

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE LAW OF SYMPATHY

A MASTER of Wisdom points out that the law of sympathy works at all levels. Thus:

Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy, and there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man; thought runs swifter than the electric fluid, and your thought will find me if projected by a pure impulse, as mine will find, has found, and often impressed upon your mind....Like the light in the sombre valley seen by the mountaineer from his peaks, every bright thought in your mind...will sparkle and attract the attention of your distant friend and correspondent.

There exists a sort of universal magnetism. Father Kircher said that there is but One Magnet in the universe from which proceeds the magnetization of everything existing, and that magnet is the Central Spiritual Sun, or God. He observed that sun, moon, stars and planets become highly magnetic by living in the universal magnetic fluid or Spiritual light. Hence there exists a mysterious sympathy between the bodies of plants, animals, and humans. There are plants that are especially attracted to the sun and some others to the moon. Vine feels natural antipathy towards cabbage but sympathy towards the olive-tree. “Kircher accounts for every feeling in human nature as the result of changes in our magnetic condition. Anger,

jealousy, friendship, love and hatred, are all modifications of the magnetic atmosphere which is developed in us and constantly emanates from us.” Sympathy is a holy and natural power of magnetism, while fascination is evil and unnatural. Spiritual love, that of the mother for her child, or love as pure friendship, are purely magnetic manifestations of sympathy in congenial natures. (*Isis*, I, 209-10)

The Voice of the Silence also mentions the same idea, comparing the disciples to the strings of a Vina. All the disciples in a group affect one another as they are bound together by psychic ties, like the mother to the child. We are interconnected on the inner plane. One person’s unhappiness pollutes not only his own inner being and of those around him, but also the collective psyche of which he is an inseparable part. Further, any negative inner state is contagious. Through the law of resonance, it triggers and feeds latent negativity in others. Mr. Crosbie writes:

It is better to assume a cheerful attitude, to cultivate in one’s self a feeling of confidence, and endeavour to impart it to our nearest. Our anxiety and inner fears, as well as our outward expression of them, may go a great way in depressing those who love us and whom we love.

So also, in U.L.T. the inner state of the student—one of indifference or of enthusiasm towards the teachings and the teachers, helps or hinders the progress of the entire Lodge. We notice that if one of the students is absent at a meeting, a magnetic gap is produced and he seems to give an impulse to others, in that direction. There are psychic currents between the Group of disciples (students) and the Masters. They are channels through which help can be received from the Teachers. When faith in the Masters is shaken, disciples are not able to provide a clear channel. At a later stage, there is psychic interchange between the Master and the pupil, and how much the chela can receive would depend upon the clarity and purity of the channel.

We are asked to be sympathetic towards one another. Sympathy or empathy means getting into the shoes of another and being in attunement. Sympathy is an intense and involved emotion wherein we are identified with the other person. If he suffers, we too feel the pain; if he is excited, our heart leaps with joy, etc. It comes very easy with those who are our near and dear ones, but it can be cultivated between co-disciples and others when we stop being self-centred. We are quite taken up by our cares, concerns, opinions and judgments to pay attention to another person’s needs, views, opinions, etc. It is not only essential to be in sympathy with another’s joys and sorrows but also with his opinions and views. In this work natures are intensified and each student comes with his own peculiarities as also educational, cultural and religious background. It is only when we are sympathetic that we will take the trouble to look into another’s views and opinions.

When a student-disciple is sliding back, others should support him and try to bring him out. Instead of helping, often there is severe criticism and even refusal to work with such a person. As *Light on the Path* says, if you see a man who has a vice, try to give him a helping hand and lift him out as a person whose boots have become too heavy with mud. When we fail to give such help, we are unknowingly encouraging the student-aspirant to give up the discipline. It seems an easier option to him than fighting the evil tendency.

Though it is easier to empathize with close friends and our near and dear ones, one of the conditions for learning practical occultism is empathy or a “spiritual bond” that one needs to forge with co-disciples. “The *upasaka* while studying must take care to be united as the fingers on one hand” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*).

Co-disciples share a special bond. The family bonds or bonds of friendship get exhausted in a few incarnations, but not so with co-disciples. It is not disciple-to-disciple relationship but primarily, it is the relation with the Guru and through him all disciples are related. Hence the Master says, “Are you so blind as to think that, it is the

first time you have contacted Theosophy?” It is a continuation of old karma and our conduct with the co-disciples will determine whether in subsequent incarnations, we will struggle on alone or in harmony with other disciples—with their support and help. When a disciple refuses to adjust, but persists in being separate and assertive, then like the overstretched string which breaks, he may find a crack developing in his inner consciousness and the silver string that binds him to his divine nature might be stretched unduly, making it difficult for him to get guidance from the Master within. Being in harmony is very important.

The heart and being of someone who desires to progress spiritually, must respond to every sigh and thought of *all that lives and breathes*. No man can sin alone nor suffer the consequences of sin alone, nor can he rise above his individual failings without lifting the whole of humanity ever so little. The whole concept of brotherhood rests on the subtle threads of sympathy which connect us. H.P.B. points out that if we hurt a person, his pain and suffering is not restricted to himself but spreads and affects not only his neighbours but men of other nations, *in good time*. Unless we accept at least as an *axiomatic truth* that by wronging one man we wrong not only ourselves but also the whole of humanity in the long run, no brotherly feelings such as preached by the great reformers are possible. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 45-46)

The mind of man is capable of bringing about results through means of other minds about him. But as Mr. Judge points out, most students think that people around are not receptive. We are connected with others on the mental plane, and if we think nothing can be done we impress other minds around us with the same thought, and then, of course, nothing is done. As against this, if we *think* Theosophy and say to ourselves, earnestly and sincerely, that just as I have benefited from Theosophy, let others, too, be benefited, then it would be like whispering into the ears of others who are in the vicinity, “Theosophy, help and hope for thee.” Such an attitude combined with sincere efforts at promulgation can have a miraculous effect.

Mr. Judge tells us that Universal Brotherhood is based upon a law or a fact in nature that all men are spiritual beings and they are indissolubly united together in a vast whole. Hence no individual or branch (centre) can be regarded as insignificant and no member as too obscure to benefit the movement or mankind at large. He observes that every branch of the Theosophical Society [and we can apply it to every U.L.T. Centre] is composed of atoms or individuals. That body will be made intelligent, vibrant, forceful or weak, just as it is made by its component parts. Every one of us affects not only the immediate associates but projects into the great universal current an influence which affects the whole race. Thus:

A branch [U.L.T. Centre] which has been indifferent, or selfish, or full of doubt or disloyalty regarding the ideals it promised to follow, will attract out of the international theosophic Karma just enough to accentuate its weakness and doubt, and on the other hand a branch which has worked hard, unselfishly, and earnestly will attract the good from the whole sum of karma, and that added to its own, will enable it to resist bad effects and will further strengthen the vital elements in its own corporate body....Thus we are all, theosophically speaking, keepers and helpers of each other....If we do not do our duty it may happen that some struggling branch in some far off-place will by reason of its newness or weakness be the recipient, not of help but of damage from us. Each Branch is separately responsible for its own actions, and yet every one is helped or injured by every other. These reciprocating influences work on the real though unseen plane where every man is dynamically united to every fellow man. (*The Heart Doctrine*, pp. 72-73)

ALL human wisdom is summed up in two words: wait and hope.

—ALEXANDER DUMAS

THE YOGA OF MEDITATION

ALTHOUGH the actual practice of the technique of the yoga of meditation may not be within the reach of many of us, yet, an understanding of that technique, even theoretically perceived by the mind, will be of tremendous benefit. It is true that the art demands intensity of purpose and of determination, and a high degree of altruistic renunciation. Yet, even a little of this practice will help every one of us to establish a greater degree of mental equipoise, to get rid of some of our lower tendencies and our lower inclinations.

What are the characteristics in reference to the habits of thought which prevail today in our century? Referring to the 19th and 20th-century civilization, a French author wrote: “The 19th century with its scientific materialism closes the mind of man to that which lies above that mind. And 20th-century psychology with its erroneous notions about the constitution of the consciousness of man opens the mind to that which lies below it.” Theosophy is in the world today to close the mind to that which lies below the mental level of his own consciousness as a thinker, and to open that mind to that which is above and beyond it—the divine and the eternal. Because of our tendency of going outward, of turning outside, of plunging merely into objective contact and experiences, our modes, our habits of thought have become most superficial. Another characteristic of this lower mind to which our consciousness has unfortunately become opened is noise, turmoil and confusion. We are not having even a little practice of silent inner reflection. Do we not require that necessary pause, that necessary silence to enable us to retain our mental equilibrium and our emotional balance? The tempo of this Kali Yuga is speed, and this haste makes us rush. We want to hurry and hurry and to gain time, but gain time for what? What do we do with the time that we gain? We have lost that art of leisure, leisure to contact that in us which is worth knowing and coming into closer touch with.

What is that something above the soul, in each one of us? We are

told about the threefold constitution of man—Body, Soul and Spirit. Spirit is described as a beam of light immaculate, as our life-guide and our true self, the watcher and the silent thinker. The yoga of meditation is the technique of meditation that enables the soul to attain to yoga or union with the true self. That soul cannot be hurt but through the erring body. Hence the need to control the body, to purify, to discipline and train the whole lower personality. Who must make the effort? It is soul in each one of us—placed midway between the two poles, the spiritual and the physical—who is the chooser and who has the free will to resolve and determine. The fire of that inner resolve and inner determination must be kept burning until the victory is achieved. To achieve that victory, there are certain necessary practices and exercises. H.P.B. defines yoga of meditation as a means of leading to spiritual liberation. It is the practice that develops psycho-spiritual powers and induces the possibility of experiencing that mystic state known as *Samadhi*, in the highest degree. This, in its turn, will enable the individual to perceive directly, truths as they exist, as facts in nature—both in the visible and in the invisible universe.

The soul will have to deal on the one hand with the lower nature, with the personality including the body, and on the other hand it will have to prepare this most precious instrument, the mind. That mind must be made a clear and clean mirror that will serve as the focal point to catch in all its purity, the light and the wisdom of the divine spirit. Hence, there are three definite degrees, or three definite stages in this technique of spiritual meditation. The first is purification, the second is concentration, and the third is called unification.

Purification involves the need for some moral and mental discipline. Asceticism in our philosophy is always from within without, so that whatever practices of mortification are undertaken, they must begin in the field of our inner consciousness. What takes place in the body and in the external environment of that body must be but the reflection of the change within. This is important, because

people ask, is it necessary, let us say, to be a vegetarian? The control of thoughts and feelings, what a man thinks and feels is more important than what he eats. We are the consciousness within the body, and therefore the purification must be primarily directed to the currents of our ideation and feeling. The purity of thought, the nobility of feeling are of the very essence of the discipline of self-purification which brings about the cleansing of the mind and of the emotional nature. To assist that discipline, will it be helpful to sit in a particular *asana* or posture? Will it be useful to take up more or less definite exercises of *pranayama*, or attune the process of breathing—breathing from one nostril and then from another nostril? The breathing exercise and postures follow *Yama* and *Niyama*—the positive and negative ethical injunctions. Hence we must first practise non-injury, observation of truth, integrity or honesty, celibacy and chastity, and cultivate a sense of detachment for our possessions. There is also purity, contentment, austerity and mortification of the personality. H.P.B. says that the highest duty of the Theosophist is to forget his own personality. For this there must be complete devotion to that divine presence within, call it Krishna, Buddha or Ahuramazda.

The second step is concentration. It is not suggested that we must first attain to full purification and only then begin to concentrate. We must begin to concentrate even now, by being attentive, watchful and vigilant, and by giving the very best to whatever we have to do. Thus, we cannot take up the higher, inner exercise of true yoga while we are making no attempt to curb the personality, to lead a pure and virtuous life, to eradicate selfishness, to try and cultivate broad sympathy and impersonal love for all. If the preliminary preparation, the toning up of the moral nature is not there, then postures and breathing practices will bring only detrimental results. The Sixth Discourse of the *Gita* deals with the subject of meditation and advocates the principle of moderation—neither too much nor too little. For instance, when we choose a seat, let it not be too high or too low. We begin by sitting comfortably, not *too comfortably* so

that we become sleepy, but comfortably enough to be quickly forgetful of the body.

Pranayama is the control of breath. From the inner point of view, it pertains to the rhythm of the inner breathing. *Prana* is physical breath but it is the reflection of the “true *prana*,” which is the vitality or life energy, and that *prana* is in its appropriate *kosha* known as *pranamaya kosha*, the sheath of *prana*, i.e., our astral body. When the consciousness at the back of the two bodies, the physical and the astral, is sufficiently balanced to establish its poise with a certain degree of firmness and assurance, the *prana* within will respond and will be rhythmic. Then the outer breath or the manifestation of inner *prana* will also respond, and that is why when we are not agitated our breathing is normal. When we become agitated, either through pleasure or through pain, we find a change in the breathing. So we must establish *pranayama* to such an extent, that we are equipoised, quiet, tranquil, and our own physical breathing is harmonious and rhythmic.

Then comes *pratyahara*, which means the senses have been withdrawn from the objects of the senses, and the consciousness has been withdrawn from the objective world. *The Voice of the Silence* says, “Withhold thy mind from all external objects, all external sights. Withhold internal images, lest on thy soul-light a dark shadow they should cast.” We are now ready for the last three stages, and those are *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*, or concentration, contemplation and meditation.

Dharana is the actual concentration of our consciousness, of our mind, on an important subject for meditation. If concentration is practised with the end in view of true spiritual yoga, let its object be as high as possible. We may take a statement from one of our devotional books or a noble idea as subject for concentration. But the moment we try to concentrate the mind, a hundred images come within our mind. Mind is essentially wandering in its tendencies. Even Arjuna in the *Gita* is puzzled how anyone can attain that final union with the supreme because of the restlessness of the mind.

Krishna says that mind can be controlled by *abhyasa*, (constant practice) and *vairagya* (dispassion). We need not get discouraged, because daily concentration will bring its legitimate effect. What would you say of a gardener, if after planting a seed he tried to pull out the roots to find out what had happened! So once we have planted the seed and nourished it through concentration, trust the law and before we know it some flowering will begin! However, concentration has to be practised not just at an appointed time, but throughout the day. The mind is caught in that web of illusion made up of our own feelings, desires, likes and dislikes. Detachment can also be cultivated at this stage.

Then comes *Dhyana*, the dispassionate perception of truth eternal, the direct perception of things as they are, not as they appear, not as we wish them to be, both in the visible and the invisible world. It is followed by *Samadhi*, final union with the supreme, that sense of identity with all, that realization of the integral oneness of the whole of nature and therefore of the whole human family which becomes an indivisible unit. Such union enables the true yogi to return to the world of objectivity charged with the dynamic power of uttermost compassion. In *The Voice of the Silence* we are given a perception of uttermost renunciation and selflessness, thus: "Ere thou canst settle in Dhyana-Marga and call it thine, thy Soul has to become as the ripe mango fruit: as soft and sweet as its bright golden pulp for others' woes, as hard as that fruit's stone for thine own throes and sorrows." So even now, we can try to exercise our efforts along the right lines, practising dispassion in reference to our own sorrows, but opening ourselves fully to the suffering and the misery of other human hearts and minds, and thus prepare to tread this path, *Dhyana-marga*, to achieve success in the yoga of meditation. Then we may follow in the footsteps of those who having attained to that fullest spiritual liberation have chosen to become "Buddhas of Compassion" and to serve as the friends, philosophers and guides of humanity as a whole.

CEREMONIES FOR THE DEAD

AMONG the Hindus it is customary to offer *Pinda* (rice balls) after a person's death, by his relatives, calling upon the name of the departed person. In Russia, for six weeks after the death of a person, dishes full of rice with a candle stuck in the middle, are laid on the tomb of the dead. A mass is said for the *rest* and peace of the departed soul, in order that it should not become a *bhut*, a restless, wandering soul, in the earth's atmosphere. In order to prevent the soul of the dead from being earth-bound, the ceremony, the Feast for the Dead is held throughout Christendom on 2nd November.

T. Subba Row explains that the reason behind the Hindu custom of offering *Pinda* is that on account of some unsatisfied desire of a material nature, the soul of the dead may linger on earth. Hindus believe that after physical death, the entity lingers on earth for a period of ten days, before passing into any other state of existence. During this period rice balls are put before the crows and the belief is that crows are so sensitive as to detect the astral figure in the vicinity. If a man dies, having some unsatisfied desire, then his astral figure covers the rice balls and hence the crows cannot touch them. If the crows immediately touch the rice balls it is concluded that the departed entity, having no unsatisfied desires, is not earth-bound. If the crows do not touch the rice-balls, the relatives of the departed go on recounting all the wishes of the dead person, they can possibly think of, promising at the same time to fulfil them. When the right thing is hit upon, the entity goes off to its sphere and then the crows touch the balls. T. Subba Row explains that in ancient times, an initiate or adept was always present in the death chamber, and attended to the necessary conditions and thus released the dying man from his earthly attractions. This is the real origin of the custom of having a priest near the dying person.

Though it is hard to believe how ceremonies that are performed mechanically can help the deceased, people spend large sums of money for these ceremonies. *Shastras* are often quoted, saying that

“he who omits to perform *Sraddha* (ceremony) on the anniversary of the day of death, will be born a *chandala* (a low caste person) a crore of times.” H.P.B. has this to say:

Rites and ceremonies as prescribed by our...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 illogical hypotheses....Abraham and other Patriarchs were buried without any rites....In the same manner the oldest Zoroastrian books, the old and the new *Desatir*, with the exception of a few acts of charity and the reading of sacred books, prescribe no special ceremonies.

To understand the science behind the tradition, it is worthwhile understanding the states after death. Immediately following the death of the physical body, the Ego takes the review of the life just ended. Hence, we may take care that twelve hours at least must elapse between the death of the person and the destruction (by burning or burial) of the body. It is necessary to talk in whispers so as to enable the departing soul to take the review of the life ended and take with it the harvest of good and noble thoughts, deeds and aspirations. When we bury the dead, *i.e.*, preserve the corpses, we intensify the images of the dead in the astral light. It is these wandering shells of the dead which cause hallucination and fear. Death exhales death. The preserved or imperfectly destroyed corpses spread plague, cholera and contagious diseases, as also, sadness, skepticism and disgust for life.

So long as the Ego is still in *Kamaloka*, *i.e.*, for a certain time after death, it is possible for it to get affected by the thoughts and prayers of those who were closely associated with it. *Kamaloka* is the purgatory of the Christians, the slag-pit of life, where the Ego sheds off the unwanted elements of the last personality. There is separation of the lower principles from the Higher. The astral body

coalesced with passions and desires and the record of unwholesome thoughts and actions, is left behind in *Kamaloka*, in the form of *Kamarupic* shell (popularly known as “ghost”). The Ego departs to *Devachan* or *Swarga* or Paradise, taking with it the spiritual aroma or noble qualities of the last personality. Hence the important question is how long does the Ego remain in *Kamaloka*? The general answer is that it falls almost immediately into pre-devachanic unconsciousness. We may take an analogy. Just as a morally good person on dreaming of murder or crime or theft or sensual scenes would wake up with a start, as it would revolt his moral sense, the same is true for the Ego in *Kamaloka*. An average, good person who only occasionally thinks of revenge or crime or lust will be revolted by the pictures of such things in *Kamaloka*. The moral shock to him is such that the Ego immediately leaves the *Kamaloka* state and flies to *Devachan*. However, if the person was materialistic, or if he had some strong unsatisfied desire, or if he wanted to convey something to someone on earth, then the Ego of such a person would be detained longer in *Kamaloka*. It may be a few hours, days, months or even years. The reason behind the ceremonies for the dead is this belief that the soul may be detained in *Kamaloka* by the enormous force of some unsatisfied desire and cannot get rid of the astral and kamic clothing until that desire is satisfied by someone on earth or by the soul itself.

H.P.B. was asked, if there was any ceremony or rite to protect the personality (*Kamarupic* shell) during its period of disintegration, and make it impenetrable to mediumistic and other evil influences. She pointed out that such a ceremony to be efficacious should be performed, on the night of the death, by a true occultist—thoroughly acquainted with the knowledge of the *Magi* (Wise Ones or Yogis) of old—and these are not found at every street corner. (*The Theosophist*, August 1883)

H.P.B. goes on to explain that even from the occult standpoint these ceremonies are not efficacious as they are opposed to the correct understanding of the Law of Karma. The after-death states being

effectual states, the state of the person after death would depend upon the kind of life lived. It is absurd to believe that good or bad actions of the relative of the departed person can lighten or overburden his Karma.

However, it is generally believed that after death the souls of some men cling to this earth and wander on it, either because of their own misdeeds or the influence of the evil stars. They assume at times various shapes and are restless. They could be delivered, it is believed, from this unhappy condition through offering of *Pindam* by relatives. “As to the efficacy of *Pindam* or *Sraddha* 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* [priests],” writes H.P.B. She points out that a sort of psychic atmosphere is built at the places of pilgrimage and there is generally a sensitive or a medium among the pilgrims. Since all have come with the same objective of offering *Pindam*, the intensity and sameness of their thoughts will affect the elementaries around them. Picking those thoughts from the mind of the offerers, the elementaries clamour for *Pindam*. 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 to appear. Then the signs which the pilgrims were expecting to show that their offerings have brought about the deliverance is given mechanically by the ghosts, such as, certain words from the medium’s mouth. What is it that puts an end to the unrestfulness of the “ghost”? It is mainly the firm belief of the medium that the offerings have satisfied the restless soul, who will no longer return to haunt. H.P.B. writes:

Nothing particular, most probably: neither the magnetism of the place devoted to the *Pindam*, nor the strong will of the person who offers it....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 is all....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. (*The Theosophist*, October 1883)

There is an incident of a lady called Lakshmibai whose wish it was to be removed to another place or room before dying. That is because, it was believed that whoever died in the room she was then occupying, became a *bhut* or ghost. But this wish was not fulfilled, and she died. Six months later a distant relative of Lakshmibai got high fever and was trembling. The same was construed to be “possession” by a spirit. When questioned, whose spirit it was, the ghost introduced itself as Lakshmibai and said that the thought of not being removed to another room and becoming a ghost as a result had tormented him/her. So, could it be that the unfulfilled desire detained the Ego and brought it back after six months? H.P.B. explains that the intense thought or desire of the dying person can spread magnetic, unhealthy influence that affects all people for a long time to come. For instance, a person who dies of a contagious disease, the objects touched by him/her or a bit of his/her clothing, can communicate that disease to a person *physiologically sensitive* (and he may not be anywhere around the dying person) long after his death. An intense thought is equally contagious, like the germs of infectious disease. Just as the thoughts of the living can so work as to affect and psychologize another mind, so also the thoughts of a dead person. Thus, the intense thought of the dead person can work on the brain and nervous system of the sensitive and pave the way for rushing in of the mass of other floating thoughts of the dead person. Hence, the person so infected by the thoughts of the dead person is able to answer any question put relating to that dead person. (*The Theosophist*, January 1882). Hence it is not easy to be sure whether it is the “ghost” of the dead person that visits.

In the light of the above we are able to appreciate that in the present day at least the ceremonies for the dead are not likely to be

efficacious. Mr. Judge says, “*Sraddha* and *Pinda* are now neglected, because the inner constitution of man, and the constitution of the macrocosm, are not understood in such a way as to make the ceremony of the slightest use.” (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 22 fn.)

Swami Dayanand Saraswati has this to say:

The original meaning of the word *Shraddha* is *Shraddhà*, “devotion.” It is the duty of every son to serve his parents with all possible devotion while they are living. But the performance of *Shraddha* does not bear out the original idea at all. *Shraddha* really signifies to serve living parents with all devotion, not the dead. And it is, therefore, useless to offer *Pinda* (rice balls) in honour of the dead, as it results in no good. (*The Theosophist*, March 1880)

IF thou standest resolutely here and shrinkest not back, thou shalt see or feel great wonders. For thou shalt find Christ in thee assaulting hell, and crushing thy beasts in pieces, and that a great tumult and misery will arise in thee: also thy secret undiscovered sins will then first awake, and labour to separate thee from God, and to keep thee back. Thus shalt thou truly find and feel how death and life fight one against the other, and shalt understand by what passeth within thyself, what heaven and hell are. At all which be not moved, but stand firm and shrink not; for at length all thy creatures will grow faint, weak, and ready to die: and then thy will shall wax stronger, and be able to subdue and keep down the evil inclinations. So shall thy will and mind ascend into heaven every day, and thy creatures gradually die away. Thou wilt get a mind wholly new, and begin to be a new creature, and getting rid of the bestial deformity, recover the divine image. Thus shalt thou be delivered from thy present anguish, and return to thy original rest.

—JACOB BOEHME

MAN—RISEN APE OR FALLEN ANGEL?

III

THE LIGHT of mind was not given to the whole of humanity at the same time. Occult Philosophy tells us that out of the Host of Dhyanis, whose turn it was to incarnate as the Egos of the immortal—some obeyed the law of evolution immediately when the men of the Third Race were physically ready, *i.e.*, when they had separated into sexes. But some of these Beings who deferred this incarnation saying, “We can choose, we have wisdom,” had to incarnate into inferior bodies. However, then there were those Dhyanis or Sons of Wisdom, who had deferred their incarnation till the Fourth Race. But as shown earlier, by then the mindless men had defiled the bodies through unnatural union with animals. This was the “fall of the angels” because of their rebellion against karmic law. Theology has shown fall of angels through pride, whereas *The Secret Doctrine* shows that the angels refused to incarnate in half-ready forms and therefore the refusal was because of physiological rather than for metaphysical reasons.

The Third Race was gigantic with “Third Eye” which represents Wisdom and spiritual intuition. What does Siva’s “Third Eye” depict? Is it a fact of human evolution or just allegory? Dr. O. P. Jangir, a Zoology professor in Bikaner, created frogs with three eyes in the laboratories of Dungar College. He removed the two eyes of a tadpole and treated the pineal gland with Vitamin A, which gradually transformed into an eye having all the properties of a normal eye. He transplanted this eye in another tadpole, giving rise to three-eyed tadpoles. “According to him, evolutionary history suggests that primitive animals, including some vertebrates, had three eyes on the frontal lobe,” wrote Sandipan Sharma (*The Indian Express*, January 30, 2005)

H.P.B. mentions that in the beginning, every class and family of living species was hermaphrodite and objectively one-eyed. Prior to acquiring the “coats of skin” or the physical form, when man and

animal were both ethereal, the third eye was the only seeing organ; the two physical front eyes developed only later, in both man and animal. This “Cyclopean” eye was, “and still is, in man the organ of *spiritual* sight; in the animal it was that of the objective vision” (S.D., II, 299). H.P.B. mentions that during the course of evolution there were races of men with three eyes and four arms. Before the human form became perfect and symmetrical in the Fifth Race, there are indications of the early Fourth Race being three-eyed. However, this third eye need not have been in the middle of the brow; in fact, it was at the back of the head (S.D., II, 294). Thus, the “third-eye” was once a physiological organ, but later on, owing to the gradual increase of materiality and disappearance of spirituality, this “third eye” got atrophied, and was gradually transformed into a simple gland (S.D., II, 295-96). The sin was not in using the divine powers and attributes but in *misusing* them. “The *third eye is dead*, and acts no longer; but it has left behind a witness to its existence. This witness is now the PINEAL GLAND.” (S.D., II, 295)

One of Ulysses’ adventures comprised blinding of the one-eyed Cyclopean giant, Polyhemus. The Cyclopes belonged to the Third or Lemurian Race while Ulysses belonged to the Fourth or Atlantean Race. The meaning of this adventure is explained thus:

The “one-eyed” Cyclopes, the fabled giants—three in number according to Hesiod—were the last three sub-races of the Lemurians, the “one-eye” referring to the Wisdom eye; for the two front eyes were fully developed as the physical organs only in the beginning of the Fourth Race. The allegory of Ulysses, whose companions were devoured while the king of Ithaca was saved by putting out with a fire-brand the eye of Polyhemus [the Cyclope] is based upon the psycho-physiological atrophy of the “third-eye.” Ulysses belongs to the cycle of the heroes of the Fourth Race....His adventures with the latter [Cyclopes]...is an allegorical record of the gradual passage from the Cyclopean civilization of stone and colossal buildings to the more sensual and

physical culture of the Atlanteans, which finally caused the last of the Third Race to lose their all-penetrating *spiritual* eye. (S.D., II, 769-70)

The first solid human race appeared only after the middle of the Third Race. It is interesting to note that the Third and Fourth Race humanity were giants. The Third Race was called Lemurian Race while the Fourth Race people were called Atlanteans. The huge statues at Easter Island are reminders of the Fourth Race giants. Ancient Greeks believed in giants—Pelops, Atlas, the Cyclopes and the Titans are some of the mythic heroes, supposed to be of gigantic stature. Giants are not a fiction. H.P.B. cites several examples of men, in Russia, America and Europe, who were between 7 and 9.5 feet tall. She observes that Darwin’s statement that species of animals, which result from cross breeding, “always betray a *tendency to revert to the original type*,” must apply to man, also. “Had there been no giants as a rule in ancient days, there would be none now” (S.D., II, 277). She explains that traditions about the race of giants in the days of old are universal. India had her *Danavas* and *Daityas*; Ceylon had her *Rakshasas*, and Greece had her Titans (S.D., II, 336). Further:

It was the belief of entire antiquity, Pagan and Christian, that the earliest mankind was a race of giants. Certain excavations in America in mounds and in caves, have already yielded in isolated cases groups of skeletons of nine and twelve feet high. These belong to the tribes of the early Fifth Race, now degenerated to an average size of between five and six feet. But we can easily believe that the Titans and Cyclopes of old really belonged to the Fourth (Atlantean) Race, and that all the subsequent legends and allegories found in the Hindu Puranas and the Greek Hesiod and Homer, were based on the hazy reminiscences of real Titans—men of a superhuman tremendous physical power, which enabled them to defend themselves, and hold at bay the gigantic monsters of the Mesozoic and early Cenozoic

times—and of actual Cyclopes—three eyed mortals. (*S.D.*, II, 293)

The fact that man lived side by side with the plesiosaurus is doubted because going deep into geological strata, no fossil of *genus homo* is discovered in the same stratum. That is because before man developed any physical body he clothed himself with an astral form. Antediluvian animals absorbed in their enormous bodies so much of the total quantity of gross matter available that very little was left for the astral man, who remained almost without any corporeal frame, *i.e.*, without the “coats of skin.” Thus, because man was in his astral form, he did not leave behind any fossil and also he could exist in the same place with those huge birds and reptiles without fear. Their massive proportions inspired him with no terror, and by their consumption of food there was no lessening of his sustenance. And, therefore, being of such a composition that he left no impression upon mud or plastic rock. Hence, though our explorers are finding, now and then, the remains of animals and birds and reptiles in strata which show an age far greater than any assigned to the human race, they never come upon human skeletons. However, it was not the period when man of astral body was totally devoid of any material frame, but it was not dense enough. Further:

Man was all this time acquiring the power to clothe himself with a dense frame. He threw off astral bodies one after another, in the ceaseless pursuit, each effort giving him a little more density. Then he began to cast a shadow, as it were, and the vast, unwieldy animal world—and others as well—felt more and more the draughts made upon it by the coming man. As he thickened they grew smaller, and his remains could not be deposited in any stratum until such time as he had grown to sufficient hardness. (*Echoes from the Orient*, p. 42)

Theosophic Adepts insist that there are still in the earth bony remains of man, which show that man acquired a dense body many

millions of years farther back than have yet been admitted by science. These remains will be discovered by us before much time shall have rolled away.

The Fourth Race Atlanteans of the later period are renowned for their magic powers and wickedness, as also their ambition and defiance of gods. H.P.B. points out that no one can fail to recognize the Atlanteans of *The Secret Doctrine* in Ravana and the Rakshasas of Lanka. It is from the Fourth Race that the early Aryans got their knowledge of wonderful things. One of them is the Mayasabha mentioned in the *Mahabharata*, which was built by Mayasur, an Atlantean, for the Pandavas. The chronology and computations of Brahmin Initiates are based on the works of that great astronomer and magician, Asurmaya, who was also an Atlantean. The Aryans learnt from the Atlanteans the aeronautics or *Viman Vidya*, and so also their great arts of meteorography and meteorology. “It is from them again that the Aryans inherited their most valuable science of the hidden virtues of precious and other stones, of chemistry, or rather alchemy, of minerology, geology, physics and astronomy.” They were adept in *Ashtra Vidya* (highest magical knowledge). The terrible Sidereal Force, known to and named by the Atlanteans MASHMAK, which when aimed at an army, could reduce to ashes 100,000 men and elephants, as easily as it would a dead rat. (*S.D.*, I, 563)

The Atlanteans perished in the cataclysm brought about by their extreme materiality and sin. They worshipped form and matter which later degenerated into self-worship and then into phallic worship. *The Secret Doctrine* says that the Atlanteans built great images nine *yatis* (27 feet) high, the size of their bodies. From the Third, Lemurian to the present Fifth Race, men have been dwindling in size to the present five or six feet. Though Atlantis, the continent of the Atlanteans submerged thousands of years ago, the Egos that formed the Atlantean race are reborn forming the mighty Egyptian civilization and later, on the American continent. “I can almost see the Atlanteans in these citizens of America, sleepy, and not well

aware who they are, but yet full of the Atlantean ideas, which are only prevented from full and clear expression by the inherited bodily and mental environment which cramps and binds the mighty man within,” writes Mr. Judge.

A few wise men among the Atlanteans were saved from the cataclysm, and they became forefathers of the Fifth Race. We are in the fifth subrace of the Fifth Root Race and this race has been in existence for one million years. The Sixth subrace is being formed on the American Continent, which is described as the crucible or refining pot where men and women of every race are found to be living together and attacking problems of life together. A process of amalgamation is going on so that in the course of many generations there will be produced on the American continents, an entirely new (sub) race—with new bodies, new powers of the mind, curious and unheard of psychic and physical powers. The transition from one Root Race to the next or from one subrace to the next is very gradual, and there is always the overlapping of the races.

(Concluded)

LET us say nothing is good and nothing is bad, but all is *opportunity*—the very best opportunity, because the soul knows what it needs for increasing its powers and keeping its energy. Every single event is an opportunity, even the passing of people on the street and the thoughts and feelings they stir up in us; whatever we feel toward others, our relations with them, our family relations, our social, our business, our national relations—all these are opportunities to be taken advantage of in every way; every one of them constitutes Karma.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

REFLECTIONS ON DEATH

INADEQUATE understanding of the Theosophical teachings on the after-death states sometimes leads students to the hasty conclusion that, since death is a blissful state, we need not worry about it now, nor prepare ourselves for the great change, for are we not told that death is sleep and that we shall awake to objective consciousness only with our next birth?

A more careful study shakes us out of our easy acceptance of the teachings we have become accustomed to and makes us look again at what they really imply. To take one such teaching:

After death, before the spiritual eyes of the soul, begins a performance according to a programme learnt and very often unconsciously composed by ourselves: the practical carrying out of correct beliefs or of illusions which have been created by ourselves. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 163)

We may have accepted this as a statement of fact, but on looking at it more closely we see that both illusions and correct beliefs are held by us during life, and both are the result of conscious or unconscious thought. Since we should be at that stage of evolution where, as far as possible, we do not live in a world of illusions or lay up a store of either happiness or unhappiness through *unconscious* thinking and planning, we are faced with the need to have correct beliefs and to think *consciously* during life.

The questions arise: How shall we think correctly of the after-death conditions? What do we actually know of them? How shall we make real to us the teaching that the soul carries with it the efflorescence of what it has gathered during life? Is our consciousness wrapped in illusions, in an atmosphere of unreality, or in correct beliefs? And if the latter, what are they?

We are told that the Mohammedan and the Christian heavens, to take two examples, are based on a material conception of life. For the Hindu, the idea of heaven is absorption in the contemplation of

Shiva or of Krishna. As for the Theosophical student, he often believes that if he has an ardent longing to work for humanity or to be with the objects of his devotion, the Great Mahatmas, would shorten his stay in *Devachan* or the heaven world; but such a student is under as great an illusion as the others, and may stay there longest, “serving mankind,” as he believes, saving generation after generation of sinners, lifting them up to high heaven!

If we have no conscious thought of the fact of an after-life, then we shall not be conscious of what happens in that after-life. We shall be like the traveller in a train; in daylight, *i.e.*, during waking life, he sees the landscape which the passing train reveals to his sight, but if he sleeps through the journey, then he cannot see anything of the country through which he is speeding.

What is the difference between the materialist who says there is no after-life and the student of Theosophy who adopts an indifferent attitude and gives no conscious thought to the subject? Sometimes even the student feels that *Devachan* will be a welcome rest from the cares of life, *after* which he will come back refreshed, to take up the threads once again.

Truly the states of consciousness are many and varied!

If, awakening from our blissful, wishful thinking, we begin to plan our after-life consciously, how shall we set about the task? What are the thoughts we should have about it? What causes must we generate to produce in the after-life conscious appreciation of the good absorbed by the Ego during earth-life? What bent shall we give to our imagination and our will?

A few ideas come to our aid: the teaching on unmerited Karma, and the underlying thread through our review at death and through the daily self-examination during life.

“Unmerited Karma” is that Karma we suffer, as we believe, through no guilt of the present personality; and, that being so, the personality feels it is suffering unjustly. This feeling, we learn, “is sufficient to entitle the human soul to the fullest consolation, rest and bliss in his *post-mortem* existence.” Theoretically, we know

there is no such thing as unmerited Karma, for what we are now reaping is either the result of what we ourselves have sown in other lives, or is the concomitant of present resolutions, even if those resolutions are to work for humanity. This latter aspect of “unmerited Karma” is often not recognized. H.P.B.’s sufferings, for instance, were not the result of her own bad actions in the far past, but the natural outcome of her being the centre of the dynamic Theosophical Movement. Hence we must free our minds of the idea that there is any physical, psychological or mental unmerited Karma, especially when we remember that all our lives on earth are for the purpose of the Soul, and that it is the Soul that reincarnates.

Along this line, H.P.B. tells us not to seek for reward. So we must learn to eliminate two causes of Devachanic life—the desire to be compensated for the “wrongs” we think we have suffered unjustly; and the desire to be rewarded for the good we have done.

We are taught that at death we have a panoramic review of the past life, and before birth we have a preview of the future life, and thus we are helped to realize that what has happened or will happen is just and merciful. Do we see the justice and mercy aspect of the Law in our nightly and morning self-examination? If we strive to do so, we shall have taken another step in the direction of doing away with the idea of unmerited Karma, and strengthened the thread of Egoic consciousness in life. More, we shall have begun to link ourselves with that Egoic consciousness.

What is Egoic consciousness? What is our Ego doing here and now? Is it meditating, acting, dreaming? Is it aware of the personality’s efforts through the day, and is the latter aware of the Ego’s activities at night? Is the Ego trying to be aware of the personality, and *vice versa*? If we are told that the condition of our consciousness is something we cannot understand, we are not helped. So we need to plan, consciously, a real after-death condition by having an egoically illuminated personality now and here.

Obviously we must make ourselves of the same nature as the Ego. As the Ego is Atma-Buddhi-Manas, it thinks universally, feels

universally, wills without bias. So it would seem that when we consciously think, feel and act universally, we are becoming in line with our Egoic life. We learn that the purpose of life is to enable the Ego to contact this plane of matter and gain control over it. If in our daily self-examination we try to see that it is the Ego that reviews through our brain-mind, we must be on the way to acting as Egos in life, and in time there will remain no unassimilated experiences of earth-life to absorb the Ego's awareness in *Devachan*.

H.P.B.'s hints as to the analogy between sleep and death have to be applied practically. When we go to bed every night we must remember that sleep is a time for union with the Ego—not an absorption, but a state which gives us the opportunity of learning.

What a task for us! Sleep is not just a rest but a period of learning, not a cessation of all activity but a journey “homeward” with our gifts of the day. And there has to be a return consciously to waking life with the gifts from “home.”

In this way we learn the meaning of “immortality,” *i.e.*, constant and unremitting awareness and analysis and remembrance.

Death, then, like sleep, becomes merely a change in the state of our consciousness; we are still awake, aware, acting, feeling, thinking, though on a high plane of universality.

Is there not an analogy between the awareness resulting from the flooding of the personal consciousness with the light of the higher at the moment of death, and the flooding of the consciousness of the Ego by the Divine Consciousness at the moment of final Illumination? To prepare ourselves for that great event, we need to learn, now and here, that “to live to benefit mankind is the first step.”

ATTACHMENT is by thought, first of all. Desire exists in thought, first of all. Then follows the action.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

Question: When we begin to conquer vices, which one is the first to get conquered and which is the last?

Answer: Vices of men become rungs of the ladder of spiritual progress, one by one, as they are surmounted, says *Light on the Path*. We are advised to become aware of all the vices even as we begin spiritual life, so that, having identified our weaknesses we do not make allowances for them or try to explain them away when they surface. As the smith removes impurities in the silver, little by little, so we must have patience and perseverance in removing impurities of moral nature. It would be very difficult to say which is the *first* vice that gets conquered completely. There is simultaneous development of various aspects of our nature. We may say that the vice that we set out in dead earnest to overcome would be the first to get conquered. However, it is said that first we are able to conquer these vices in their gross form and then in the subtle form. As *Light on the Path* puts it, “Vices of ordinary man pass through a subtle transformation and reappear with changed aspect in the heart of the disciple.” Hence we are asked to drive out from the stronghold of our soul all the foes—ambition, anger, hatred, “even to the shadow of desire,” *i.e.*, in their subtlest form. We may not hate a person openly but if we dislike his ways and mannerisms, and criticize them, then there is still a *shadow* of hatred. Ambition is very tricky; as we drive it out at one level, it reappears at a subtler level. It can appear at the level of wealth, fame, power or love. A person may decide that for his good turn or help he will not look for any material

reward, *i.e.*, he will not look out for compensation in terms of money or material wealth. He could still be ambitious at another level. In place of concrete reward he may want public acclaim, recognition, praise, etc. If even fame is foregone then ambition lurks at the level of power. For the help extended, the person desires that he should be consulted and if he is not consulted before any step is taken then he feels angry or offended. If these three levels are surmounted, then one at least wants to be loved for one's good works. Our aim should be unconditional help and service.

However, it is said that the two most potent enemies to fight in the spiritual battle and last to get conquered are sexual desire and Egotism. Between these two, egotism, pride or the sense of separateness is the most difficult to surmount. Mr. Judge writes:

The question of sex is not the most difficult. The personal one is still harder. I mean the purely personal, that relating to "me." The sexual really relates only to a low plane gratification. If Nature can beat you there, then she need not try the other, and *vice versa*; if she fails on the personal she may attempt the other but then with small chance of success. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

There are many stories of sages and spiritually advanced beings who, even after making great progress, display pride or egotism. It may surface as "holier than thou" attitude or as pride for one's intellectual, psychic or spiritual achievements. There is a story of a jealous yogi called Changdev, who came riding on a tiger to meet young sage-mystic Jnaneshwar, to show his superiority. Jnaneshwar who was sitting on a broken wall with his brothers and sisters, moved along with the wall to greet the yogi and thus showed that it is very easy to acquire and master such lower powers. The yogi fell at the feet of Jnaneshwar and accepted him as his Teacher.

A spiritual aspirant may think that he is working to benefit humanity but if there is a thought that in giving food to humanity he feeds himself, it shows that he was indirectly seeking his own benefit. A subtler form of selfishness is exhibited by one who chooses

Moksha, or the Path of Liberation, *i.e.*, enters the peace and bliss of *Nirvana* with no concern for suffering humanity. As against this, there is the Path of Renunciation taken by the *Nirmanakayas* who refuse the bliss of *Nirvana* but remain behind to help others. Choosing *moksha* or the Path of Liberation is termed "spiritual selfishness" or exalted and glorious form of selfishness.

Question: Daily we are confronted with terrible news regarding baseness of human nature and the suffering of the helpless and the weak. Also, we see the consequences of the fast-moving social and moral changes in all directions, leading to stress, violence, greed and all that is selfish in human nature. How are we to respond to such tragic and demoralizing news? What can we do about it? Is that our concern?

Answer: This question should arise out of a *genuine concern* for human progress and the search for human well-being, and *not* out of over-sensitivity, despair and sentimental helplessness in the face of human suffering and wickedness. We can be of help in the matter only when we ourselves—even if the victims of injustice, etc.—preserve our sanity and resolve to help in the amelioration of the human condition.

However complicated the political, social, economic or psychological problems, and whatever their immediate causes may be, the final and the crucial cause, as we must know, is Man himself with not only his lowest tendencies, but also with the highest potentialities latent in him, waiting to unfold! If we accept this fact of the *duality of human nature* then there is a hope of reforming that nature however distant in the future. We cannot afford to be impatient, nor despair of our inability at present to change things immediately. We must preserve our sanity and our unshakable faith in humanity.

Good and evil are forces that have their definite cycles of rise and fall, and we have contributed to them sometime in the past as well as in the present. What is *our* responsibility in them and how

are we to help to turn the tide in favour of better times, depend on our sincere concern, resolve, and commitment to the human welfare.

We can make a difference, however little, to the *collective human psyche*, by the way we conduct ourselves, and how we apply spiritual teachings in daily life. We know that we cannot change others overnight, but we can change ourselves in our daily and hourly conduct, outer and inner. Since we are all inter-connected in this “Web of life” by the magnetic threads of affinities, our actions influence others on the invisible plane, at least in our immediate vicinity. The power of human thought and the purified Will is so great that there are many instances on record of how man can influence even so-called mute Nature. And there are instances of how a single individual can make a difference in the destiny of a nation, when the time is ripe.

No student should ignore the realities of daily life, but none of these should prevent us from what Mr. Judge calls “the (right) spirit in which the least things are done.” Just as there is enough wickedness, there are also unknown heroes who must be silently working to reduce human suffering and to raise human nature through their own spiritual achievement. In this work, there is invisible but definite help from the Great Ones. Of this we must be sure. And if they can wait over the long ages of human ups and downs, we may at least try to imitate them, while doing our best as we can, and to wait with expectancy. Faith, Hope and Love are our armour.

It is known, even to the best minds in the world, that great social and personal transformation can take place only when the right doctrines are available to men. Our duty therefore is to assimilate these noble teachings of Theosophy, and to share it with our brothers. This is our task, besides working strenuously upon our own nature to transmute ourselves even in the teeth of adversity and obstacles. While confronting the culture of selfishness in our age, we have to keep up with the culture of integrity, discrimination and good-will. This is more than we can help in reducing human suffering.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Did the modern humans originate in sub-Saharan Africa? University of Cambridge population biologist Andrea Manica examined 4600 male and 1500 female skulls—all less than 2000 years old—from all over the globe and gathered data in respect of 37 structural characteristics. Both, skull as well as DNA analyses revealed that farther the population was located from Africa, fewer variations in skull shape, genes, etc., were displayed. Manica argues that this strongly supports the idea that modern humans originated in Africa around 200,000 years ago and then spread across the world starting about 50,000 years ago, hardly or never mixing with other species of hominids. Every group migrating from Africa took with itself only a fraction of total variation present in the cradle of humanity, thus reducing variability in genes and skull shape with every subsequent migration.

Researchers opposed to this “Out of Africa” school of thought, say that data based on 2000-year-old skulls cannot say much about our earliest ancestors. Paleoanthropologist Milford Wolpoff of the University of Michigan argues that variability in African population could be because Africa has a less stable climate and environment, writes Jennifer Barone. (*Discover*, October 2007)

Regarding the African continent we are told that after the destruction of Atlantis, most of Asia issued from under the waters, while Africa came much later. Europe is the fifth continent and the latest to arise. Europe in the quaternary epoch was yet in the process of formation and was united to what is now North Africa by a neck of land running across the present Straits of Gibraltar. African tribes are described as offshoots of Atlanteans, modified by climate and conditions (*S.D.*, II, 740). The extraordinary variability of types existing in Africa—from black to almost white; from gigantic men to dwarfish races—is because of their forced isolation. The Africans have never left their continent for several hundred thousand years. If tomorrow the continent of Europe were to disappear and other

lands to re-emerge instead; and if the African tribes were to separate and scatter on the face of the earth, about a hundred thousand years hence, they would form the bulk of the civilized nations. And it is the descendants of those of our highly cultured nations, who might have survived on some one island, without any means of crossing the new seas, that would fall back into a state of relative savagery (*S.D.*, II, 425). H.P.B. points out that from the seven primitive types of the Fifth Race, there now remain on earth only three. She agrees with the view of Prof. W. H. Flower that in the course of ages, the primitive man, whatever he may have been, must have diverged into three extreme types, represented by the Caucasian of Europe, the Mongolian of Asia, and the Ethiopian of Africa, and all existing individuals can be ranged around these types. (*S.D.*, II, 471 fn.)

Is Western civilization in the midst of a historic decline? There are a number of books with words like “collapse,” “catastrophe,” and “dark age” in their titles. The apprehension of Doomsday is accelerated because of happenings such as, shrinking supply of oil, destruction of the natural environment and human driven climate change. There is growing irrationalism and religious fundamentalism; terrorism with biological weaponry and computer attacks has also been the cause of concern. When we study the history of decline of civilizations we find them characterized by decline of values, widespread crimes, intensified class warfares, etc. Many questions arise: Why is it that, instead of going on forever forward and upward, societies so often stagnate, decline, and collapse, leaving behind nothing but ruins? In other words, was the process inevitable, or could something have been done about it? Thinkers attribute fall of civilizations to either mystical or material decline. Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Christopher Dawson and many others speak of “mystical decline” which attributes fall of civilizations to exhaustion of a people’s “life force,” or to “moral

decline,” or replacement of intuitive or spiritual approach to life by pure rationality. The supporters of “material decline” put forward economic explanations for decline. For instance, writers of mystical bent say that Roman civilization declined when Romans were corrupted by a loss of religious faith and depraved elite wallowed in cruelty, sensuality, and luxury. Several writers, like Toynbee and Pitirim Sorokin feel that the process of civilization decline could be arrested through religious renewal. Technological advancement though beneficial, may also contribute to war and decline. “The toughest part of any effort will probably not be the availability of wealth, technology, or ideas, but getting societies to use these resources to take serious action,” writes Nader Elhefnawy, the visiting assistant professor of literature at the University of Miami. (*The Futurist*, November-December 2007)

The rise and fall of civilizations is governed by the law of cycles. Books, arts, mechanics, etc., of the glorious civilizations are periodically destroyed, so that they leave no physical evidence. However, law of rebirth combined with the law of cycles and of Karma brings back the Egos who made the most ancient civilizations, and they bring with them the knowledge and the essence of progress and powers from the previous civilization, to produce a new and higher state of civilization.

“The downfall of every civilization is caused by the weak morals of those who live in and by it. False knowledge and misuse of knowledge generally accompanies weakened morals. An unbalanced relation between knowledge and ethics brings about a critical stage which, if not promptly attended to, results in death....War plays a part in the destruction and the reconstruction of civilizations....Religious feeling without knowledge is a curse which develops fanaticism, hatred and war; knowledge devoid of a spiritual basis....begets arrogance, enmity and war.” (*Studies in “The Voice of the Silence,”* p. 1)

“All good and evil things in humanity have their roots in human character....Progress can be attained, and only be attained, by the

development of the nobler qualities,” says H.P.B.

Through the Gates of Gold points out that the purpose of civilization is to produce spiritual fruit (progress and perfection) but unfortunately after the civilization has flowered, in terms of technological and material advancement, the flower of civilization falls and dies, without producing spiritual fruition. It is because of indolence and incredulity of humanity, which refuses to believe that peace and happiness can lie in a direction other than material advancement.

How are galaxies formed? The discovery of 27 “teenagers,” or proto-galaxies like the Milky Way has shown that they were created by the clumping of smaller clouds of gas and dust. These 27 proto-galaxies are believed to have existed since the universe was two billion years old. It was difficult to study these adolescent galaxies as the light from them was very faint. However, staring at the same patch of sky for 92 hours, using some of the world’s most powerful telescopes, Martin Haehnelt of Cambridge University and colleagues were able to pick out the light from 27 of the distant objects. Scientists believe that billions of years ago the universe was filled by an extremely thin and almost uniform gas, which then started to clump together to form faint proto-galaxies. After aeons these components must have come together—through collisions or mergers—to form fully fledged galaxies like our Milky Way. (*The Times of India*, November 29, 2007, courtesy *Reuters*)

The Secret Doctrine tells us of *Mulaprakriti*, primordial matter or pre-cosmic root substance, as the basis of all manifested matter—from the most subtle to the densest. The first differentiation of primordial matter is that cosmic matter which is the origin of “milky way” or world stuff. It is radiant and cool and at the first awakening of the cosmos from the periodic rest, this matter is scattered through space, and when seen from earth, it appears in clusters and lumps,

like curds in thin milk. Milky Way is described as the storehouse of the materials from which stars, planets and other celestial bodies are produced. Milky Way is composed of matter that is in a different state of differentiation than matter on earth. It appears that only after passing through many stages of differentiation, matter composing the Milky Way reaches the condition in which it is found in planets, stars, etc. The matter within the Solar System is entirely different from that outside it.

The Masters point out that since the objects are seen in reflected light, there is optical illusion created by the atmosphere of the earth. As a result the calculation of the distances of the celestial bodies is not likely to be accurate. It also entirely alters the observation of matter of which celestial bodies are composed. (*Transactions*, pp. 113-114)

The world-famous wildlife expert and nature lover, Steve Irwin, knew he would die young, says his wife Terry Irwin. He was a legendary “Croc Hunter” popularly so named by his admirers. He would take the risk to approach and learn at close quarters about beautiful secrets of wildlife and especially about the endangered species. Mrs. Irwin says that Steve had a “sixth sense” that he would die young—before he reached 40. “He was not morbid about it, or awful about it, he was open and earnest about it.... Steve had a real sixth sense about so many things. He had an odd [uncanny] connection with wildlife. He was also extraordinarily intuitive with people.” Last year Irwin died “in harness” while exploring in water, from a stingray’s barb which pierced his heart, causing instant death. Another aspect of this brave young naturalist was his intense concern for the endangered species. He would lend his hand to the missions that tried to protect their habitats and their life. Mrs. Irwin says: “He was such a frightening force of nature, here on Earth! I am sure he is even now on his way to sink some Japanese whaling ship!”

(*Hindustan Times*, October 30, 2007, courtesy *Reuters*)

The “Crocodile hunter” was not out to trap wild animals for commercial purposes but to help research into their life-style, etc. The dexterity with which he could handle the wild animals, without weapons, was amazing as can be witnessed on the video cameras by the wildlife researchers. Those who care for Nature’s extravagant bounty on earth are gifted with the skill and the courage to come very close to even the most dangerous animals and to handle them.

Even wild animals instinctively sense their well-wishers and respond accordingly, although millennia of cruelty to animals have estranged them from mankind and have rendered them distrustful of man’s closeness to them. Wild animals instinctively retaliate when they are pushed out, or brought under captivity.

In contrast to the small number of true nature lovers and a few environmentalists who voluntarily go at great length to save the earth’s precious wealth, there is a growing number of environmental crimes. These include pollution of the earth and her biosphere, and depletion of natural wealth—flora and fauna—and many other *preventable* acts of greed and stupidity. Albert Einstein observed long ago that it has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.

“WE meet our Karma in our daily duties” is a good saying to bear in mind, and in the performance of these duties comes our tests. We should therefore do what we have to do, simply as duties, regardless of whether that performance brings us praise or blame. All the energy would then be expended in the performance of duties, and there would be nothing left for the personal idea to subsist upon.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

TURE BASIS FOR MORALITY

Strive with thy thoughts unclean before they overpower thee. Use them as they will thee, for if thou sparest them and they take root and grow, know well, these thoughts will overpower and kill thee.

—*The Voice of the Silence*

BOTH science and reason have been the bane of 20th-century thought. Faulty processes of reasoning from particulars to universals have helped in the downfall of ideals. Since the spirit and soul of man cannot come under microscope and scalped, their presence is doubted and oftentimes denied. Indulgence, so long as it causes no visible or violent upheaval, has become permissible. Society no more stigmatizes the departure from time-honoured rules. The thief, the racketeer, the trader of souls is welcome company, and the *élite* have in consequence become corrupt. A lie is not only tolerable under certain circumstances, it is permissible and even laudable as where nations break treaties and violate pledges. Thus, rights come to be trampled under foot, gratitude is considered a handicap born of sentimentality, and at each turn virtue is made to beg pardon of vice. Yet, a show of piety and virtue is not abandoned. It is still found to be a valuable cloak to hide the ugliness within.

A falling away from the paths of rectitude occurs when man feels that somehow he can get away with it, and that vice and sin do not necessarily bring their own chastisement. If, despite all that religion and morals say, a tyrant and a killer enjoys high status, enjoys life and dies a normal death without nemesis overtaking him, why cannot such an instance be multiplied a thousandfold? Why can this instance not be held up as proof positive that there is no such thing as a moral law that has within it the power to enforce its decrees? When large masses of men come to lose faith in the spiritual and the divine, it behoves those who know even a little of the Wisdom-Religion to engage in its constant and steady propagation lest a sore-beset soul

in its anguish point its finger at them and accuse them of failing in their duty to warn.

Since the correct method of proceeding in any study is to understand the theorem first and then apply it to corollaries and problems, it is always right to proceed from general principles to particulars and only thereafter and with the full knowledge gained, to complete the circle and go back to principles. When the study of man is taken up, we cannot view him as a unit separate from other men or from any aspect of nature. We have to know him in his beginnings and acquaint ourselves with the powers that reside in one or the other aspects of his complex make-up.

Morals are laws which govern the behaviour of man in regard to one or another aspect of himself as also with other men and the kingdoms above and below him. However, before a study of these laws can be entered upon, the student of life has to trace man from his early beginnings and then, taking his various aspects for study, see how best he can conform himself in his relation to the whole.

Man is but an incarnation, partial or fragmentary, of a being of Light that has yet to gather its harvest on earth in order to reach immortality. Being too far removed from matter, this Being can only send its reflection or shadow in the capsule of the animal-man. It is this dweller within the body which, being left to itself for the whole course of an incarnation, forgets its source and origin, acquires a false sense of “I”-ness, and weeps and laughs by turns. This “I” of an existence with which all men are familiar is, as said, a reflection or a ray from the divine being who is its “Father.” At death, it returns to its source, carrying back a rich or a poor harvest. During moments when it is freed of the millstone of matter, this lesser “I” basks in the warmth and closeness of its Father. During those moments it enjoys bliss, for divinity wraps it around to the extent that its uprightness permits. In moments when this “I” forgets its divine origin, it remains a mere animal of desires with a hundred times the power of the animal, for it can draw upon the forces which reside in it and which it derives from the fact that the reflection of its Father carries, albeit

in miniature, the potency of that Father.

What is the mission of this incarnated and, for the moment, the separated ray? It has a purpose and a programme to fulfil. Like any ambassador or viceroy of a distant king, he is an agent bound by the policies of his sovereign, yet free at the same time to choose such avenues as he finds suitable to express and implement those policies. Every act, word and thought that departs from the policy is reprehensible to the king and therefore cannot be brought before his august presence. These departures at best represent the personal reactions of the earthly ambassador and must be jettisoned and left as the flotsam of an incarnation. It therefore follows that in order to enrich his king the ambassador must at the close of his ambassadorship carry only that which is pleasant and acceptable to his Lord and Master.

It often happens that the ambassador gets enamoured of the sights and sounds of the kingdoms to which he is sent. He neglects his briefing, reduces the volume of communication with his King to a trickle, and, forgetting the purpose and programme of his stay, entangles himself in pursuits alien to the king’s wishes. When it is time for him to return, he cannot carry with him the fruits of his divagations. He may return, empty-handed and will not be able to account for himself, in which case his sojourn has to be counted as a failure.

Once that the earnestness of life is understood, the questing soul has to find a new anchorage for his faith. For him the question is: Where is the stable, unshakable bed-rock; where the ultimate in Truth? To answer this, he has to reach out to fundamentals and verities which remain basic in both time and space. He has to assure himself that, if from the One Flame all the minor lights emanated, each differentiated point of light carries the essence of the One and rebecomes that One on the day of its reunion.

When the white light is broken up into its prismatic constituents, the white is no longer perceptible and to the uninitiated can never be recalled from out of the plethora of colours. Yet, science demonstrates

that these same variegated colours can be made to merge back into the white from which they emanated. So too in nature and man. Man belongs to a ray which itself is a sub-ray from yet another hierarchy of—shall we say—colour. This same man can raise his consciousness above the mundane and, taking the colours—not missing any—clear white. The re-constituted white is the same, and yet not the same, as the primary white that, entering the prism, emanated the seven distinct rays or colours. It is the same white but it has now stored within it the experience of each separate colour-ray. Call that ray by the name of a prismatic colour or call it by the name of a human principle—*Kama* (desire), *Manas* (mind), *Buddhi* (discrimination), etc., and the result is the same. The separated aspects when withdrawn into the parent luminary become that luminary, but carry back into it the tribute they gathered in their sojourn as separate entities.

Man knows not this because the old Wisdom has been forgotten and the new knowledge is becoming more and more entangled in the denser forms of matter. It is for this reason that he no longer knows of colours and hierarchies, of rays and flames. He acts as does the child—dips his brush in any colour that pleases his passing fancy and produces a mixture that defies any colour definition. Can the man, by some self-devised process, precipitate each separate colour, make it primitive pure and then remerge the seven colours so that they lose their distinctive existence in the One which is also the Light and the Flame? It is not difficult to understand that if any colour retains an impurity alien to its nature, it is useless and the grand experiment must be held up till all the constituents have been made ready.

It is here that reincarnation proves most beneficent, for with a new body and brain and fresh vigour (checked by Karma) the process of purification or of precipitating the true colour can be continued without the haunting memory of past failures. Each incarnated Soul has this one purpose. All else is incidental. Each thus is a brother working in his own laboratory, yet dependent on the researches of

others. Each may be a sub-ray of the same ray to which several belong, and unless the efforts of all—none excluded—are co-ordinated in harmony, the process may halt and be delayed over long incarnations till the lesson is learnt. In such a programme as this, harmony is not the mere achieving of a brotherhood of sorts. It can be attained where, even in the midst of intense personal activity, each unit lends a helping hand to the others lest the breakdown of one may retard the progress of the many.

To produce a pattern of behaviour which facilitates this, the Wise of old laid down norms of Duty or *Dharma* or Law. It is incumbent on each one that he keep his own body and mind in perfect health such as is ideal or suited to his work for the Great Cause. No glowing complexion and pleasing looks; no muscular development or exuberant energy—just the pure rhythmic vibration of mind and body that synchronize their purpose for carrying out their assigned duties for the incarnation. The body must not only be tuned to the correct pitch; it must moreover be made so responsive that it does not rebel when the Soul tries to mould it to its desires. All desires that are enjoyed at the expense of the life-energy are therefore to be avoided. They but drain away the strength and tenacity required for the lifetime's effort and must be recognized as deterrents on the path. Any thought, word, or deed, overt or covert, that hurts another or hinders or delays his work in the inner laboratory of his being becomes a sin—a hewing at one's legs and limbs, a shutting of the door against the vital contribution which it was the other's duty to offer.

As the student begins to understand the purpose of his own life, he begins to readjust the moral code and make it conform more to the pattern of his Soul's behaviour. A lie becomes reprehensible because it cheats another out of a truth, and primarily because a cause for conflict is created between parts of the one whole. Greed is the hugging to oneself of nature's bounty and therefore lessening the share of others who by right of brotherhood can have an equal share. Nursing one's grievances is the act of one who builds a wall

around himself and cuts himself off from friend and foe alike. He refuses to take the bitter experience and thus misses the pleasanter. He vegetates and his life's laboratory receives nothing and contributes nothing.

Judged from the point of view of a purposeful life, many a law and convention of the day is found applicable to the particular society or era. A few centuries more and the law may become obsolete through disuse. The student who lives among the people of his era has to conform to their conventions and not provoke them to needless hostility. He must render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. The outer pattern of behaviour has to be adjusted to the prevailing circumstances. It is the inner attitude, the motive that governs thought and action which will determine the intrinsic worth of the experience. It is this and this alone which will help or hinder the effort to keep open the channel of communication with the higher spiritual spheres.

To bend life's activities to this purpose, special sets of laws exist—laws for which the physical brain can find no rationale. *Yagna* (sacrifice), *Dana* (charity) and *Tapas* (austerity) are rules as rigid in their application as any that deal with mundane living. Yet, they seem out of place in this age, for they are of little help either in amassing earthly things or in raising the pitch of sensual enjoyments. When even the presence of the Soul is questioned, how can people be taught the meaning of laws that pertain to planes where alone the Soul can act?

If the student of Theosophy is earnest and desires to serve the Cause, it becomes incumbent on him to preach and popularize a knowledge of these laws of the higher life. He has to demonstrate by reason and analogy the necessity for the moral code. He has to show by easy, understandable stages the purpose of life and the forces which are permissible to be used to reach the goal and the supreme consummation. The humblest can help in this as the most learned. The motive must count in this as in all things, for whatever is done in the name of the good LAW is bound to turn out right.