guide, you will avoid the commission of crimes.

He who is depraved does not listen to the divine law, and on this account lives without law.

No one is free who has not obtained the empire of himself.

—PYTHAGORAS

LANDMARKS FOR THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

H.P.B.'s COMMENTS on civilization in her day can be of great use to us today, for we are finding ourselves rather shocked at the tendencies showing themselves almost all over the world, especially among the youth. There seems to be no doubt that a new cycle is beginning which may change entirely our present accepted order of things, and many people are afraid of the consequences.

Perhaps it would be profitable for students of Theosophy to try to find what lies at the root of today's troubles, and what pattern for the future is emerging.

Times today are not very different from those in 1891 when H.P.B. wrote her article "Civilization, the Death of Art and Beauty" (reprinted in *She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*). She wrote there that "modern civilization with its Spirit of Speculation is the very *Genius of Destruction.*"

Two years earlier, in her article "The Tidal Wave," she wrote: "Take advantage of, and profit by, the 'tidal wave' which is now happily overpowering half of Humanity." And, ever helpful, she indicated what to do: "Speak to the awakening Spirit of Humanity, to the human Spirit and the Spirit in man, these three in One and the One in All." The "hour of the new historical era," she wrote, will strike "for those who will have learnt to express and put into practice the aspirations as well as the physical needs of the rising generations and of the now trampled-down masses." The bad conditions of the time were caused by "the worship of matter, material interests and *selfishness.*" Those who would bravely fight "for human rights and *man's divine nature*" would become the benefactors of the masses in the coming century.

The following sentence is surely a perfect prevision of what was to happen in our century:

Woe to the twentieth century if the now reigning school of thought prevails, for Spirit would once more be made captive and silenced till the end of the now coming age.

We are now in that "coming age." Cycles repeat themselves. H.P.B. wrote of the "late dead calm of public thought that had exiled from literature every reference to Soul and Spirit and their divine working" during the whole of the middle period of the 19th century; but, she

added, "the renovated, life-giving Spirit in man is boldly freeing itself from the dark fetters of the hitherto all-capturing animal life and matter," and we can see this even today. We are also seeing today what took place in her day, a "death-struggle between Mysticism and Materialism," and as then, so now, "the party which will win the day . . . will become the master of the situation and of the future; *i.e.*, it will become the autocrat and sole disposer of the *millions* of men already born and to be born, up to the latter end of the twentieth century" — that is, our own time.

This is where we are. Looking backward, therefore, to the last one hundred years, we should take note of the debits and credits and see where there has been failure and why, and where there has been success and why.

That which disturbs us the most on the physical plane are riots, wars, destruction of property, injustice, infringement of human rights, etc. But does not life go deeper than all this, and is it not the absence of a belief in something higher than the physical body and material possessions that lies at the root of our feeling of frustration? The war for "human rights" is still being waged, but it will continue to lead to violence and disturbances unless man can begin to think of himself, not as a human animal, but as divine. It is because of a lack of appreciation of the true meaning of human rights that there is in the world today licence instead of real freedom. Human rights have come to mean self-determination, self-expression, absence of all restraint, and independence or freedom for oneself at the expense of corporate life. All concept of what is due from each man to every other man, so well expressed in *The Key to Theosophy*, has in the main been lost — unless there is some material benefit accruing! A harsh saying, but it has to be faced. Only the acceptance of reincarnation and karma and the knowledge of man as an unfolding god can give humanity a logical basis for co-operative living. Emerson's cryptic saying, "Everything has its price," and the Buddha's words, "The creeping thief and spoiler rob, to render," can open a vista of hope for the struggling youth of today.

But it must be admitted that there is today a better appreciation of the human right of self-determination than there was one hundred years ago. What we need is to understand what self-determination means. If it is rooted in national pride, isolation, love of power, it will breed destruction. But if there is respect for the self-determination of other

nations, then there will be a real basis for unity among all. In order to value unity in a real way, each nation and race must see what its own vices and virtues are, what it has to give to others, where there is room for change of conditions for the betterment of all. In fact, trying to help others without knowing how best to do so is fraught with danger. Look at the world today and see the damage done by ignoring the sores of one's own country and rushing out to help others get rid of theirs. When each nation strives to find first its own national traits of good and bad, and then tries to eliminate the bad and strengthen the good, the world will be on the way to becoming a family of nations.

Turning to religious thought, there has been a marked improvement since H.P.B.'s time, but once again the destruction of old ideas and concepts has come about without the construction of new ones. Therefore, the inner kernel of the good that underlies all religious faiths has been lost with the discarding of the old concepts. We see how the discarding of the concept of a hell where evil-doers are punished, mistaken though it was, has resulted in licence, and the "man of sin" has become triumphant whereas the "man of Spirit and Immortality" has been lost sight of. Because of lack of thought on these subjects, humanity is still in the throes of wrong doctrines which keep its rightful heritage out of its reach.

H.P.B. wrote that the two great doctrines of Mysticism and Materialism were, in her day, engaged in a "death struggle," and this struggle is not yet over. We see signs of it in the social order. The desire for money is not the only sign of unrest; the desire for greater responsibility in the workings of industry by the workers, and in educational institutions by the students, is a new slant and should be watched carefully. We need to learn to apply the idea that the smallest cog in the largest aeroplane is as much responsible for a safe flight as the most experienced pilot. But the cog was put into place by a human being. Therefore the humblest worker connected with the machine is as responsible as the pilot for the safety of those who travel by the plane. Similarly, without students educational institutions and teachers are valueless. Therefore our attitude towards the teachers and the taught has to undergo a change. There should be a *joint* effort for the good of both. Does the present youth struggle take this into account? Or is it an outburst of plain discontent at any suggestion from another as to what one should do? If the youth has in mind merely the destruction of the existing order with no plan for better construction, nothing but chaos can result. It is

no use trying to "fight" the present youth movement; it needs to be *understood*, and then *led*.

For the student of Theosophy, it would be profitable to try to find out what are the constructive ideas given us by H.P.B. in her article "Civilization, the Death of Art and Beauty." She pointed out there what the result of materialism would be. It "will most surely lead to the annihilation of art and of the appreciation of the truly harmonious and beautiful." One great value of H.P.B.'s writings is that she never leaves a statement to stand by itself but gives the reasons for it. And the reason she gives for the above statement is that art cannot exist "without imagination, fancy and a just appreciation of the beautiful in Nature, or without poetry and high religious, hence, metaphysical aspirations." She wrote that "the picturesque and the natural is daily replaced by the grotesque and the artificial." Do we not see this today in almost every branch of art, in music, dancing, and even in the matter of dress? A few artists are still struggling for perfection in their art, but alas! the appreciation of the grandiose and harmonious is rare. Why? Changes must certainly occur or all would be stagnant, but there must be, and is, a foundational idea at the base of all forms of art and appreciation thereof — that of mathematics, numbers and geometrical forms. Why is it that we miss this fundamental basis?

Perhaps because we think that Nature exists solely for our use. The earth has become merely a means of feeding us, and care of it as an entity in its own right is neglected. Animals are kept as pets, or killed for food or for sport or for their coats, or used for laboratory experiments. The waters that should be life-giving are polluted, and so also is the air. The noise made by jet-planes and the effect it has on the human being should help us to see that material progress has also its destructive side. We cannot go back; we must go forward, but that going forward should be on the lines of harmony and beauty. Many efforts are already being made in this direction. Let us work for that beauty and harmony in our own environment.

How true it is that we lose all touch with Nature when we cannot see the stars and the moon at night, nor the rising and setting sun; when we do not see the fall of the leaves in the autumn, and then the budding, the flowering and again the fall! We rarely feel the peace of eventide, or the "promise" of the dawn. We wake up to surrounding walls, spend the day in the office or in the factory with its unnatural noise and its artificial lights, and go home to "chores," or to the cinema,

or the night club, or to some other form of excitement. We have no time of peace when we can use our imagination, read poetry, or lift up our eyes to something greater and more satisfying than our mundane life. These ideas are not new and can be found expressed here and there, even in our newspapers and magazines. It is our duty to note and spread the ideas so that our thought can reach those of others and permeate deeper into human consciousness.

H.P.B. tells us in fact that the greatest help that can be rendered is through literature. In "The Tidal Wave" she refers to Dostoevsky, who did much good by pointing out the wrongs of his day. She writes: "If asked, what is it then that will help, we answer boldly: — Theosophical literature, hastening to add that under this term neither books concerning adepts and phenomena, nor the Theosophical Society publications are meant." Our particular contribution should be to bring back the concepts of Soul and Spirit, of high aspiration, and by the force of our example, to impress others to follow it.

If she said to those of her day that they should take advantage of, and profit by, the "tidal wave" and "speak to the awakening Spirit of Humanity, to the human Spirit and the Spirit in man," how much more must we at the beginning of our "tidal wave" of change do the same! How glad we should be that educationists over the world are recommending the re-writing of history books for children so that they are more in line with true facts, to avoid the feeding of national pride and hatred of the "enemy"! How glad we should be that the transplantation of bodily organs, for instance, has raised a storm of protest on ethical lines, but sad it is that no note is taken of the mystical aspect of the relationship between bodily organs and the indwelling soul and spirit, and of the right of interference with the body of another!

A thorough study of the two articles mentioned is very rewarding if we compare the conditions in the last century, when H.P.B. wrote, with the conditions now.

OURS is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount.

—GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY

CEREMONIES FOR THE DEAD

[Gathered together here are a few important extracts which give the Theosophical answer to various questions relating to ceremonies for the dead. As the questions were raised by Hindu and Zoroastrian correspondents, H.P.B. refers specifically to the ceremonies in their respective religions, but what she says applies *mutatis mutandis* to the ceremonials pertaining to every other religion. These extracts have appeared in an earlier volume of THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT.—EDS.]

FEEDING THE DEAD

IN *The Theosophist* of February 1882 (Vol. III, p. 120) S. Ramaswamier wrote the following:

It is true that after a person's death his children or kindred offer sacrifice in the shape of *pinda* (rice-balls), calling upon the name of the departed spirit. But it is no less true that it is an article of faith based upon quite a different reason than the one assigned. No educated person would for a moment think that the *spirit* of the deceased hears him, or — less than all — can taste the food so offered. It is done simply as a duty to the memory of the dead, and rather on behalf of the survivors.

On this the Editorial remarks were:

In Christian Russia the same custom of offering rice to the dead prevails throughout the Empire. For six weeks after the death of a person, dishes full of rice with a wax taper stuck in the middle of it are sent at regular periods to the parish church or laid on the tomb of the defunct. There, with the rice placed near, a mass is said for the *rest* of the departed soul in order that it should not become a *bhut*, a restless wandering soul in the earth-region — the latter being considered the greatest misfortune. In Roman Catholic countries it is the same thought of fear for the soul's torments at being earth-bound that underlies the ceremony of the Feast of the Dead held throughout Christendom on the 2nd of November.

NO BENEFIT TO THE DEPARTED

"N.D.K.," a Parsee student of Theosophy, wrote in a letter published in *The Theosophist* of June 1883 (Vol. IV, p. 221):

Enlightened reason rejects the idea that the blundering ceremonial acts performed mechanically could be of any avail to the disembodied portion of man, and yet the Parsees and the Hindus have to spend large sums of money from year to year to allay a superstitious dread lest they might unconsciously do injury to the departed soul. The funeral ceremonies are a real curse to the Parsee, and the middle classes are ground down by needless expenses which lie heavy upon them. Their civilization has been greatly retarded by this crushing superstition. It will therefore be no small boon to learn the opinion of the Occultists as to how far men on earth can—if at all—benefit a deceased person. At p. 179 of the fourth volume of *The Theosophist* Mr. Chidambaram Iyer quotes a Shastra which says that “he who omits to perform Shraddha on the anniversary of the day of death will be born a chandala a crore of times.”¹ This is evidently a writing of an uninitiated priest² who scarcely knew anything about the true doctrine of rebirths. But sentences like these sway the populace, and thoughtful persons for want of a correct knowledge of the occult teaching on this point are themselves troubled with doubts.

...I sincerely trust you will be good enough to enlarge upon this point as it is of the highest moment to the Asiatic races to know what their funeral ceremonies are really worth.

To the above the answer was given in an Editor's Note which we reprint in full:

In every country, as among all the peoples of the world from the beginning of history, we see that some kind of burial is performed—but that very few among the so-called savage primitive races had or have any funeral rites or ceremonies. The well-meaning tenderness felt by us for the dead bodies of those whom we loved or respected, may have suggested, apart from the expression of natural grief, some additional marks of family respect for them who had left us for ever. But rites and ceremonies as prescribed by our respective Churches and their theologians are an afterthought of the priest, an outgrowth of theological and clerical ambition, seeking to impress upon the laity a superstition, a well-paying awe and dread of a punishment of which the priest himself knows nothing beyond mere speculative and often very illogical

¹ The punishment, even if true, would not be so dreadful after all in this our age of enlightenment, when social equality and education are levelling all the castes.—ED., *The Theosophist*

² Most assuredly the threat does not come from an initiated Rishi.—ED., *The Theosophist*

hypotheses. The Brahmin, the Mobed, the Augur, the Rabbi, the Moolah or the Priest, impressed with the fact that his physical welfare depended far more upon his parishioners, whether dead or alive, than the spiritual welfare of the latter on his alleged mediatorship between men and God, found the device expedient and good, and ever since worked on this line. Funeral rites have originated among the theocratically governed nations, such as the ancient Egyptians, Aryans, and Jews. Interwoven with, and consecrated by, the ceremonies of theology, these rites have been adopted by the respective religions of nearly all the nations, and are preserved by them to this day; for, while religions differ considerably among themselves, the rites often surviving the people as the religion to which they owed their origin have passed from one people to another. Thus, for instance, the threefold sprinkling with earth with which the Christian is consigned to the tomb, is handed down to the westerns from the Pagans, Greeks, and Romans; and modern Parseeism owes a considerable portion of its prescribed funeral rites, we believe, to the Hindus, much in their present mode of worship being due to grafts of Hinduism. Abraham and other Patriarchs were buried without any rites, and even in *Leviticus* (Chap. XIX, v. 28) the Israelites are forbidden to "make any cuttings in the flesh, for the dead, nor print any marks" upon themselves. In the same manner the oldest Zoroastrian books, the old and the new *Desatir*, with the exception of a few acts of charity (to the poor, not to the Mobeds) and the reading of sacred books, prescribe no special ceremonies. We find in the Book of the Prophet Abad (*Desatir*) simply the following:

154. A corpse you may place in a vase of *aqua fortis*, or consign it to the fire, or to the earth (when cleansed of its *Nasa* or dead matter).

And Again:

At the birth of a child or the death of a relative, read the *Nask*, and give something in the road of Mazdam (for Ormuzd's sake, or in charity).

That's all, and nowhere will one find in the oldest books the injunction of the ceremonies now in use, least of all that of spending large sums of money, which often entails ruin upon the survivors.

Nor, from the occult standpoint, do such rites benefit in the least the departed soul. The correct comprehension of the law of Karma is entirely opposed to the idea. As no person's Karmâ can be either lightened or overburdened with the good or bad actions of the next of

kin of the departed one, every man having his Karma independent and distinct from that of his neighbour — no more can the departed soul be made responsible for the doings of those it left behind. As some make the credulous believe that the four principles may be made to suffer from colics, if the survivors ate immoderately of some fruit. Zoroastrianism and Hinduism have wise laws — far wiser than those of the Christians — for the disposal of their dead, but their superstitions are still very great. For, while the idea that the presence of the dead brings pollution to the living is no better than a superstition, unworthy of the enlightened age we live in, the real cause of the religious prohibition to handle too closely the dead and to bury them without first subjecting the bodies to the disinfectant process of either fire, vultures or *aqua fortis* (the latter the prevailing method of the Parsees in days of old) was as beneficent in its results as it was wise, since it was the best and most necessary sanitary precaution against epidemics. The Christians might do worse than borrow that law from the “Pagans,” since no further than a few years back, a whole province of Russia was nearly depopulated, in consequence of the crowded condition of its burial grounds. Too numerous interments within a limited space and a comparatively short time saturate the earth with the products of decomposition to such a degree as to make it incapable of further absorbing them; and the decomposition under such a condition being retarded, its products escape directly into the atmosphere, bringing on epidemic diseases and plagues. “Let the dead bury their dead” were wise words, though to this day no theologian seems to have understood their real and profound meaning. There were no funeral rites and ceremonies at the death of either Zoroaster, Moses or Buddha, beyond the simple putting out of the way of the living the corpses of them who had gone before.

Though neither the *Dabistan* nor the *Desatir* can, strictly speaking, be included in the number of orthodox Parsee books — the contents of both of these if not the works themselves anteceding by *several millenniums* the ordinances in the *Avesta* as we have now good reasons to know — we yet find the first command repudiated, but the second corroborated, in the latter. In *Fargard* VIII (Verse “74” 233 of *Vendidad*) Ahura Mazda’s command: “They shall kill the man that burns the corpse,” etc., is thus commented upon — “He who burns *Nasa* (dead matter) must be killed. . . . Burning *Nasa* from the dead is a capital crime” [*Farg.* I, 17 (63)] for “thereupon came Angra Mainyu who created by his witchcraft a sin for which there is no atonement.

the (*immediate*) burning of corpses."¹ Ahriman being man's own ignorance and selfishness.

But as regards the rites observed after the funeral of the corpse, we find no more than this — a repetition of the injunction given in the *Book of Abad (Desatir)*. "An Athravan . . . shall say aloud these fiend-smiting words: Yatha ahu vairyo — the riches of Vohu-mano (paradise; *vohu-mano* or Good Thought being the doorkeeper of heaven — see *Farg.* XIX, 31) shall be given to him who works in this world for Mazda and wields agreeably to the will of Ahura the power he gave to him to relieve the poor (*Farg.* VIII, v. 19–49).

Thus, while abrogating the Fersendajian usage of burning the dead among the devotees of Mah-Abad, Zerdush the 13th (of the Persian prophets) *who introduces* many improvements and reforms, commands no other rites than charity.

TRIBUTE PAID BY CREDULITY TO CUNNING

In *The Theosophist* of October 1883 (Vol. V, p. 23) was published the following letter by a Simla Hindu:

Referring to N.D.K.'s query and your reply in *The Theosophist* for June 1883, on the efficacy of funeral ceremonies, may I be permitted to ask for the explanation of the following.

It is generally believed that after death the souls of some men, owing either to their own misdeeds or the influence of evil stars, cling to this earth and wander on it, assuming at times various shapes and remaining in a state of continued unrest; and that the only way by which they can be delivered from this unhappy condition is through the offering by someone related to them of what is commonly called *Pindam* laid at the feet of Gadadhara, the presiding Deity of Gaya. People whose veracity can hardly be doubted say that the ghosts very often narrate through the persons obsessed by them the tale of their sufferings, and express the desire that their friends and relatives should offer the *Pindam* with a view to their speedy deliverance.

If there is any truth in these stories, what is there in the shrine at

¹ Twelve hours at the least had to elapse between the death of the person and the burning or the destruction by any other means of the corpse of the dead. This old law was equally forgotten by the Brahmins as by the Zoroastrians. It was not the act of *burning* that was forbidden, but burning before the corpse was empty, *viz.*, before the inner principles had the time to get entirely liberated. As the *aqua fortis* was thought possessed of an occult property to that effect, hence the preliminary burning of the flesh by this means — with the Fersendajians.—ED., *The Theosophist*

Gaya that emancipates the ghosts when their previous *karmas* require that they should still hover over the earth? Why should the *reliquiae* of the departed which, under ordinary circumstances, naturally long to prolong their artificial existence, covet their final dissolution? Is it the strong *will* of the person that offers the *Pindam*, or is there about the place itself any latent magnetic power that destroys the *reliquiae*? It is often related that pilgrims on their way to the sacred place see the shadows of their departed relatives imploring them to offer *Pindams* for their benefit. It is also affirmed that in order to convince their relatives that their offering of *Pindam* had produced the desired effect, the ghosts sometimes promise to break the branches off some trees or a piece of cornice from some old buildings which they had haunted and in which they had resided, in token of their deliverance; and that they had actually fulfilled their promise as soon as the *Pindam* was placed at the feet of Gadadhara, the time of both the events being in due time found to correspond exactly together. It is further believed by many that if by some accident the shrine at Gaya were suffered to remain without any offerings being made to it, even for one single day, the presiding *Asura* of the place would rise from his resting place and shake the very world to its foundation.

For any reasoning person who does not blindly follow the *Shastras*, this is a puzzle which he finds difficult to solve, while at the same time he can hardly help believing the stories when related by persons whose truthfulness is beyond question.

If the offerings help really in any way to destroy the Hindu *bhuts*, can they also produce the same result upon ghosts which, while they lived on earth, had neither any regard for the Hindu religion, nor ever heard of Gaya and its *Pindam*?

A short explanation from you would be of immense value to your Hindu readers as throwing light on one of the most mysterious ceremonies daily performed by hundreds of Hindus coming to Gaya from different parts of India and at a great cost of money and convenience.

A HINDU

SIMLA

June 24th, 1883

The following Editor's Note was appended to this letter:

The answer would be more satisfactory, we think, were it to come from some initiated Brahmin or Yogi. If we believe in *bhuts* or "shells" who have to wait in the earth's atmosphere for the slow dissolution of their *reliquiae*, we cannot say the same of Gadadhara. We believe the latter — as we believe all the other minor Hindu gods and goddesses —

no more than the generic name assumed by a host of elementaries who play their tricks upon Eastern credulity as some spooks play theirs upon Western imagination. But this is our personal belief, for which we claim no degree of infallibility. While disbelieving the omnipotence of Gada-dhara, there seems no reason why we should doubt at the same time the words of honest and truthful pilgrims when they tell us that they saw "the shadows of their departed relatives." The air is thronged with *shells* — the pale reflections of men and women who lived and whose *reliquiae* are magnetically drawn to those whom they had loved on earth.

As to the efficacy of *Pindam* or *Shraddha*, we deny it most emphatically. The custom of such *post-mortem* offerings having been in existence for long centuries and forming part and parcel of the Hindu religion, they produce effects, only owing to the strong belief in them of the offerers, or the *pujarees*. It is the latter who cause unconsciously the production of such phenomena. Let there only be a strong medium in the midst of pilgrims (something that happens invariably in a country so full of sensitives as India is), and the intensity and sameness of their thoughts bent constantly and simultaneously upon the object of their pilgrimage, will affect the throng of the elementaries around them. They will repeat that which they find in their friends' brains and clamour for *Pindam*. After which, following the same idea which develops in the pilgrim's thought, *i.e.*, that the offering will bring on deliverance — they, "the ghosts," will promise a sign of it, and perform the promise mechanically and unconsciously as a parrot would repeat a word, or any trained animal perform an act, led on by the superior intelligence of the master mind that had trained it to this.

What is it that puts an end to the unrestfulness of the "Ghost"? Nothing particular, most probably: neither the magnetism of the place devoted to the *Pindam*, nor the strong will of the person who offers it; but simply the absence of any idea connected with the reappearance of the "ghost," the firm assurance, the implicit confidence of the medium that the "ghost" having been comforted by the offering of the *Pindam* can no longer return, or feel unrestful. That's all. It is the medium's brain, his own creative power of imagination that calls forth out of the normal subjectivity into *abnormal objectivity* the ghosts that appear, except in the cases of the apparitions of *real spirits* at the moments immediately following their death. No living being, no god or goddess has the power of impeding the immutable law of nature called *karma*, especially after the death of the person that evolved it.

We would be pleased to see an infuriated *asura* shaking in its wrath “the world to its foundation.” Many a day, during the invasions of and attacks upon cities by the armies of an enemy, have the shrines remained without any offering as they have often been destroyed, and yet the world moveth not. It is the presiding and hungry, when not simply *greedy*, geniuses of the shrines, the Brahmins, who need the *Pindam*, we should say, more than the Gadadharas and the *omnia gatherum* of such. The masses claimed for the quieting of the souls of Christian ghosts paid in hard cash instead of being rewarded mostly in nature are of the same kind and efficacy. And if we are asked to give our honest opinions upon both the modes adopted by the priests of every religion to make the living spend their money in useless ceremonies upon their dead, we say, that both means are in our sight no better than a legal and authorized extortion, the tribute paid by credulity to cunning. Change the name and the story is told of civilized Christians as it is of half-civilized Hindus. But — *Mundus vult decipi* — and who can prevent a willing man from hanging himself!

O UTTAMA! If the father and mother, who were but born, die, why should we perform ceremonies? It is the blind who, relying on their feeble memory so-called and boasting of the *tarpanas* they perform, pour water and gingely seed with all the time-honoured *shraddha* and wander from temple to temple, but withal become not a whit wiser for it.

—*Agastya Pooja Vidhi*

THE LESSON OF THE PLAIN PATH

IT WAS A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN that was facing the Traveller and his heart sank as he listened to the rising wind which was already beginning to toss flurries of snow about the rocks. "Yet," thought he, "I am here of my own free will, on ardent quest of what is adventurous and exhilarating. I could have kept to humdrum ways if I had wished. But this! — this stern glory of the heights — has always secretly allured me."

"Are you sure of that?" asked a voice.

The Traveller saw a Hermit standing earnestly observing him. He was a venerable man, but upright, and his keen eyes belied his white locks.

"You read my thoughts," countered the Traveller.

"Say, rather," replied the Hermit, "your heart. In this barren place, in the course of many years, my gaze has necessarily turned inward."

"Then you see there a lifelong yearning for adventure," quoth the Traveller. "I am come to scale this mighty mountain, for only so can my heart be at peace."

"Are you sure?" inquired the Hermit as before. "Do you indeed feel no counter-attraction? Would you not at this moment prefer, say, the warmth and sweetness of some fair garden, where you might be at rest and indulge happy thoughts, feeling no call to action?"

"Certainly not," said the Traveller. But even as he spoke, his face changed. "Stay!" he added. "You sow seeds of uncertainty. It might be — yes, admittedly it might . . ." As the words passed his lips he found himself reclining in a flowery sunlit bower with a chorus of bird-song in his ears and a delicious lassitude pervading his limbs.

"Ah, what bliss!" he sighed contentedly. "This indeed is the fulfilment of desire. Now I know beyond all doubt that the true instinct of my being is to live at ease in beautiful surroundings and muse tranquilly, leaving the strenuous world to go its own way."

"Are you sure?" asked a voice.

Somehow, it did not surprise the Traveller to find the Hermit watching him. It seemed as natural to see him there among the roses as on the icy mountain track.

"I am indeed," said the Traveller firmly. "I feel it innate in me to lead a quiet life. If I have ever thought otherwise, why, then I was in error. What a blessing to come to an understanding of oneself before it is too late!"

“You do not regret what you may lose? — those mighty mountains never to be scaled by you? The acclaim accorded to others for feats which might have been your own will not cause you to repine?”

“Not in the least,” said the Traveller heartily. But a sudden shadow passed across his face. He glanced round the garden and then closed his eyes to it. “If only,” he murmured, “that vision of wild untrodden ways and that sense of challenge would fade utterly!”

“Look again,” said the Hermit quietly, “and make up your mind.” Opening his eyes, the Traveller found himself back in the desolate snowy mountain fastness.

“What is this?” he cried angrily. “Are you playing some trick on me? I have read books about the Orient, let me tell you. Would you mock me with illusions?”

“There is no need, my son. You yourself are a past-master of illusion. And paradoxical though it seem, you are at the same time its bond-slave,” the Hermit answered solemnly.

“Word-spinning!” scoffed the Traveller. “Come, be honest if you can, my good sir. Am I here or am I there in that garden? Pray tell me where I stand.”

“Willingly,” said the Hermit. “Would that all men would make the same request! Look now. ’Tis granted. Look, my son. Look upon Reality.”

The Traveller gazed about him. Neither mountain nor garden met his eye, but a wide tract of country with a small narrow path running through it. Upon this path he stood beside the Hermit. A single star was shining overhead.

“Look upon Reality!” repeated the Hermit. “Look upon the path which ’tis your earthly lot to tread. That is all that is assigned to you — a pilgrimage. But oh, my son, is it not enough? ’Twas but illusion,” pursued the old man, drawing nearer and laying a kindly hand upon the other’s arm, “illusion, that dire source of many ills, when your heart seemed set upon adventure. Illusion again when the sensual delight of that fair garden seemed, briefly, the *summum bonum* of life. Your true desires were hid from you. Had it not been so, could you have turned in such short time, with words so positive and yet so contradictory, from one extreme to the other? Therefore it is well that you had not the choosing of your lot but entered this bewildering plane of being under Karma. Neither mountaineer nor sybarite, you are simply, under

Karma, a pilgrim. And does a pilgrim need aught save a path? This, my son," concluded the Hermit, "is Reality."

"I begin to understand," said the Traveller. "So this that now lies before me is Reality. A path, a plain path, with no mirages, rosy mists, or illusions."

"But leading ever on," said the Hermit. "Leading — yonder!" And he pointed, as it seemed, into infinity.

The Traveller's eyes followed his outstretched finger, and the expression in their depths was one of quiet resolution. He no longer looked excited or self-complacent. For some minutes he stood gazing in silence.

"Do you see an ending to the path?" asked the Hermit.

The Traveller shook his head.

"Do you see a light in the far distance?"

The Traveller answered "No."

"Do you see anyone who looks like a guide, or a possible companion?"

"I see no one," was the Traveller's reply.

"Yet you are content to go forward simply because it is your path?"

"I am content," said the Traveller.

A smile illumined the Hermit's venerable face. "Go, then, my son," said he, "with my blessing."

The Traveller stepped forward with no further farewell.

The evening star shone down upon him as he fared upon his way.

THE MORAL LIFE of man may be likened to travelling to a distant place: one must start from the nearest stage. It may also be likened to ascending a height: one must begin from the lowest step.

—CONFUCIUS

THOUGHTS ON THEOSOPHY

[The following article was published by H.P.B. in *Lucifer*, Vol. I, p. 134, for October 1887.—EDS.]

“THE LETTER KILLETH, but the spirit giveth life” — this is the keynote of all true reform. Theosophy is the vehicle of the spirit that gives life; consequently nothing *dogmatic* can be truly *theosophical*.

It is incorrect, therefore, to describe a *mere* unearthing of dead-letter dogmas as “Theosophic work.”

When a word, phrase, or symbol, having been once used for the purpose of suggesting an idea *new* to the mind or minds being operated on, is insisted upon irrespective of the said idea, it becomes a dead-letter dogma and loses its vitalizing power, and serves rather as an obstruction to, than as a vehicle of the spirit; but, alas, this insistence upon the letter is too often carried on under the honoured name of “Theosophy.”

A man cannot acquire an idea *new to him* unless it *grows* in his mind.

The mere familiarity with the *sound* of a word, or a phrase, or the mere familiarity with the *appearance* of a symbol, does not, of *necessity*, involve the possession of the idea properly associated with the said word, phrase, or symbol. To insist, therefore, on the contrary cannot be theosophical, but would be better described as *untheosophical*.

It would certainly be theosophical work to point out kindly and temperately how certain words, phrases and symbols appear to have been misunderstood or misapplied, how various claims and professions may be excessive or confused as a consequence of ignorance or vanity, or both. But it is quite another thing to condemn a man or a body of men *outright*, for certain errors in judgment or action; even though they were the result of vanity, greed or hypocrisy; indeed such wholesale condemnation would, on the contrary, be *untheosophical*.

Were I asked how I would dare attempt “to dethrone the gods, overthrow the temple, destroy the law which feeds the priests and props the realm,” I should answer as the Buddha is made to answer in *The Light of Asia*: “What thou bidst me keep is form which passes while the free truth stands; get thee to thy darkness.”

“What good gift hath my brother but it comes from search and strife (inward) and loving sacrifice?”

“A TIME TO EVERY PURPOSE”

MASTER, why is punctuality important?

Friend, I will ask you another question: What do you mean by practical Theosophy?

Master, practical Theosophy means putting the truths of Theosophy into practice in daily life.

How does this show in our life, O Friend?

Master, in kindness to all, in a brotherly attitude to all.

Is that all it means, Friend? That should be our fundamental attitude, of course, but it must be based on knowledge, or it is merely sentimental and does more harm than good. Does not practical Theosophy mean the putting into practice of the *knowledge* we learn?

Yes, Master, I see; but where does punctuality come in? What is its basis in knowledge?

Friend, have you forgotten the Second Fundamental Proposition which tells us of the law of cycles? Does it not tell us that this is a fundamental law which operates at every point in space and at every moment of time? If this is true, then this law must act without fail in our own lives. It is Karma, in fact — action-reaction-action. There is, therefore, a right time and a right place for every act. The *Gita* tells us that even the giving of gifts should be at the *right* time, to the *right* person, and with the *right* attitude. Shakespeare has told us that “there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.” We colloquially speak of “missing the bus.” *Ecclesiastes* says: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”

Is it not also said, “A stitch in time saves nine”? The awful words, “too late,” can prove catastrophic. Does it not strike you, therefore, that there is more to “time” than at first appears?

Yes, Master, I see this in the big things of life, of course, for we know that if we are too late we miss a train that we have planned to catch, but why must we practise punctuality all the time? Are the little things in life so important as to have a right time and place?

O Friend, what do you mean by a “little” thing? Even one little drop of poison can bring death. Is the observance of punctuality in

commencing and ending a meeting a small thing or a big thing? We are called upon not only to disseminate the Fundamental Principles of Theosophy but also to *exemplify* them in practice. As the ceaseless operation of the law of cycles is a fundamental principle of the Ancient Wisdom, we, too, must follow that law in our own lives.

Ask yourself, what causes unpunctuality? A man goes regularly late to his office; he gets up late, he is late with his letters, for his meals, in going to bed. He is late for appointments, etc. Unpunctuality has become a habit with him. What is a habit? "Sow a habit, reap a character," we are told. So habit builds character. Why and how? It is because when we think, feel, or act, we are using elementals, those impressionable entities that we make our own and impress with our own stamp. They fly to us at our wish and, if impressed with the stamp of unpunctuality, they make it almost impossible for us to be punctual!

Think along this line and ask yourself another question: What does the habit of unpunctuality ultimately lead to?

Master, I suppose it must lead to the habit of procrastination.

You are right, my Friend. And procrastination leads, in time, to apathy, which ends ultimately in destruction. So we had better, here and now, begin to follow Nature's eternal Law.

There is also another aspect to this question. Since eternal harmony is the basis of all things, that is, everything fits in properly with every other thing — the right thing at the right time to the right person — since this is the law of the universe, if we do not fit in we disturb the harmony, and this affects not only ourselves but others as well. Supposing we are unpunctual for our meal. It will affect not only the overcooked meal, not only the others sharing that meal and the one who prepares it, but add to this the factor of digestion. Are we not taught that even the stomach works under the law of "cyclic impression and return"? There is natural rhythm in all things. If we disturb this, the lives of our stomach get upset, apathetic, cease to function, etc. Our emotions also get upset, and upset emotions further adversely affect the digestion. Digestion is not just something that has to do with the body. Nothing is simple in the wonderful complex machine of the body or of the Universe. By virtue of the complexity it is essential that things be allowed to work under their own law of being.

Yes, Master, I begin to see.

Friend, there is still another thing to be remembered. What do you

think of an unpunctual person -- that is, if it is someone other than yourself?

Master, I cannot trust him; he upsets my plans; I never know where I stand with him.

Then, O my Friend, do not others feel the same way about you when you yourself are unpunctual? So now, how shall the habit of punctuality be created? First, we are taught to get the right *mental* attitude. Actions follow the mind and feelings, so it is no use merely saying verbally, "I will be punctual." You have to sit down and again work this thing through with your mind and your feelings. We must dismiss the attitude: "Oh, it doesn't matter if I am a few minutes late!" It *does* matter, for the reasons given above. If we do not get rid of this attitude, we shall find ourselves on more and more occasions making excuses for being late. Once we make up our *mind* to be punctual, we can begin to create the habit. We shall not succeed at once, for the elementals we have trained for unpunctuality hinder us. But we have to go on and on and on until we have trained other elementals which are punctual. It is arduous at first, but we must not give in.

Are we not taught to "help Nature and work on with her," and if we do so, are we not told that Nature in turn will help us? Look also at the Ten Items from *Isis Unveiled*. Nature becomes our "material ally, pupil and servant."

This means that punctuality will become a habit and, strange as it may seem, when this happens it becomes *impossible for us to be unpunctual!* We have become, in this respect at least, an ally and master of the Law of Cycles!

IN THE LONG RUN men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, though they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high.

—THOREAU

STUDIES IN "LIGHT ON THE PATH"

III

Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart.

—*Light on the Path*

THE FOURTH AND LAST of the unnumbered Rules, quoted above, contains within itself the summation of the other three. Ramifications of it are to be found in 16 to 21 of the numbered Rules, and that brings us to the conclusion of Book I of *Light on the Path*.

To be able to stand in the presence of the Masters is to have confidence. This implies that in reaching this stage a disciple has gained control over his emotions, found within himself the centre of equipoise, equanimity and peace from which nothing can shake or disturb him. These are not "possessions" in the ordinary sense of the word, but form part of the powers which the inner man requires. Gaining control over his emotions, becoming a Listener or a *Shravaka* and acquiring the gift of speech, the disciple gains all that is needed to begin the journey which will enable him to stand in the presence of the Masters.

To begin any journey a certain preparation has to be made, much more so a journey which has as its end proximity with the blessed Masters. They stand at the top of the ladder, waiting patiently for disciples who are prepared to begin the journey which, if completed successfully, will eventually lead to Them. In numerous places the Masters have indicated that it is *we* who have to take the first step in Their direction. "Every step made by one in our direction will force us to make one toward him," wrote one of the Masters. It is books like *Light on the Path* and *The Voice of the Silence*, as well as other Theosophical books, which will help us to awaken that dormant portion of our nature which aspires to reach the Masters. The way to Them is lighted, in the words of *Light on the Path*, by that "dim star that burns within." It is "the light from the ONE MASTER," which, as *The Voice of the Silence* says, "shoots its effulgent beams on the Disciple from the very first."

The Masters need helpers in the world. Mr. Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy* says that the Masters preserve the wisdom, but "the help of the companions is needed to rediscover and promulgate it." More than that, as *Light on the Path* points out:

...give your aid to the few strong hands that hold back the powers of darkness from obtaining complete victory. Then do you enter into a partnership of joy, which brings indeed terrible toil and profound sadness, but also a great and ever-increasing delight.

The imagery in *The Voice of the Silence* is that of the "Guardian Wall":

Built by the hands of many Masters of Compassion, raised by their tortures, by their blood cemented, it shields mankind, since man is man, protecting it from further and far greater misery and sorrow.

We owe Them a debt of gratitude because we are a part of that humanity which They are protecting from the powers of darkness.

The disciple, therefore, must "Seek out the way. Seek the way by retreating within. Seek the way by advancing boldly without." We are not to seek it by any one road, though "to each temperament there is one road that seems the most desirable."

The disciple must first look within to seek his real motive for desiring wisdom. Is his motive a selfish one, the earning of the peace and bliss of *Nirvana*? Or is it to fit himself "to be the better able to help and teach others"? It is true that the final choice comes at the end of the pilgrimage or journey, but that choice is the culmination of innumerable choices made by the soul — from the stage of the probationer to that of the Adept.

"Not for himself but for the world he lives" is true of the Mahatma; but it must be equally true of the disciple, for his motive, will and intent are all-important. The humblest aspirant must make the effort for himself; no Master can do his work for him. If ever a disciple is to "stand in the presence of the Master" it must be by his own effort, and it is this effort that must take him to that Hall of Wisdom "where the light of truth shines with unfading glory." It is only by the active presence of truth in oneself that one can hope to recognize truth in another, be he an ordinary man or a Master.

Everyone must some time come to the point where he vaguely senses the need for an evaluation of his station. Does he wish to go on or remain where he is? The latter course is impossible because nothing in nature stands still. One either goes forward or backward. So it is necessary for the disciple to seek within himself for his motive.

"The Path is one for all, the means to reach the goal must vary

with the Pilgrims." Though for every disciple the path must begin in his own personal nature, in reality it is one, just as the goal is one, and the Karma of one is interwoven with that of all others. If a disciple catches a glimpse of this truth, he has for that moment united himself with the Great Orphan — Humanity. The memory of that glimpse will never be lost by him, but will serve as an energizing force in his heart.

It is only by "retreating within" that the disciple can advance "boldly without." It is only by gaining in some measure an understanding of his own nature that he can ever hope to understand others. Most of the time the process is reversed and we look without first, and then within. We care little for our own mistakes, but are quick to detect those of others. Until a disciple begins to understand his own difficulties and troubles, can he hope to understand that his fellow disciples and companions along the way also have their own troubles and difficulties?

Day by day and year by year the disciple who treads the path will meet with troubles and problems, but let him remember that it is a "path of woe" only for his personal nature, never for the God within. From the point of view of the disciple's personality, any set of circumstances may be a hell or a heaven, and seemingly new difficulties confront him all the time, but growing knowledge and increasing steadiness will at last bring home to him that the obstacles are not new but are the old circumstances in different forms. Having overcome them once, he knows he can do it again, and does it, learning a new lesson, and gaining in understanding, strength and stability. The Law will bring to him no more than he can endure.

This is the way the disciple learns. Another way is "by testing all experience." Experiences are the effects of causes that have already been set in motion. As the disciple begins to seek these causes, he learns, and when the lesson is learned the necessity ceases. A "test" means "a trial that shows what one knows or can do," and this is how every experience should be looked upon. The disciple is not called upon to rush out to try and experience everything possible; he has rather to learn from those experiences which come to him under Karma. Rigid justice rules the world, so nothing comes to him which he is not ready for. If this fact is relied on with calmness and confidence, then he can face anything that comes, knowing that there is within him the knowledge and power to overcome each and every difficulty.

"The vices of men become steps in the ladder, one by one, as they are surmounted." That is why they must be overcome at the outset and

learned from, for, as *The Voice of the Silence* says:

... if there is one single vice thou hast not left behind ... the ladder will give way and overthrow thee... make thy vices impotent, ere the first step is taken on the solemn journey.

"The virtues of man are steps indeed, necessary — not by any means to be dispensed with. Yet, though they create a fair atmosphere and a happy future, they are useless if they stand alone." Virtue, as commonly understood, is, as *Light on the Path* describes, "useless" if it stands alone. Real virtue is knowledge, and knowledge is virtue. Virtue is that "inherent power or merit" within ourselves; it is knowledge — and its application is contained in the "glorious virtues," the first of which is "to live to benefit mankind"; then follows the practice of the other six. All are needed; no one virtue will lead us to the goal, any more than "devotion alone, contemplation alone, ardent progress, self-sacrificing labour, studious observation of life... None alone can take the disciple more than one step onwards. All steps are necessary to make up the ladder."

Light on the Path next points out that "Each man is to himself absolutely the way, the truth, and the life." H.P.B. is perhaps the best example of this. Whether regarded from the standpoint of precept or example, her human actions and her writings alike evidence the more they are studied that she was herself the embodiment of what she taught, as of the great Objects of the Theosophical Movement. The course pursued by her, no less than her writings and her life, contains a great lesson. Indeed her method is the key to her teachings, as both are the key to her life as well as to our own.

Thus it is that first the way has to be sought by the disciple, and as he walks it, his perception awakes. This awakening of perception is likened to the opening of a flower. "With it comes confidence, knowledge, certainty." This cannot be achieved until the whole nature has "yielded and become subject unto its higher self." Then follows a calm, and herein is contained a lesson for all. During this period of calm, growth is taking place. Many do not question periods of peace, or why they come or what causes them. It is during these "peaceful" times that growth must be watched.

Towards the close of Book I of *Light on the Path* we are told: "Those that ask shall have." Why? Because the voice has lost the power to wound and has penetrated the seclusion of the Master. The disciple has in reality given up "all weapons of defence and offence ... all weapons

of mind and heart, and brain, and spirit. Never again can another man be regarded as a person who can be criticized or condemned; never again can the neophyte raise his voice in self-defence or excuse. . . . He has begun to be born again on to the higher plane of life. . . .”

To ask is also “to feel the hunger within — the yearning of spiritual aspiration.”

“Those who desire to read shall read,” because when the eyes have become “incapable of tears” and the emotions have been overcome, there is the dawning of inner perception and vision. This makes a disciple capable of fulfilling to some extent the “hunger within,” his yearning to reach the goal and all that he aspires to. He is able to read with “the eye of Spirit” and to learn from what is taught. He is now a “listener,” because unless he becomes one he will not hear the voice of the God within, let alone the voice of his Master.

Until the first great battle has been fought and won, it is impossible to learn, but “once having passed through the storm and attained the peace, it is then always possible to learn, even though the disciple waver, hesitate and turn aside.”

The way to achievement lies in finding the path from the world of physical, sentient existence to the inner, hidden world within each one. The way is open to all; the Masters who reign over that world say they have only one word to all aspirants — “TRY.” H.P.B. opened up the way, and furthermore told students:

If one cannot, owing to circumstances or his position in life, become a full adept in this existence, let him prepare his mental luggage for the next, so as to be ready at the first call when he is once more reborn.

This means entering, when the time comes, into “a partnership of joy, which brings indeed terrible toil and profound sadness, but also a great and ever-increasing delight.”

This concludes Book I of *Light on the Path*. It has been said of this first part that it is “like a chord in music; the notes have to be struck together though they must be touched separately.” (*Lucifer*, February 1888)

ARISE, ASSIMILATE, RADIATE

THESE THREE WORDS are very graphic. They cover the stages of the "return home."

In the very early stages of human life, the feeling that arose spontaneously in the consciousness of infant humanity was that of devotion to its leaders, its spiritual guides and instructors. This, in time, was superseded by a different conception, which finally resulted in a turning towards the "creator-father" in fear, with appeals for forgiveness to that arbiter of our fate.

Theosophy offers the conception that growth is a continuous process; that the soul is neither lost nor saved through one earth life. It brings the knowledge of the individual Soul or Ego, the link between the Spirit and the body, between the Divine and the personal—the Ego which gains knowledge through repeated lives on earth. In the place of belief in "the one and only son of God," it gives us the knowledge that all Egos are sons of God; all Egos take on the responsibility for the errors of the personality while that personality is undergoing training to become the temple of the living God.

Theosophy tells us further that it is not enough for us to think only of our individual Ego. This Ego has to be seen as the son of the Father, and the Father-Spirit has to be seen as the One Life. The duty of the Ego is to focus that One Life in the world through the further focus of the personality.

By right study and reflection we have to transform our personal consciousness; we should attempt to rise and assimilate, so as to radiate, the Light of "the only God man comes in contact with," *i.e.*, the Monadic Trio of Spirit, Soul and Mind.

The first stage of the "return home" is reached when a sense of individuality arises in the mind in place of the personal idea. It is the beginning of the awakening of the human being to a knowledge of himself. He who seeks the cause and cure of sorrow and desires union with the Divine takes a further step; he begins to reach to and assimilate his Ego as the bridge between himself and the Divine. He who treads the Paramita Path goes still further and tries to radiate what he has gained, letting the knowledge and virtue acquired pour forth through himself, "the channel of Alaya," into another bed. He makes of himself a window through which the Light acquired can radiate forth and help and guide those in need.

How shall we practise, now and here, this threefold path which we have to keep in view as our goal? How shall we learn to look upon the Ego or the Individuality in us apart from all we know of ourselves, our longings, feelings, desires, thoughts, bodily aches and pains or wonderful health, apart from the environment in which the body lives and moves?

Perhaps it might help us to begin to think of the body as a focus for the Individuality. In time this thought would be impacted in us and we would approach life on that basis.

Then must come the thought that the Individuality is a focus for something higher, the Self or the All. It is only through the Individuality and the personality that the Spirit can shine in its fullness, only through them that the One Light can be focused throughout manifestation. We must try to sense the line of Light which extends from the One Self to the body. We know that without the Self the body could not be, could not function, but we are here dealing with a conscious recognition, an awakening to conscious power. We reach up to that which is beyond our daily consciousness.

The next stage is harder. It is trying to assimilate the Individuality, to make it part and parcel of our consciousness, part and parcel of our activities in the environment in which we are placed outwardly, and of our desires, feelings and thoughts inwardly. The desires, feelings and thoughts of the personality have to become subservient to those of the Individuality. But how shall we know what are the desires, feelings and thoughts of the Individuality? This is where the assimilation comes in. Knowledge of the nature of the Individuality and the endeavour to do its bidding will bring results, just as acting in terms of conscience brings growth in character. Many a fight will take place in us before the personal voice loses its power and the higher voice begins to guide our personality; and still more fights before the personality becomes the willing servant or vehicle of the Master within.

The third stage is one of outgoing—the use to which this added power and consciousness is to be put, and this is the most important aspect of our work. It does us little good to supplant the selfishness of the personality with the self-centredness of the Individuality. Therefore as soon as we become aware of the Ego in us we must keep in mind that it is but a focus for the rays of the One Self. Without the One Self it would not be. Without the body the Ego would not progress. All three are necessary and make a unit. Evolution has to be seen as

the focusing of the Light of the Spirit in and through a body so that It can become aware of Itself in matter. Why? Because channels are necessary to focus the power of Universal Spirit. Man's principles are such foci on the various planes of matter.

The Voice of the Silence tells us what is the basic heart feeling:

Compassion is no attribute. It is the Law of LAWS — eternal Harmony, Alaya's SELF; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting right, and fitness of all things, the law of Love eternal.

The more thou dost become at one with it, thy being melted in its BEING, the more thy Soul unites with that which Is, the more thou wilt become COMPASSION ABSOLUTE.

It tells us also what is to be our basic thought:

All is impermanent in man except the pure bright essence of Alaya. Man is its crystal ray; a beam of light immaculate within, a form of clay material upon the lower surface. That beam is thy life-guide and thy true Self, the Watcher and the silent Thinker, the victim of thy lower Self. Thy Soul cannot be hurt but through thy erring body; control and master both, and thou art safe when crossing to the nearing "Gate of Balance."

It tells us too what is to be our basic line of action:

To live to benefit mankind is the first step....

The living power made free in him, that power which is HIMSELF, can raise the tabernacle of illusion high above the Gods, above great Brahm and Indra. *Now* he shall surely reach his great reward!

Shall he not use the gifts which it confers for his own rest and bliss, his well-earn'd weal and glory — he, the subduer of the Great Delusion?

Nay... those gifts and powers are not for Self.

Would'st thou thus dam the waters born on Sumeru? Shalt thou divert the stream for thine own sake, or send it back to its prime source along the crests of cycles?...

Know, if of Amitabha, the "Boundless Age," thou would'st become co-worker, then must thou shed the light acquired... upon the span of all three worlds.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIME

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ONE has only to look about him with deliberate and passionless gaze, to discover that the days of Materialism are numbered; but it is not so with the forces of good and evil. These remain. Materialism and Spiritism ebb and flow, and the great mass of mankind are engulfed as with mighty waves. The popular idea of prosperity pertains to material things, and yet in this prosperity the masses seldom share. In the most prosperous countries known to modern times, even under democratic governments where the governing class and the wealthy owe their position to the suffrages or labour of the masses, these masses struggle with poverty and ignorance, only partially succeeding, at best, in beating back the devouring waves.

When materialism declines, and when, as at the present time, a spiritual era begins, the condition is the same, though the terms of the equation often change sides, and the prospective enlightenment of a race ends in the liberation of a few, and the superstition of the many. If the rich and powerful are also superstitious, they look upon their own position as an evidence of the favour of heaven, and govern with a heavy hand. If intellectual enlightenment has removed superstition, the rulers become still more indifferent to the welfare of the masses, and are content with material dominion. It therefore transpires that in spiritual as in material prosperity only the few reap the fruits designed for all. The reason for this in either case is ignorance. Hardly one in a thousand of human beings in any community is more than half awake. The intoxication of wealth and the despair of poverty alike bewilder the soul of man.

The Bacchic frenzy of satisfied desire, equally with the unsatisfied craving, deludes the real man; the one imagines that he possesses the source of happiness, the other that he lacks it. The rich man is sure to discover his mistake, and envy is likely to do for the poor what pride does for the rich.

The popular idea of a Christian heaven only enables the rich and poor to change places, as Emerson has so well shown in one of his essays, for such is the logical sequence of rewards and punishments, based on belief and vicarious atonement. If the days of materialism are being numbered for the present generations of men, what under

these conditions is to be the result? If belief in unseen powers and the immortality of the soul is to take the place of agnosticism and soulless materialism, what is to be the result with the seething, sick, and struggling masses? What result to the wiser few? I answer — superstition and fear for the many in the future as in the past; knowledge and enlightenment for the few. And why? I answer again, through *ignorance*.

When this time has arrived, prince and priest will rule by “divine right” as heretofore, and this patent of authority, when driven home to the last analysis, is nothing but the ignorant fear and superstition of the masses.

If all this be true, it gives a most profound significance to the present time; and this is history, and “history repeats itself.” The philosophy of history has revealed the cycles of time.

This may be a doleful view, a discouraging outlook for humanity, but is it not nevertheless a true view? The signs of the present time reveal the dawn of a brighter day, but that day may again close in darkness. Creeds and superstition are crumbling to dust. The old shackles are being broken and the long imprisoned truth set free.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life are being declared, not to the rich, not to the wise, not to the powerful alone, but to everyone who hath ears to hear. Not by favour of the gods, not by permission of kings, but because of the fullness of time, is the glorious sun of truth rising above the clouds of superstition and fear, and everyone who wills may turn his eyes to the life-giving orb. The light that streams from the East for the healing of the nations shines once again for all. It is no respecter of persons. How many will look on it and be healed? Alas! not all who are groping in darkness desire the light. How many are joined to their idols! How many regard darkness as the natural condition and sole heritage of man! Who shall compel them to come in? A solution is offered of every question that has bewildered the mind and darkened the life of man; a way out of half our troubles, and all our perplexities, removing the sting of death, the sharpness of grief, and clothing even poverty itself in royal robes, such as kings might in vain envy. The cry has gone forth, ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the fountain and drink freely! How many have approached the fountain with questions, with timidity! The scientist has put a few drops under his microscope, the chemist reported his analysis, the physicist declared the spring impossible, the bigot cried *poison*. Yet still it bubbles up in all its purity, sparkling with divine light and flooding

the world for the healing of the nations. Few indeed have quaffed the pure waters. In every direction are springing up imitations. Some have poured a few drops of pure water into muddy wells, and are offering the compound at reduced rates as the genuine Elixir, with roads of easy ascent, so that the traveller may carry all his rubbish strapped to his back.

These are a few of the signs of the times. "He who drinks of the water that I shall give him shall thirst no more; there shall spring up in him a well of living water." In every human soul lies hidden the fountain of Youth; this fountain is clogged by pride, lust, greed, envy and all uncharitableness; the springs of knowledge and immortality clear it out and let its waters flow for the good of our fellow man. Do we fear that it shall run dry? Know ye not that it takes its rise in the delectable mountains, and that the more it flows the more it receives; the more it withholds, the less it has, till the fires of self burn out the last drop, and the soul is seared as with devouring flame?

This is not a new religion, but the sentinels of the ages who have so long guarded the sacred stream give it out afresh. The old channels long ago ran dry, and the cry of humanity as with one voice has reached the loving watchers, like the wail of a sick child in the night borne to the mother's heart, and there has come the ready response, *Here am I!* Their motto is, truth and nothing but the truth, and truth against the world. Have they honoured the rich? Have they despised the poor? Have they sought dominion? Have they claimed authority? Where are the signs of evil? Servants of truth, they are the masters of time. Obeying the law, they are no longer bound but free. Wouldst thou approach their sacred abode? Lo! they have made plain the way, and promised an escort when by earnest zeal a certain station is past.

Is it too much trouble? Then blame only thyself for thy future woe. Dost think thou canst climb up some other way? Discover some easier road, then ask thou the right to try; and when involved in thine own conceit, and lost in the labyrinth, thou shalt curse thy folly, and bewail thy fate. May all good angels pity thy folly, only *thou* hast thy fate in thine own hands. The very gods cannot save thee against thy will. Seek then instruction of thine own soul. Listen to the voice of thy higher self, and when the ear of thy soul becomes quick to catch its loudest cry, perhaps thou mayest discern a still small voice bidding thee to come up higher.

—HARIJ

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Dr. Zakir Husain, in his Guest Editorial on "Gandhi Centenary Year" in *Gandhi Marg* for October 1968, considers Gandhiji as not exclusively an Indian but as one who had absorbed into himself the finest in every civilization and culture known to us. The basic ideas, the basic methods of work and the accompanying social disciplines which have come to us from him have, therefore, an abiding significance for mankind. What he stood for is summed up thus by Dr. Zakir Husain:

It would be a mistake to remember Gandhiji only as a saint because he was very deeply a man of the world concerned with political, economic and cultural problems of modern India and the world. He himself was a totally integrated person in whom spiritual, ethical, social and cultural values found their high poise in the magnificent mosaic of a complete life. No leader within our memory balanced so perfectly within himself the dynamic responses to the challenges of the human spirit and to the challenges of material life at the same time. Spiritual and material progress were inseparable not only in the mind of Gandhiji but in every programme of redemptive work of which he became the embodiment. We must keep this synthesis in mind in any attempt to understand Gandhiji. . . .

Primarily, Gandhiji pointed to the inescapable reality of the moral government of the world. Neither the individual nor society nor the nation could live outside the moral law except at their peril. Gandhiji never admitted that there could be a different morality for the individual or the group or the nation. Individuals and nations must operate the tools of politics and economics within the moral law if civilization and culture are to be worth while. The moral law ruled out every type of exploitation, political, economic or cultural. Equally, it ruled out every type of domination by individuals or groups over others. . . . The consequences of the acceptance of this doctrine of universal application of moral principles are so far-reaching that few of us are willing to look this challenge in the face; and yet, if we do not do so, has human society a future at all in a world full of the growing menaces of competitions, rivalries and nuclear weapons?

Nothing is better known about Gandhiji than his insistence on the purity of the means in achieving any great objective or aim, however revolutionary or compelling. To him pure means meant nothing more and nothing less than action based on love and non-

violence. With utter simplicity he defined non-violence as love in action. Hate and violence therefore were impure means. . . .

He wanted the unity of religions in order to discover their inner strength and with it influence politics and economics. The key to the inter-religious unity lay in equal reverence for all the great religious traditions and in the deliberate cultivation of tolerance and the open mind. Without the spirit of religion and morality affecting politics and economics all religions might die of inanition or perish before the onslaught of materialism, rising like a tidal wave in the wake of modern science and technology. . . .

Gandhiji created the concept of a new democracy from which there is hardly any escape for all of us if we wish to remain true democrats. . . . Democracy to be worth the name must not only take the utmost care of the minority but aim at the total freedom and total good of the entire people without any distinction of caste or class. . . .

Gandhiji stood unreservedly for the fullest integrity and development of the individual but insisted that this can only be within a completely just and non-exploitative society. The moral individual and a moral society were inseparable. The test of civilization and culture was for Gandhiji equal justice and equal opportunity to every human being, allowing at the same time the specially gifted to grow to their fullest height and giving the weakest the fullest opportunity to develop to their maximum capacity. . . .

Without the ethics of Gandhiji purifying our politics and exalting our economics, without his non-violence pushing out nuclear weapons and leading the world to disarmament, without this concept of democracy providing for the security and the growth of the poorest and the weakest in society, and finally without the reconciliation of the freedom of the individual and that of society and the nation, which he stood for, there can be little hope of the redemption of mankind.

Theosophy has always asserted that behind the immediate physical cause of any disease there is another cause, the inner one, involving both mind and feelings, and that real health of the body will result only from a clean life and a sane and dispassionate mental attitude. This aspect of the power of mind over matter has long been recognized in modern

science, and the cure of psychosomatic disorders is entrusted to the psychiatrist in preference to the medical practitioner.

Recent experiments go to prove that certain personality types develop particular diseases, and that it is possible for psychoanalysts to diagnose a patient's ailment, without meeting him or knowing his medical record, merely on the basis of a psychological case study. (*The Hindu*, November 3, 1968)

Psychosomatic Specificity, a book published recently by the University of Chicago Press, is an account of the experiments which were conducted from 1951 to 1965 by the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis. The team of psychoanalysts, which was directed by the late Dr. Franz Alexander, a pioneer in psychosomatics, selected patients afflicted by seven well-known psychosomatic ailments — bronchial asthma, neurodermatitis, rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension, peptic ulcer, thyrotoxicosis and ulcerative colitis. Reports of psychological interviews with the patients, carefully edited to delete any clues to the disease in question, were turned over to the analysts for their diagnoses, and these diagnoses were compared with those of medical experts. In 41 per cent of the cases, the psychoanalysts' diagnoses proved to be correct.

Dr. Alexander's theory was that psychosomatic illnesses came "from a combination of variables — a particular psychological disposition, a particular physical disposition, and some precipitating factor in the emotional life that set off the disease." The Chicago experiments are said to validate the theory and are looked upon as "a methodological breakthrough of major importance." To what practical use the findings will be put, remains to be seen.

The fact that the Soviet Union has more centenarians than any other country in the world has of late given rise to many theories as to what causes longevity, and its social, economic, demographic and hygienic aspects have been widely discussed at international congresses of gerontologists and geriatricians. In the Transcaucasian republics of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, there are nearly 5,800 people who have lived over a hundred years. In some districts of these republics there are between 120 and 140 centenarians to every hundred thousand of population. In Georgia alone there are over two thousand centenarians.

These are the figures given by Professor G. Pitskhelauri, Director of

the Georgian Gerontology Centre, in his article on "Aging and Longevity" (*Culture and Life*, No. 9, 1968). None of the two hundred and more theories proposed by gerontologists to explain the causes and mechanism of aging, he writes, accounts for all the complex processes involved. The Georgian Gerontology Centre has been studying the geographic distribution of centenarians, their living and hygienic conditions, heredity, marital status, kind of activity, state of health, diet, diseases, etc. Professor Pitskhelauri writes:

Our observations show that not a single sluggard ever lived to a really ripe old age. Active life and physical work are the decisive factors of longevity. It is not important what a man's job is: the main thing is his attitude to work. Love for one's work stimulates the wish to live on.

Take the oldest man in this country, Shirali Mislimov, now 164 years old. He has worked all his life, and still begins every morning with work in the garden. When he is asked what has helped him to live so long, he answers: "Daily work."...

Scientists have established that as people work less, the functional state of the cardio-vascular system deteriorates markedly. Continuing work increases the compensatory capacity of the organism, particularly of its cardio-vascular system....

More than half of the centenarians enjoy good health. Mostly they are cheerful and sprightly old folk who have retained their mental faculties and the capacity for physical work. They have good memories, hearing and eyesight. They walk a great deal. None of them are fat. As a rule they keep to a mixed diet and never overeat....

All these are good material applications of the Theosophical principle of the "middle way" — moderation in all things pertaining to one's mode of living. If men and women do not live sanely, they will die prematurely. But this is not all. Another aspect of the question is explained by Mr. Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. The body, he says, is subject to physical, physiological and psychical laws which govern the race of man as a whole. "Hence its period of possible continuance can be calculated just as the limit of tensile strain among the metals used in bridge building can be deduced by the engineer." Elsewhere he explains that the astral body is the cohesive principle within the physical organism. While the latter is constantly changing, this inner form "alters only from life to life, being constructed at the time of reincarnation to last for a whole period of existence." The length of this period is set by individual Karma.

The outer body is kept in shape by the inner one until the period of decay. And this decay, followed by death, is not due to bodily disintegration *per se*, but to the fact that the term of the astral body is reached, when it is no longer able to hold the outer frame intact. Its power to resist the impact and war of the material molecules being exhausted, the sleep of death supervenes. (*The Heart Doctrine*, p. 118)

The increase in drug-taking in the West, particularly among young people, has received and still receives wide publicity. But the increase in alcoholism has been given comparatively little attention. In Britain, for example, there are far more alcoholics than drug addicts. Estimates place the number of alcoholics at around 500,000 as against about 2,000 heroin addicts and a somewhat larger number of those who take barbiturates. Moreover, alcoholism among the young is on the increase. (*The Times of India*, December 2, 1968)

So serious is the problem in Britain that 18 months ago a Medical Council on Alcoholism was formed to help rehabilitate alcoholics. The Council, a private body, has now announced an ambitious plan of research, education, publicity, and treatment.

According to some experts, an alcoholic can never be completely cured; he can at best achieve "recovery," *i.e.*, be able to live a useful life once more. But he will still from time to time badly need drink. The treating of patients is very important, but prevention is better than cure. It is the education of young people and of their parents that must be looked to for arresting the spread of alcohol addiction. Man needs to be enlightened on his responsibilities.

We know some effects of alcohol on the physical body. But do we know all its consequences? Man is a unit, and he is more than his body. Alcohol degrades not only the physical body but also the incarnated consciousness. It paralyses the control of the mind and liberates the animal tendencies, making a man no better than a beast, and thus frustrates the purpose of the Soul.

Mr. Judge wrote in a letter quoted in the Semicentennial Edition of *Letters That Have Helped Me* (pp. 177-78):

Generally speaking, the habit of drinking intoxicants is due to a desire to get rid of what might be called the present personal

consciousness. When people drink to try and drown sorrow, pain, worry, they clearly do it with that motive in view. But others drink without any such ostensible motive, though still with the same actual motive, for they long to get rid of what is to them an intolerable sense of identity, of monotony, of sameness. It is an effort to produce by extraneous aids what can only be done properly and lastingly by interior development. People read trashy novels, gamble and so forth with the same motive, that is to say, with the intention of getting rid of their personal identity for the time being. Ultimately, the race will come to realize that this can only be achieved by identification of the ego with the higher instead of the lower nature. Meanwhile, and for the ordinary person, healthy and interesting occupation is the best cure for such a habit. If possible, he should be made to understand that the desire for drink is now a habit in certain lives in his body, whose very existence depends upon their being fed with alcohol. The desire is not in himself unless he is foolish enough to identify himself with the desire. Once he ceases to so identify himself, the desire will lose more than half its power over him.

The cult of scientology, which has become the subject of controversy in many Western countries, continues to meet with official disapproval (*The Times of India*, November 8). Scientology is supposed to be, in the words of one of its "priests," "an everyday philosophy, a technology of the human spirit... an aim at total know." It also claims to be the study of knowledge in the widest sense of the term. Beyond these abstractions, it has little that is concrete to offer. Its so-called "philosophy" is expressed in meaningless jargon. It believes everyone is "normal," and one of its objectives is to "clear" people, *i.e.*, free them of all inhibitions. Thus, a criminal or a psychopath who is a scientologist must not refrain from doing what he feels like doing or is driven to do. In other words, social obligations should not inhibit behaviour, no matter what kind of behaviour it is.

Thus, scientology poses a threat to social and communal life. In England, where it was born and where it has its headquarters, it has been described as "socially harmful" and attempts have been made to curb it. In Canada, the U.S. and Europe, it is regarded with a great deal of suspicion. Now Western Australia has banned it by law.
