

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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BATTLING WITH OUR FATE	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	9
A POLISH FOLK TALE	
STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA	13
THE BHIKKHU—II	
OVERCOMING OUR PERSONAL NATURE	19
THE ADEPTS IN THE BIBLE—JESUS—II	23
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	29
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

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BATTLING WITH OUR FATE

THE WORLD everywhere is divided, and in every era it has been so divided, between the old, who regard themselves as experienced in the affairs of life and the young who want to conquer circumstances and difficulties. As a general rule the aged hold more to the view that man's fate is determined, while the young generally speak of conquering destiny. Pre-destination appeals more to the old and the conservative; free will to determine the course of any event is on the lips of the young and the revolutionary. The old say, whether the life of his past is full of achievements or frustrations, that “Nature is stronger than nurture.” The youth exclaim, “Life will bring troubles and woes but we can make our own destiny, conquer our own fate and achieve what we will to achieve.”

The same problem of fate or free will arises in history: Do circumstances produce leaders, guides, geniuses? *Or*, do great men and women shape circumstances? Did circumstances make Napoleon or did Napoleon make circumstances because of his insight and vision? Which of the two propositions is correct: Do circumstances make the man or does man create and master circumstances?

Two schools of philosophy have been fighting “a battle royal” through the ages; and now in modern science also Pre-determination and Free Will claim each its own adherents and votaries. Only the great Theosophists, down the ages, have refused to belong to either of the two schools of thought. Krishna and Buddha and their peers

in every land and every era have taught what Mme. Blavatsky taught in Theosophy to our own age. Rejecting the two extremes they have taught that both pre-destination and free-will work hand in hand, side by side, in the life of every man, woman and child. Fate and free will belong to the doctrine of Karma. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of this doctrine have taken place. Therefore, we find that Karma has been looked upon as what is already determined, and that which is inflexible, never to be overcome. In India Karma has been grossly misunderstood. People sit down in front of the most trivial of difficulties and say—“Karma.” If they happen to be Mohammedans they say—”Kismet.” Some people with the ambition and the aspiration to conquer “fresh fields and pastures new,” brush aside the doctrine of Karma as mere babbling of the unenlightened.

Let us, for a moment, see the fallacy of both these positions. First, those who look upon Karma as pre-determined fate. If everything is already determined, if the course of a man’s life is fixed, then why aspire to do anything great or noble, why trouble about conditions of life? All is pre-ordained, all is pre-determined, therefore, take what comes your way, go when death calls. Such a view of life is not only depressing, it is degrading. All experience is against it. A little observation shows its faultiness. The other view rejects the law of Karma. Reject Karma and we have no adequate substitute coming from modern science or western philosophy to explain suffering and offer solution for any suffering. Life becomes mechanistic—give food to the body as you give fuel to an engine. Life becomes materialistic—eat well and enjoy, do what you can for yourself, have some hobby, politics or art or literature, and try to be honest and kind, as far as possible.

Hundreds and thousands of men and women fluctuate between these two views of life, and they toil without any real understanding of life, with no sure principles to guide and direct them. The fundamental principle which Theosophy offers as the very foundation of life is this doctrine of Karma, which is like a compass and a map in the hands of a stranger in a vast city. Any human soul

with the knowledge of the law of Karma can find his way to a happy and harmonious life in this vast and complicated world, because it reveals to us how to overcome our weaknesses and obstacles; how we can unfold our powers and virtues; above all how we can handle, from day to day, the circumstances of life as they arise.

Each one of us finds himself with two major factors: 1) Our outer circumstances, our environment. We are surrounded by people and events. These are there just as the air we breathe is there. Every child born into the world comes to a set of circumstances, to a family and to a country, just exactly as that child comes to breathe the air of this world. It is said that a child is born into his circumstances which form its destiny. 2) But there is the second factor. We have within ourselves some capacity to handle these circumstances, people and things. The child at its birth brings the capacity to scream and thus breathe. Thus, the child is not born to face air without the power to breathe. However, it is true that many children die at birth; they are not able to scream and thus to breathe the air. So also, there are men and women, thousands of them, who die, who are killed morally or mentally, and do not *seem* to have the capacity. But even this ability or inability to face the situation is the result of past actions. It is essential that we take note that these two factors, the one within and the other without, are not results of chance or accident. Our outer circumstances are the result of Karma; our inner capacity is also the result of Karma. Both these are results, *i.e.*, effects which proceed from previous causes.

If we have poor mind, a peevish temper, a poverty-stricken environment, they are results or effects from legitimate causes. Some people call this fate. If it is fate, then we may ask: Who made or created or caused these circumstances? Who made my mind and my moods? Who fashioned my character? Everything depends on the answer to that fundamental question. That answer contains the key to the mystery of life.

There are three answers: The first answer comes from modern

science. It states that it is not able to say how the Law of causation functions in the moral world, producing the differences in man's shape and size, in his moods and temperaments, in his mind and heart, in his capacity to face his environment. Science further offers Heredity as a mode or method of expression of these differences; that is to say through heredity we are able to know, if not everything, at least a great deal about why we are, whatever we are.

The second answer comes from orthodox religion. God created each human soul according to his will, or many gods combined to prepare the environment for each human soul. In other words, some outside agency fixed our destiny and all that *we* can do is to say, "God's will," "His will be done," and so forth. A poor man must remain poor for it is God's will—such is the philosophy of orthodox religions.

The third answer comes from Theosophy, which says that each man is the creator of his character, the maker of his destiny. But it immediately adds that the process of creating character, of making destiny or forging fate is going on even now. It will not do, says Theosophy, to look only at the past; nor to look only at the future. It is not right to say fate and not free will; it is equally wrong to say free will and not fate; do not even say fate versus free will but say *fate through free will* and the *use of free will through fate*. Past and future meet in the present for each one of us. Our present inner attitude and outer environment result from the past, but also they shape and colour the future.

This is the fundamental principle of the Law of Karma: We are making our future, and the material out of which we create that future is what we brought with us from the past. Each one of us is moulding and shaping his own future, and the only kind of limitation from which we suffer comes to us from our own past. Take an example: early, at school, a boy is marked for his high intelligence; compared to other boys he is brilliant. But to pass his examination he has to make use of his brilliant mind; on his present effort will depend his success; his past brilliancy, accumulated in previous lives,

will no doubt assist him—but work in the present he must. So, Theosophy teaches that each one of us brings with him his inner capacity and also each one has fashioned for himself his outer environment, but these are his materials, his tools with which to work in the present for the future.

How shall we battle with our own fate? By giving right response to what fate brings to us. By accepting and learning the right lesson, when we are unable to change it in spite of our efforts. But we must also ask ourselves, why do we want to battle with our fate? If we desire knowledge and a fine mind, if we desire a noble character, so that we may be a success in the world as people know success, then we are on the wrong track. If our desire is for soul-growth, to bring happiness and enlightenment to others, then we are bound to succeed. Our goal in life should be the spiritual and true service of our fellow-men. This is the motor-power, and the horrid sufferings, physical, mental, moral, which overtake us are accidents caused by absence of right motor-power. Do not aspire to become personally happy, or to gain success and fame, or to gather money or even to make one or two or a few people personally happy. For the actual realization of this aspiration we need a Vision. Many people want soul freedom, inner peace and strength. Without an adequate vision they fail. There are people who accept the justice aspect of Karma and they repeat, correctly that their fate is what they deserved; that is why they do not make progress. What is necessary is to perceive clearly that what we have and are is not only deserved, but is what *we desired*. Immediately our attitude changes when in face of obstacles and difficulties we say, "This is what I desired." Next we need action, in line with our aspiration and vision. To battle with our fate, to conquer it so that we are no more bound by it and suffer through it, we must fill our days with sacrificial action. Simple experiences of everyday life show to us that we feel happy and even uplifted when we have done something for somebody. It is natural for a good mother to love and sacrifice for her children; a friend readily sacrifices for his friend; but in such sacrifices the vision and the aspiration are lacking

and therefore there arise trouble and confusion and disillusion in the progress of time. All our sacrificial actions must be impersonal and wise.

When difficulties arise look upon them as splendid opportunities to develop stamina and strength. Our poverty is an opportunity; our ignorance is an opportunity; our enemies are opportunities. Whatever we have of money or wealth, little or much, is also an opportunity. It is said that wealth increases wealth. There is a philosophical principle underlying it; that as we use what we have, rightly and correctly, we acquire more. Similarly, our ignorance is an opportunity to use what knowledge or intelligence we possess—it may be meagre, but it is *our* intelligence. Then our enemies are our opportunities to kill in ourselves the feeling which produces enmity. How to do that? By activating the spirit of friendliness, and to do that we must make more friends and deepen our ties of friendship with present friends. That is how we grow into freedom and wisdom and sacrifice. Once we have entered the stream of Right Aspiration, and have kept our vision clear before us, we will swim with every stroke of sacrifice till we reach the other shore—the Land of the Great Ones, Men who have realized their Divinity.

In overcoming fate, in realizing that each one is the maker of his own destiny, we find that there are those who are Masters of Karma who have freed themselves from the bondage of Karma and who are now engaged in performance of Karma which the *Gita* calls *Adhi-Yajna*, the great sacrifice.

IF THERE is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house. If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

—*Chinese Proverb*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A POLISH FOLK TALE

THERE ARE many fairy tales throughout the world relating to the Initiation of a Disciple. The story of the little cobbler given below originates from the district of Cracow in Poland, where it used to be told by Polish peasants, the lesson of which can be summarized in the following words: Help Nature and Nature will respond.

Once upon a time there lived a poor, aged shoemaker. His only son was a very handsome youth. One day his father called him and sent him into the world to find a better future for himself. He gave him two rucksacks for his journey: one containing loaves of bread; the other a shoemaker's tools. And so the young fellow began his journey through various lands in search of work.

One sunny morning he found himself following a path through the forest. Suddenly he noticed an ant-hill which had been destroyed by a mischievous hand. His heart was filled with pity for the tiny creatures. He knelt on the ground, re-built the ant-hill and replaced the scattered eggs. A little further along the path he noticed a beehive hidden in the trunk of an old tree. But some mischievous hand had plundered the hive, and swarms of bees were buzzing round the tree. The shoemaker's heart was overwhelmed with pity. He repaired the broken hive and put a wax frame into it. The young shoemaker continued on his way until he arrived at the bank of a beautiful river filled with shoals of goldfish, and silver swans glided on the surface of the water. He took out the remaining piece of bread from his rucksack and threw the crumbs into the water for the goldfish and the silver swans.

Long and weary was the shoemaker's journey; he was often hungry and various dangers threatened his life. But he finally reached the gates of the large city. He settled down in the city and made a reputation for his skill as a shoemaker. One day he was called to the royal castle and was asked to make a pair of slippers for the young princess. As soon as he saw the face of the beautiful princess he

immediately fell in love with her and he asked the queen, who was a *wicked enchantress*, for the hand of her daughter. The queen said that whoever wanted to marry the princess must be prepared for three tests. In the first test, the queen ordered a sack of poppy seeds and a sack of sand to be mixed together, and the shoemaker was asked to separate the seeds from the sand before the next morning. The unhappy young man sat in the closed room provided to him as tears of despair rolled down his cheeks. But just then he heard a strange noise and saw thousands upon thousands of ants enter the room through the barred window. They started carefully to clean the poppy seeds, putting aside every grain of sand. Soon the work was completed. The shoemaker thanked the tiny creatures with all his heart.

The next morning, the queen was greatly surprised to see all the poppy seeds separated from the sand, and gave the shoemaker even more difficult task to perform. She locked the princess in her room with a golden key which was thrown into deep waters of the river, and the shoemaker was asked to find the key. The shoemaker stood in despair on the bank of the river, when he suddenly saw a silver swan swimming towards him with the golden key in its beak. The swan came as a messenger from the goldfish who had found the key at the bottom of the deep river.

The queen then gave him his last and the most difficult task to perform. She led him to the room where three aged, ugly spinsters were spinning. He was asked to guess which one was the princess, and if he guessed incorrectly, he would have to marry the oldest and the ugliest spinster as a punishment! The shoemaker looked around him hopelessly, and just then a swarm of bees flew in through the open window and circled over the head of the ugliest of the spinsters. The shoemaker immediately perceived the meaning of their action. "That one is my princess," he shouted, and ran towards the spinster pointed out by the bees. And lo! in her place appeared the lovely princess, freed from the enchantment of the queen. The shoemaker married his beloved princess.

The theme of this, and indeed many of the details, strongly resembles that of "The Queen Bee," one of the Grimms' Tales. The youth who goes out into the world in quest of a better future for himself is the human soul. In one rucksack he has the "bread of wisdom" and in the other he has the tools for making "shoes" (or sheaths of skin), in which the incarnating Higher Soul may "tread on earth." The human soul is fed by spirit, but he has also the power to create a complex body of matter. The young princess for whom he has to furnish slippers is his own potential godhood, for which he has to provide embodiment. But first, as always happens, he has to pass through certain probationary trials and tests that come from great Nature herself. Nature the enchantress must be overcome before man can be more than man. The first test is to "learn to discern the real from the false," the living seed from the sterile sand. The poppy is a flower that, astrologically, is under the moon, the goddess of childbirth, and truth is the living seed of the "second birth."

Now it is not ordinary logic and reason that sift out unerringly the real from the unreal. When man "instinctively," so to say (without having to weigh the pros and cons), picks out the essential truth, then he *knows*. "Reason, the outgrowth of the physical brain, develops at the expense of the instinct. . . . In losing instinct, man loses his intuitional powers, which are the crown and ultimatum of instinct" (*Isis*, I, 433). The ant can be considered the epitome of instinct, and when man's conscious mind restores that instinctive knowledge (as the youth repairs the ant-hill) then the thousandfold experiences of his life become assimilated into the discerning faculty of intuition.

In the second test, water represents the pure, spiritual element out of whose depths immortality is won. In many religions the fish is connected symbolically with man's Saviours, while *Hansa* (the Swan or Goose) stands in Indian symbolism for the secret Divine Wisdom, and for Eternity. It symbolizes too "the identity of man's essence with god-essence" and thus it carries the golden key that opens the door behind which man's divinity is imprisoned.

And in the third test, the three daughters of Nature, who spin

man's fate may be considered as the three aspects of Death—the end of all life. The “oldest and ugliest” is the violent death that comes from a wilful course of sins of commission; the second death is the slow decay that follows the sins of omission; while the third “death,” apparently as fearful as the others, is in reality Divine Life itself. The extinction of the personal life is the bliss of Nirvana, but, as the aspiring soul gets its first glimpse of that Life Universal, it is terrified and overwhelmed by it. Yet, what appears in this terrible awful guise of death, is in reality the goddess of Life.

And here the fairy tale offers the clue that our power to choose the right goal depends on our ability to act as Spirit, universally. If the ants represent our perceptions (the whole scale of instinct-intuition), the bees, the honey-gatherers, represent our powers of soul-action; for the noble and soul-energized thoughts and deeds, are often called the honey gathered by the Ego from each incarnation.

Thus, even at the beginning of the Path, “sympathy, charity and all other forms of goodness” opens up opportunities for gaining the necessary knowledge to tread the Path. So the accumulated merit of our selfless and spiritual actions develops the powers (bees) that enable us to meet the test of the final “moment of choice,” and, in spite of the terrifying vision before us, to make the right choice. It should be noted also that even beginners on the Path are confronted, before taking a step forward, with something that seems dreadful and hard to face, whether a circumstance, a relationship, a task. Upon the way they react to it will depend which “ugly spinster” they will choose—either of the two who represent the positive and negative aspects of Karma-Nemesis, or the one which is Soul-achievement in disguise, so that seeming poison becomes life-giving. The only thing that gives us the stamina to face the terrors that confront us is the result of putting our spiritual intentions, our ideals, into practice. There is a daily as well as a final initiation, and the fairy story refers to both.

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

THE BHIKKHU—II

8. *He indeed is a Bhikkhu who does not identify his soul with his name and form, his mind and body, and who grieves not for what he does not possess. (367)*

WHAT COMES in the way of spiritual progress? It is the attachment and identification with name and form, mind and body. When we say “I” we mean our body, our personality, our likes and dislikes, our status and stature, our mind—the present bundle of thoughts, feelings and emotions that constantly change. We keep comparing ourselves with others in terms of our looks, our possessions, our knowledge, our achievements, our power and position, and we feel proud if we possess what others do not have, and are disturbed if we do not have what others have.

It is this identification with the name and form which makes us feel separate from other beings and behave selfishly. We are ignorant of the true nature of the immortal Spirit within, which is eternal, changeless and unaffected by pleasure and pain, heat and cold, likes and dislikes. Mr. Judge points out: “Remember this, that you own not one thing in this world. Your wife is but a gift, your children are but loaned to you. All else you possess is given to you only while you use it wisely. Your body is not yours, for Nature claims it as her property. Do you not think, Oh Man, that it is the height of arrogance for you to sit in judgment upon any other created thing, while you, a beggar, are going about in a borrowed robe?” And lest we forget our divine nature, he tells us: “How shall we be proud when we are so small? How dare we be humble when we are so great?” He repeats the advice given by many Adepts: “Every day, and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake—think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain, or astral man, but that you are THAT, and THAT is the Supreme Soul. For by this practice you will gradually kill the false notion which lurks inside that the

false is the true, and the true the false. By persistence in this, by submitting your daily thoughts each night to the judgment of your Higher Self, you will at last gain light.”

9. *The Bhikkhu who practises Metta, Compassion, and who abides happily in the Wisdom of the Buddha, he has stilled conditioned existence and attains of a surety the blessed state of Peace Supreme. (368)*

Metta means love; it also means friendliness. Bhikshu Sangharakshita writes that the chief difference between *prema* and *metta* is that while one is exclusive, the other is inclusive. Love, in the Buddhist sense of the term is love only when it is felt impartially for all living beings. From this exalted and wholly spiritualized emotion one develops equanimity and compassion. When one feels friendliness and love towards all, there can be no ill-will, hatred or malice towards anyone. In addition to this, when there is abiding faith in the Wisdom of the Buddha, one begins to live in harmony with all the beings, which brings profound peace. It is our sense of separateness and selfishness that puts us in conflict with other people. We dislike those who come in our way or treat us badly. There can be no peace of mind for such a person. But, the man who sees the oneness of all beings, lives by the *Sanatana Dharma* taught by the Buddha: “Hatred ceases not by hatred but by love.” Peace fills the mind of the one who is not entangled in ill-will towards anyone, and who has complete faith that our lives are governed by the wise, unerring, just and merciful law of Karma.

Buddhism recommends *Metta-Bhavana* meditation. It spreads loving kindness to all, starting with oneself, it includes a friend, a stranger and also an enemy and then the whole world. This has to be practised in all sincerity. By this practice one reaches a state when conditioned existence is stilled, *i.e.*, it ceases to have effect, so that one does not oscillate between pleasure and pain.

10. *Empty the boat, O Bhikkhu; when emptied it will go lightly. Cut off lust and ill-will and then you will reach*

Nirvana. (369)

“Travel light” is a golden *mantram* not just for the globe-trotting man of the world but also for the spiritual aspirant. We are all pilgrim souls, travelling together to reach the final goal of Nirvana. For this spiritual journey, we have to prepare our luggage, so that we carry with us only those things which are necessary and useful. The Bhikkhu is asked to empty the boat to travel fast. He is asked to discard the unnecessary baggage of lust and ill-will which would slow down his progress and exhaust him. In the article “Occultism Versus Occult Arts,” H.P.B. tells us how Mystics and Occultists pass through the narrow gates of Occultism because they carry no personal luggage of human transitory sentiments along with them. They have got rid of the feeling of the lower personality and have paralyzed thereby the “astral” animal.

As a bee gathers honey from every flower, the soul gathers from each incarnation only the aroma of the flower that has been mown by death. It carries with itself the undying and eternal qualities or attributes, such as love and mercy, goodness and charity, the love of the good, the true and the beautiful, noblest aspirations, etc. Rest of it is discarded at the threshold of death. That man is wise who pauses to ask whether that which he is about to undertake is going to accompany him after death or not. We need to reflect upon what Mr. Judge tells us in the article, “Advantages and Disadvantages of Life”:

Languages, archæology, music, satiating sight with beauty, eating the finest food, wearing the best clothes, traveling to many places and thus infinitely varying impressions on ear and eye; all these begin and end in the brain and not in the soul or character....[At death] the wonderful central master-ganglion disintegrates, and nothing at all is left but some faint aromas here and there depending on the actual love within for any one pursuit or image or sensation. Nothing left of it all but a few

tendencies—*skandhas*, not of the very best. The advantages then turn out in the end to be disadvantages altogether. But imagine the same brain and body not in places of ease, struggling for a good part of life, doing their duty and not in a position to please the senses: this experience will burn in, stamp upon, carve into the character, more energy, more power and more fortitude. It is thus through the ages that great characters are made.

To signify the giving up of the non-essentials in life, the Hindus have *Mundan* ceremony—shaving the head. The sincere aspirant has much to unlearn before he can learn. He has to learn to listen carefully and consider seriously the words of his teacher, suspending his judgment which is often based on his limited experience, knowledge and understanding derived from his parents, education, society, religion and science. In the article “Literary Jottings” (*H.P.B. Series No. 24*), H.P.B. describes the difficulty experienced by the one who rigidly holds on to certain views—his own or that of some “Authority,” thus:

Some philosopher compared knowledge to a ladder, the top of which was more easily reached by a man unencumbered by heavy luggage, than by him who has to drag along an enormous bale of old conventionalities, faded out and dried. Moreover, such a one must look back every moment, for fear of losing some of his fossils. Is it owing to such extra weight that so few of them ever reach the summit of the ladder, and that they affirm there is *nothing* beyond the highest rung *they* have reached? Or is it for the sake of preserving the old dried-up plants of the Past that they deny the very possibility of any fresh, living blossoms, on new forms of life, in the Future? (pp. 14-15)

Zen Buddhism has a concept called “Soshin,” which is cultivating a “beginners’ mind,” so that we can replace the “I know” attitude with “I don’t know” attitude, and also be ready to empty our minds of pre-conceptions. The right attitude towards the teachings will

prepare us to receive the communication from the inner planes of our being.

11. *Cut off the five. Get rid of the five. Cultivate further the five. The thus fivefold delivered Bhikkhu is named “Oghatinna”—“One who has crossed the flood.” (370)*

The note on this verse points out that the five to be cut off are: (1) Delusion of personality [*satkaya-drsti*—the wrong belief in the permanence of the body or the personality]; (2) Doubt, *i.e.*, “skeptical doubt—not wishing to understand” [*Vicikitsa* is hesitant acceptance of the ideal of the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*]; (3) False Asceticism and “clinging to mere rules and ritual” [*Silavrata-paramarsa*—dependence upon mere morality and external ascetic observances, as though they were by themselves a sufficient means to Enlightenment]; (4) Yearning for desire fulfilment [*kama-raga*]; and (5) Ill-will [*vyapada*].

The five to get rid of are: (a) Desire for life in the worlds of form; (2) Desire for life in formless worlds; (3) Self-will; (4) Restlessness; (5) Ignorance. The five to be cultivated are: (1) Faith; (2) Attention; (3) Dauntless Energy; (4) Meditation; and (5) Wisdom.

Ogha = flood; one who has crossed over the flood of the four Asavas or Biases— (1) Bias in favour of sensuous living; (2) Bias for continuing with life; (3) Bias in favour of one’s own views; (4) Bias arising out of ignorance.

The spiritual aspirant is called by different names depending upon the number of fetters which are broken by him. While the Stream-Entrant (*Srotapatti*) has broken the first three fetters completely, the Once Returner (*Sakrdagamin*) succeeds in weakening, though not in actually breaking, the fourth and fifth fetters. The Non-Returner (*Anagamin*) having burst all five “lower” fetters is reborn in one of the Pure Abodes, and there attains Nirvana without the necessity of incurring another human birth. But, the *Arhat* also breaks the five remaining “higher” fetters, namely, desire for existence in the world of forms (*rupa-raga*); desire for existence in the formless

world (*arupa-raga*); self-will or conceit—the idea of himself being superior or inferior or equal to others (*mana*); restlessness (*auddhatya*); and ignorance (*avidya*)—in this very life wins emancipation from the bondage of phenomenal existence and straight away plunges into Deathless state or Nirvana.

The goal of spiritual discipline should not be to replace this-worldliness with other-worldliness—desire for a long stay in heaven-world or becoming a *deva*. In the *Epitome of Theosophy*, Mr. Judge tells us that when the Adept has reached a certain very high point in his evolution, he may, by a mere wish, become what the Hindus call a “Deva”—or lesser god. If he does this, then, although he will enjoy the bliss and power of that state for a vast length of time, he will not, at the next *Pralaya*, partake of the conscious life “in the bosom of the Father,” but has to pass down into matter at the next new “creation,” and has to come up again through the elemental world. Though in itself not bad, it is still a desire of *sattvic* nature. Also, there should not be restlessness which comes from lack of definite purpose or wavering or inattentiveness. It is *rajasic* drive for initiating new actions. Nor should one be ignorant, which is the root of all evil, a *tamasic* quality. One should understand the purpose of life and true nature of soul and try to rise above all the three *gunas*—*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*.

In order to make progress, one must be ready to give up one’s biases. So important it is to overcome the bias that in the *Key to Theosophy* H.P.B. tells us that one of the factors that will determine the future of the Theosophical Society will be the freedom of its members from biases. It is also difficult to give up our views—we hold on to them even when we are given logical basis and explanation. This could be because of desires, fear, ignorance, laziness, or following the herd mentality and so on; we do not like to be disturbed out of the comfort zone in which we are living.

(To be continued)

OVERCOMING OUR PERSONAL NATURE

TO KNOW ANYTHING, one has to hold that thing as a subject of experiment and view it unhampered by considerations of likes and dislikes. The consciousness that views and weighs and judges, has to be unfettered, its powers not limited nor circumscribed by the ever narrowing boundaries of selfish motivations.

It would be wrong to assume that knowledge and the powers flowing from it do not come either to the selfish man or the man of evil. They do. However, such men touch the knowledge of things at levels at which the lower human consciousness functions. They do not have access to the spiritual side of things with its potency for the exercise of tremendous force. Even then, the fact that such men can subordinate great powers for their wicked purposes cannot be denied. It is dangerous to ignore this fact.

Occult knowledge deals with the essence of things and therefore with Nature’s finer forces. It gives the key to the stupendous forces that reside in the secret side of Nature and therefore of man. Keeping such knowledge away from the ambitious, as also, from the shallow and the foolish is the responsibility of the Wise. The imposing of an oath of secrecy by ancient secret societies was no mere playing at heroics. It is of the greatest importance that the esoteric aspects of knowledge be kept in safe and trusted hands.

When a student of Theosophy starts yearning for occult knowledge he rarely knows what he desires. The word “occult” means “hidden.” Occult knowledge is, therefore, knowledge that is kept hidden from the ordinary run of men. Why, then, does the student desire for himself the unveiling of that which has been purposely secreted from prying eyes? Does he feel that he is already an entity apart from the mass? For most students, it is curiosity that is at the back of the desire. Possibly there is the desire to shine, a desire to know more than others. For the studiously inclined, there is the urge to expand the vision beyond the horizons of the day. But occult knowledge is much more than worldly knowledge. This

knowledge confers on the recipient unbelievable potent powers which he may use either on the white or the black side of life. A potential focus of danger is created when occult knowledge is given out even to the most promising of aspirants. This danger becomes real if the neophyte in moments of instability breaks his bond of secrecy. He may not be guilty of a deliberate violation. Yet he may do incalculable harm to himself and his fellow students by inadvertently disclosing the secret knowledge to those in whose hands that knowledge may become harmful to humanity.

It is therefore right that before desiring to secure the keys that will open the doors to the hidden knowledge, the student ponders over his own record as to how wisely he has used the powers which even his present limited knowledge has endowed upon him. More important still has he to judge for himself whether during psychic upheavals he has denied himself the use of the powers of thought and speech to escape the results of his own wrongdoings, or worse still, to pass the burden of his merited suffering on to another. One who yields to temptations cannot but disqualify himself. Selfishness in any form and on any plane is the agent which makes the student slip into black magic in one of its lesser or more virulent forms.

The greatest enemy of the student as of the learned person is the stranglehold that the personality exerts on him, and which forces him to use hands and mind and heart to advance his own interest. There are those for whom the concepts of universality and brotherhood rank subservient to their ideals of personal advancement. For them, there is no mystery of the self to be solved. They were born separate—they choose to remain separate. They cannot be bothered with the welfare of others. If those others stumble and fall and fail, they could not care less. How very dangerous would it be to release occult knowledge to persons and nations who hold such views! What dire mischief can be caused by the sincere student who, being entrusted with occult knowledge, does not hold it secret, and gives it out to persons who, if they themselves do not defile it, think nothing of displaying it to satisfy their own little vanities!

Before rushing into Occultism, the student has to learn to erect safeguards against his own indiscretions. He has to be sure that if he ventures into the pure white precincts of the Soul, he takes there no soiling substance that may defile the precincts and destroy their chaste whiteness. Therefore, if he finds that he has blemishes that make him unfit for the company of the truly wise, he may for the time being put aside his desires for the occult and prepare himself, however slowly, to climb from the personal to the impersonal. To him of the humble heart karma is generous in help and encouragement. If at his low level of unfoldment he cannot engage in sacrificial action, he can still serve, and serving, hope. It is no small favour to lend a hand to a stumbling soul. It is no trivial service to propagate the philosophy and thus perchance help a soul less tainted than oneself on to the path where the Masters are. One of the Great Ones has said: “If you want to know us, study our philosophy. If you want to serve us, serve our humanity.” This should imply to the student that the greatest service he can render to humanity (in its impersonal vastness) is to make it study Masters’ philosophy. By so doing, he helps units from that humanity to know Masters through that philosophy. This is impersonal service. It is service *in excelsis*.

Maintaining a constant fight against the lower self and thus loosening the bonds of personality may take lives and ages for some. Yet, their devotion to the Cause may make them render such service as will help souls who are less burdened to pass onwards. This is the hope and promise that Theosophy offers. *Light on the Path* has very valuable advice for the student-aspirant. Says the text:

Not until the bonds of personality are loosed can that profound mystery of the self begin to be seen. Not till you stand aside from it, will it in any way reveal itself to your understanding.

It is this ability to stand aside from the personality, and thus detached, to assess its walk in life, that makes the man. It is a spiritual exercise that each day the lower is reviewed and controlled by the higher. The true artist and the poet, the great surgeon and the high

mathematician stand aside from themselves when devotedly engrossed in their work. The rest of the world goes by leaving them indifferent. The student has to achieve this dissociation to such a marked degree that no friend can enter his citadel, nor yet an enemy. The concentration that permits entry into occultism is, however, of a kind different from that known and practiced by the person of one-pointed ambition. The particular concentration that the aspirant has to cultivate has for its object things that do not concern the personal life; nor is it an abstruse theorizing that borders on mental gymnastics and fails altogether to blend the mind with the soul. The act of standing aside from the personality requires an anchoring of the consciousness on stable and not on shaky ground.

The stepping away from likes and dislikes that makes possible the entry into the realms of the impersonal is not that easily achieved as some so-called modern “gurus” would have us believe. The conquering of the lower self is a work of ages and is not achieved without an inner transformation. The road is thorny and full of pitfalls. But then each one knows that victories go to the daring and to none others.

THE MAJORITY of us lead quiet, unheralded lives as we pass through this world. There will most likely be no ticker-tape parades for us, no monuments created in our honour. But that does not lessen our possible impact, for there are scores of people waiting for someone just like us to come along; people who will appreciate our compassion, our unique talents. Someone will live a happier life, merely because we took the time to share, what we had to give. Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have a potential to turn a life around. It is overwhelming to consider the continuous opportunities there are to make our love felt.

—LEO BUSCAGLIA

THE ADEPTS IN THE BIBLE

JESUS—II

JOHN THE BAPTIST also said, “And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” H.P.B. explains that “I” the terrestrial man, knew him not, but my *Buddhic* principle recognized the sign. The Dove in symbology has many meanings; one of them is Eros (Love) or Charity. This Dove descending and remaining upon man, that is to say, this Purified Love, Charity or Compassion, descending on the Initiate, helps him to unite himself with the Holy Ghost or *Atman*. On the terrestrial plane it means, that by the “Dove,” or Aura, an Initiate is recognized by his fellows. (*Lucifer*, March 1893)

In the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke, after being baptized, Jesus fasted for forty days and nights in the Judean Desert. During this time, the devil appeared to Jesus and tempted him. Jesus having refused each temptation, the devil departed and the angels came and brought nourishment to Jesus. We know that Buddha also went through the temptation of the world, the flesh and the devil as personified by *Mara*. The Gospel of Matthew records: “Again the Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them, and saith unto him; ‘All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.’”

H.P.B. explains that in all the Mysteries, after the four days of trial or temptation, came the three days of descent into Hades, or the tomb, from which the Glorified Candidate, or Initiate arose. It is interesting to note that Jesus is said to have been tempted for 40 days. Here the nought (zero) is a “blind,” for in the mystery numbers, ciphers (zeroes) can be disregarded and changed according to the rules of the method employed. (*Lucifer*, March 1893)

Jesus’ activities in Galilee include a number of miracles and

teachings. Just south of the city of Alexandria there lived a community of men and women known as the *Therapeutae*. They formed an inner group within Alexandrian Judaism, an esoteric circle of *illuminati*, or wise men. Jesus' knowledge of healing and the many "miraculous" cures attributed to him point to the fact that he must at one time have been a member of this community. They were the true mystics of that day, and Christianity is indebted to them for many of its mystical expressions.

The *Gospel According to Mark* (8:43-47) mentions that a woman with bloody issue which could not be cured even after consulting the physicians for twelve years, touched the garment of Jesus, and was cured immediately. Jesus turned around and asked, "Who touched me? I perceive that virtue has gone out of me?" Virtue is an old English word for vitality. We might well look upon it as a sort of mesmeric healing, in which healthy vital fluid is imparted by the mesmerizer to the patient, and the relief felt by the patient is proportionate to the exhaustion felt by the mesmerizer, because the process of endosmose takes place, explains H.P.B. Yet, Jesus told the woman who was cured that it was her faith that had made her whole.

In the *Gospel According to Mark* (8:49-56), we find the touching narrative of the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus. There came to Jesus, a man named Jairus, who was the ruler of the synagogue and pleaded with him to go to his house, because his only daughter, twelve years of age, had died. When Jesus went inside the house and looked at the girl, he said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." Those present there did not believe it. Jesus took the hand of the girl and called out, saying, "Maid, arise." "And her spirit came again, and she arose straight away." To understand revival and resuscitation of the dead we must understand real and apparent death. What the physiologists would term "real death" may not actually be so. The man is not dead when he is cold, stiff, pulseless, breathless and even showing signs of decomposition. The ancient philosophy teaches that death occurs at the instant when both the astral body

(or life-principle) and the spirit leave the physical body *forever*. That point which an occultist calls as "real death" is, when the vital organs, such as heart, liver, brain, etc., have become so decomposed, that if reanimated, they could not perform their customary functions. But until that point is reached, the astral body, which is the design body for the physical, can be caused to re-enter the physical body, either by the effort of the spirit or through the will of an occultist—one who has knowledge and control over the potencies of nature. The person appearing to be dead is only in a state of lethargy or torpor. Such a state is called the state of "suspended animation." Instances such as daughter of Jairus recalled to life by Jesus, and the Corinthian bride resuscitated by Apollonius of Tyana, show that these beings had the knowledge and the skill to distinguish, at a glance, between real and apparent death. There is no miracle in such resuscitations. If the death is absolute, then even an Adept cannot revive that person. A leaf once fallen off does not reattach itself to the branch. Therefore, when a woman brought her dead son to Lord Buddha, instead of reviving him, he taught her the lesson of inevitability of death.

H.P.B. mentions that the story of the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus is copied entirely from the *Hari-Purana*, and is recorded among the miracles attributed to Krishna, in which Krishna revives princess Kalavatti, the daughter of King Angashuna, who was stung by a serpent and had died, with similar command, "Kalavatti, rise and walk!" (*Isis*, II, 241)

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a Roman officer met Jesus and begged for help because his servant was sick in bed at home, unable to move and suffering terribly. Jesus offered to go to the officer's house and heal the servant, but the officer said that he was not worthy of having Jesus enter his house. Instead he suggested that Jesus should only give the order and his servant would be well. He said that he was an officer himself and when he commanded his soldiers to do something it was done. Jesus was impressed by this Roman officer's faith. He turned to the crowd and said, "I have not found anyone in Israel with a faith like this." The Roman officer

was told, “Go back home. As you have believed, so shall it be.” The Centurion returned home and found his servant completely healed. In the article, “Men, Karmic Agents,” Mr. Judge mentions that there are people who are concentrators of the forces, who become instrumental in sudden and quick precipitation of Karma. It is a well-known tradition in India that when someone meets and talks with an adept, his Karma begins to precipitate faster than usual. There are accounts of people who had met, by chance, Yogis in the forest, and telling them about a friend or a dear one at home, who was critically ill, and then on returning home finding that the illness had disappeared at the very time of the conversation, as happened in the case of the Centurion and Jesus.

The phenomena performed by Jesus may be “supernormal” but not “supernatural,” *i.e.*, they are not performed by breaking any laws of nature, or by the intervention of any divine or demoniacal agency. Jesus was an Initiate who had developed the powers through training and experience, which lie as “germ” in every human being. In *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. describes a wide range of apparently miraculous phenomena and provides their rationale. Apparent “miracles” involve forces, processes and laws, once “known” but now unknown to science.

No teacher worthy of the name has ever come forth as a revealer of new and un-heard of facts, but each and every one of them only re-stated a portion of the unchanging Truth. The inner teachings of Jesus were identical with the *Gupta-Vidya*, the secret doctrines of the Magi and of the hierophants. He must have supplemented his knowledge of the ancient Egyptian and Chaldean systems with that he had acquired through the study of the Pythagorean and Buddhist philosophies, for: “1. all his sayings are in a Pythagorean spirit, when not *verbatim* repetitions; 2. his code of ethics is purely Buddhist; 3. his mode of action and walk in life, Essenic; and 4. his mystical mode of expression, his parables, and his ways, those of an initiate, whether Grecian, Chaldean or Magian (for the ‘Perfect,’ who spoke the *hidden* wisdom, were of the same school of archaic

learning the world over), it is difficult to escape from the logical conclusion that he belonged to that same body of initiates.” (*Isis*, II, 337)

Like every other Great Teacher, Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, which has two-fold meaning, but revealed his highest spiritual doctrines to his disciples. There are cogent reasons for this silence: “*Firstly*, the perversity of average human nature and its selfishness, always tending to the gratification of *personal* desires to the detriment of neighbours and next of kin. Such people could never be entrusted with *divine* secrets. *Secondly*, their unreliability to keep the sacred and divine knowledge from desecration.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p.12)

Buddha, Confucius and Jesus are said to form an ethical triad. All three of them emphasized and taught Universal ethics, which have been taught for centuries. No Buddha, Christ or Prophet ever tried to establish a new religion. Each and every one of them was a reformer, who protested against the false religious views. Each of them tried to expose the lies and corruption of the existing religion and taught a Way of Life. Buddha was a Hindu, born in *Kshtriya* caste. He tried to remove corruption caused by religious ignorance and priestly cunning. He saw that the religion of his country had become narrow and dogmatic. Jesus, likewise, tried to purify Judaism. “Both of these great Teachers determined to break down this spirit of dogmatism which was threatening to overthrow pure religion. They both saw the intolerance and hypocrisy of the priests, the futility of their senseless ceremonials and prayers, the outward show of piety that covered their lack of true spirituality. Both of them were *reformers*. Both of them pointed to *ethics* as the only secure foundation upon which any true system of religion can be reared. The Buddha called himself *Tathagata*—he who follows in the footsteps of his predecessors.” (*Theosophy*, June 1936)

His motive was “to benefit humanity at large by producing religious reform which should give it a religion of pure ethics; the true knowledge of God and nature having remained until then solely

in the hands of esoteric sects, and their adepts” (*Isis*, II, 133). When asked what a man should do to have eternal life, he replied: “Keep the commandments.” When asked which ones, he answered:

Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery,
Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,
Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy
neighbour as thyself. (*Matthew*, xix, 16-19)

The doctrine of Reincarnation or Re-birth is called the “lost chord of Christianity,” because Jesus taught the doctrine of re-birth, but an anathema was hurled at the doctrine of reincarnation in the Constantinople Council, about 500 A.D., and hence it is absent from the teachings of Christianity. Jesus was a Jew, and the Jews then most undoubtedly believed in reincarnation. When disciples were discussing the coming of a messenger before Jesus himself, and said that Elias was to come first as messenger, Jesus distinctly replied that Elias had come already in the person called John the Baptist. In other words, he affirmed that John the Baptist was the reincarnation of Prophet Elias. Again, when there was brought into the presence of Jesus a man who was born blind, the disciples asked Jesus whether that man was born blind for the sin he had committed, or for the sin committed by his parents. Since the man was born blind, he could not have sinned in that very life, and yet the disciples put the question, fully accepting the doctrine of reincarnation, and in their view the man must have lived before, and in some previous life committed the sin for which he might be punished now. If the doctrine of re-birth was wrong and pernicious then that was the time for Jesus to deny it and put the seal of condemnation. But Jesus did not do that.

(*To be concluded*)

HE who listens to truth is not less than he, who utters the
truth.

—KAHLIL GIBRAN

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: How does the food we eat get transformed into blood and physical energy to carry out our day-to-day activities?

Answer: We may consider the views of two schools of physiology, and also the occult process involved, according to philosophical views. According to one physiological view, the process of digestion consists of the breaking down of the complex molecules of the food nutrients into simple ones, termed as “*rasa*” in Ayurveda, capable of being absorbed in blood-stream. This digestion is through a long alimentary canal, which not only includes stomach, but also intestines and colon for complete digestion. In this process of digestion, other organs, such as, the liver producing bile, and pancreas, producing pancreatic juice and a hormone, are also vitally important. For further metabolism, the circulating blood carries the “nutrients” to be absorbed and metabolized by other specialized organs, such as, kidneys, lungs, spleen, which further metabolize and make them acceptable for conversion into tissues and cells including blood (*rakta*) itself. Some such refined products of metabolism are absorbed even by the “ductless glands” in order to produce extremely useful hormones which take part in maintaining homeostasis and health of the whole organism.

In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, “Becoming the internal fire of the living, I associate with *prana* and *apana*, and cause the four kinds of food to digest,” (*Gita*, XV). The Fifteenth Chapter of the *Gita* speaks of the Supreme Spirit which abides in the body of living beings as *Vaishvanara*, all-pervading Life, which manifests Itself as the “digestive fire,” which assimilates the food that we eat. The four

kinds of food include the food that is masticated, swallowed, sucked and licked. This fire digests all kinds of food—vegetarian, non-vegetarian, cooked and uncooked. It is not the physical body alone that is working in digestion. The internal fire that is responsible for the conversion of food into chyle, etc., and also for its absorption, is the living force, the *Vaishvanara* which acts as fire in the stomach. The food that we eat is digested by the action of three of the five *pranas* or vital energies—*Prana, Apana, Samana, Vyana* and *Udana*—which are like ambassadors of the Ultimate Reality.

Thus, when the all-pervading Vital Fire is associated with *Prana* it manifests as peristaltic movement which receives and pushes down the food that is swallowed. The same Vital Fire, when associated with *Apana* gives to the intestine the capacity to throw out the undigested food as waste matter. *Samana* is the vital energy, which operates through navel region and causes digestion of food. It creates heat in the stomach and in the navel region so that the gastric juices operate and we feel hungry. Thus, ultimately, it is the *Vaishvanara* fire or the Supreme Spirit which presides over the functions of intake or swallowing of the food, assimilation of the food and also elimination of the waste matter.

It is interesting to consider the process of digestion from the Ayurvedic point of view. The digestion of food takes place in the stomach (*jathar*) and in Ayurveda the fire in the stomach is called digestive fire or *jathar-agni*. The digestive fire could be in four possible states: *Sama-agni* which reflects balanced metabolism, *Vishama-agni* reflecting irregular metabolism, *tikshna-agni* reflecting hyper-metabolism, and *manda-agni* reflecting slow metabolism. When we eat food, it is converted into the *rasa* (nutritive fluid), ready for absorption. Next there is absorption of nutrients or *rasa* into *rakta* (blood plasma), and in a sequence, conversion to *mamsa* (muscle), *meda* (fat and connective tissues), *asthi* (bone), *majja* (bone marrow), and finally, *shukra* (male and female reproductive fluid). *Sukra* is further transformed into more refined states such as *viryā*. This latter also helps at the psychic and mental level to maintain

zest, drive, enthusiasm and courage. Finally, by an occult transformation this *sukra* gets transformed into *Ojas*, a luminous energy of mind and heart in their most refined states.

Chhandogya Upanishad says that the food that is eaten is divided into three parts: Its grossest part becomes waste; its middle part becomes flesh; its lightest part becomes Mind, and hence, when the disciple was made to remain without food for fifteen days, he could not remember any of the teachings. Likewise, waters that are drunk are divided into three parts: The grossest part becomes waste; the middle part becomes blood; the lightest part becomes vital Breath.

Question: An earnest spiritual seeker is expected to learn to endure personal injustice, but be ready to defend others who are unjustly attacked. Why this double standard? Moreover, nowadays to help the persecuted (in the office or society or public) is like inviting danger for ourselves. What can one do in such situations?

Answer: *The Voice of the Silence* has similar injunction, to be as soft as mango's pulp to other people's woes and as hard as mango's seed to our own woe. In spiritual life there is always this double standard, so that we may learn to sink the personal self, and learn to live for others. *Light on the Path* suggests that one aspiring to be a disciple has to surrender all weapons of offence and defense, give up all individual rights, which tend to accentuate the personal self and also the sense of separateness. To speak of "rights" is the hiss of the snake of self and this snake must be killed out. The disciple has to learn to be content with his state because like a grain of sand on the ocean bed, he may get a chance to be under the sun, or may remain buried beneath other grains, most of the time. In not defending ourselves, we exhibit the highest faith in the law of Karma, wherein we leave the consequence to the justice of Karma. An aspirant is expected to follow this course, because so long as there is even a single thought about the self, there remains the danger of misusing the powers and knowledge for selfish purposes. But learning to endure injustice is like "negative goodness," and hence on the positive side, one must learn to defend the innocent, if one wants to

walk the Path of Renunciation.

The would-be disciple has to learn to be in sympathy with other co-students and co-disciples and then with the whole of humanity. It is the duty of a spiritual seeker to defend the teachings and the teachers from whom he has derived spiritual benefit. When H.P.B. was unjustly slandered and calumniated, she never defended herself. Mr. Judge writes that she had no need of sympathy or praise, but even she needed justice, and “without that impulse in our hearts and souls towards her...we must fail for this incarnation. As the babe to the mother, as harvest to the earth, so are all those bound to her who enjoy the fruit of her life.” We rush to the defense of our child when he is *unjustly* attacked (sometimes even when *justly* attacked!) or is being reprimanded, because we are identified with the child, and we construe injustice to him as injustice to us. We must have such devotion and sense of identification towards co-disciples, teachers and the whole of humanity.

As for the danger involved in defending others, we need not rush out rashly to defend. And yet, we should be prepared to develop the courage to fight. We can slowly accumulate *Virya* or Spiritual Courage, by learning to surrender personal will to the Divine Will. It all depends upon how willing we are to suffer and to be inconvenienced. Some people are able to over-ride the deep-seated instinct of self-preservation, and are ready even to die for another or for a cause. In the olden days there were Knights who used to defend and protect the helpless people. In India there were *Kshatriyas* who were ready to risk their own lives to save another. Etymologically, *Kshatriya* is one who saves another from injury. If we have such *Kshatriya* temperament, we would not think twice before intervening and helping. We may begin small, by undertaking the defense of a person in the family, in the social circle, or a colleague in the office, who may be wrongly accused and persecuted. At other times, we may arouse public opinion or contribute by joining the social institutions, which fight against injustice.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Rejection delivers a debilitating blow to our self-confidence, but it can also help us discover self-love, self-worth and inner strength. Rejection could be painful, as it hits at our very identity and belief system, crippling our ego and shattering our belief in ourselves and our abilities. Rejection also has the power to make people introspect, reflect and take responsibility for their lives, and helps them assess their own inner strength and self-worth. It teaches them to cultivate a self-regard and self-acceptance that can withstand the world’s withering opinion of them. Rejection has the capacity to transform people’s lives. Pulkit Sharma, a clinical psychologist at Imago Centre for Self, New Delhi, mentions that getting rejected is a part of life. It is *how* we react to it that makes a difference. When People with an inflated self-worth experience rejection, they might be driven to go through a realistic assessment of themselves. People with low self-esteem seem to negate themselves, and seek approval of those who reject them. They tend to derive satisfaction by rejecting those who like them, and are thus trapped in a cycle of rejecting and getting rejected. Getting rejected by friends, by interviewers while seeking a job, peer group, desired love interest, could hamper one’s self-esteem. In India it is very common experience for brides-to-be to get turned down by boys, especially if she has dusky or dark complexion. Some people react to rejection with a feeling of vengeance and anger, while others use it to cultivate strength and feel grateful for the experience. In her book, *You Can Heal Your Life*, Louis Hay mentions that when one learns to love one’s own being, one is better equipped to handle rejection. When people refuse to accept someone else’s verdict of themselves and their achievements, they often create success stories. For instance, Abraham Lincoln was rejected by people eight times in elections before he was finally elected the President of America.

“Rejection helps us to know ourselves better...Rejection also makes us humble, sensible and balanced. It impels us to scan our

inner self and discover our true self. It attunes us to our deep inner call and helps us soldier along even when nobody believes in us,” writes Shivi Verma. (*Life Positive*, December 2013)

At a simple level, we may be able to cope with rejection if we learn acceptance of what life brings to us. In certain cases, a little reflection shows that the reason for rejection was that we did not meet with the requirements or qualifications needed, and the thing to do is develop the qualities needed. We tend to feel dejected and depressed when we are rejected because we identify ourselves with our personality, circumstances, relationships, all of which are changing all the time. We tend to derive our identity from our body, ideas, feelings, education, etc.

Our self-worth is generally measured by others, and also ourselves, on the basis of derived “self.” There are experiences in life that open our eyes to the fact that our identity runs deeper than our appearance, our achievements, our ideas or feelings. A model who is rejected with the remarks that her hair is not silky enough or skin is not glowing enough, might slip into depression, saying, “I was rejected.” Similar feeling is experienced when one is rejected by the opposite sex, or rejected in a job interview. The feeling in each such case is, “I was rejected.” When we associate “I” with the body, ideas or feelings, we tend to become most vulnerable. It could also be the reverse. When we are praised and put on a pedestal, for our beauty, eloquence, intelligence or skill, our personal worth is immeasurably increased.

Our real worth is based on the real Self or Spiritual “I,” which is unchanging. Every day and as often as you can, think, think, think, “I” am not the body, the mind, the emotions, the intellect, praise or blame, but I am THAT, writes Mr. Judge.

The New Testament of the Bible speaks about many Marys. Who were they? There is a mention of three Marys, who witnessed the

Passion, as Jesus carried the cross, on which he was crucified. They were the first to witness the empty tomb guarded by an angel, indicative of Christ’s resurrection. The first Mary, was in all probability, Mary of Nazareth, wife of Joseph, who immaculately conceived Jesus. The second was probably Mary, cousin of the first Mary and mother of James. The third Mary was probably Mary of Bethany, sister of Lazarus and Martha, who had become a close disciple of Jesus and who paid attention to all that Jesus said. But there is also the mention of Mary of Magdala or Mary Magdalene, depicted as a woman of loose morals, who was cured of seven demons by Jesus. She is also the one who stood by him when most of his male followers abandoned him when he was arrested. She was the first to see Jesus Christ after his resurrection three days later. Scholars have now declared that this is a “composite” Mary, created by merging the stories of different Marys.

In Gnostic tradition there are stories of some of the Apostles being jealous of how close Mary Magdalene was to Jesus, leading to speculative theories that this Mary was probably the wife of Jesus and later declared to be a prostitute, as the church preferred to visualize Jesus as celibate. Mother Mary is visualized as pure and unsullied and is associated with the birth of the Christ. Mary Magdalene is visualized as being cleansed from a soiled state and associated with Easter or Resurrection of Jesus Christ, writes Devdutt Pattanaik. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, December 22, 2013)

The New Testament must be interpreted *allegorically* to understand correctly the events and personages involved in the life of Jesus. Mary Magdalene represents the archetype that finds place in Gnostic literature. Like Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the Bible, one reads about Simon (Magus) and Helena in the Gnostic system of the earliest centuries of Christianity. People talked about the actual union of Simon with Helena. In the Gnostic work, *Philosophomena*, we are told that Helena is the *manas* (mind) held in bondage within the body. Helena, like Mary, was considered a prostitute and also

the “lost sheep.” Simon is represented as the Saviour descended on Earth to rescue the “lamb.” Union of Simon and Helena is the union of *Atma-Buddhi*, or the divine principles in man, with *Manas*.

Commenting on *Pistis-Sophia*, which H.P.B. describes as the highest and the noblest of Gnostic systems, she writes:

Mary, called also Mariham and Maria Magdalena, must not be confounded with Mary, the corporeal Mother of Jesus. This Mary is by far the most intuitive (pneumatic), and the most prominent interlocutor of all the disciples.

Esoterically, however, Mary the Mother, Mary the sister of Martha and Mary Magdalene correspond to *Buddhi*, *Manas*, and the lower *Manas*. (*Lucifer*, 1890-91)

Thus, Mary Magdalene represents lower mind and Jesus Christ is the divine nature or *Christos* principle in man. When mind is caught up in the clutches of desires, the powers of the mind get wasted, which amounts to prostituting of these powers—hence the depiction of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute. It can be redeemed only when *Manas* frees itself from desire nature and unites with divine nature. Hence, in *Philosophomena*, the Soul is represented as the “lost sheep” struggling in the meshes of the net of matter, passing from body to body, and the Spirit represented as descending, in order to rescue its *syzygy* (co-partner) from the bonds that are about her. When this mystery is represented dramatically, and personified, the two aspects of the Soul are depicted as two persons.

Moreover, if we take the story of Mary being cured of the seven demons by Jesus literally, then we might presume that Mary Magdalene might have been a medium, *possessed* or *obsessed* by evil spirits. Jesus, on the other hand, may be looked upon as a Mediator. Mary Magdalene was finally redeemed from having been obsessed by “seven devils” by the triumphant struggle of her immortal spirit, touched by the presence of a holy mediator, against the dweller, explains H.P.B. She mentions that about such great beings, there gathered this heavenly nimbus (or pure aura), by the superhuman

morality and sanctity of their lives. Such holy men attracted pure spiritual influences. Radiating around an atmosphere of divine beneficence, they caused evil spirits to flee before them. (*Isis*, I, 487-88)

A recent American survey of parents with children between two and ten years of age found that increasing number of children opted for gadgets as Christmas gifts. People that have grown up playing with traditional toys, feel uncomfortable with this trend, and would like to see their children playing with a traditional train set, jigsaw puzzle or Lego. According to one view, such people fail to realize that times have changed and introducing gadgets to our kids at a young age could be beneficial for the child who has to survive in the world which is getting increasingly dependent on IT (Information Technology) devices for routine tasks, and where classrooms are increasingly technology compliant or virtual. Blackboards are being replaced by computer screens, and Wifi-enabled access to the internet is replacing libraries.

According to another view, the growing fascination that very young children have developed for electronic gadgets is a major reason for worry. Some parents view this as a step towards positive development because they have not yet realized its negative impact on the physical health, and that these gadgets tend to impair development of emotions and social skills. World Health Organization has called for research to find out risks associated with long-term use of cellphones, from exposure to radio frequency emissions by cellphones. There is always a risk of getting addicted to these gadgets which can impact health by cutting down on sleep time. Access to such gadgets tend to expose young children to excessively violent games. A great deal of adult content is accessed through internet, which parents are not always able to supervise. Too much pre-occupation with these gadgets leave very little time

for children to develop social skills or for making friends, writes Pyaralal Raghavan. (*The Times of India*, December 26, 2013)

There are pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages, of everything. Wisdom lies in following the middle path and avoiding the extremes. In some countries children devote 40 hours a week to television, videogames, CDs and internet, and these seem to have an adverse effect on the intellectual development and creative thinking of children. Though attempts are made to merge technology with fantasy, there is no denying that when children play in their make-believe world, they get a chance to exercise their imagination and express emotions. In the earlier days children would use empty matchboxes to build a house or train, using them as building blocks. No doubt, since electronic gadgets and entertainment is here to stay for a long time, children should be exposed to them, within limits, but it is crucial to ensure that children are not deprived of entertainment that gives place to simple human emotions and human relationships. Moreover, children watching violent movies and playing with violent video games are more susceptible to committing acts of violence. “The capacity of children for the storing away of early impressions is great indeed,” wrote H.P.B.

Too much involvement with electronic gadgets, or surfing the internet, etc. seems to have adversely impacted human contact, contributing to problems of loneliness and depression. We have substituted friends and companions with Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and so on. We have cultivated an inattentive and superficial mode of thinking. We see this in our habit of “browsing” the Internet so that we can pick up bits and chunks without lending our mind to what the author is trying to convey. The attentive mode of thought calls for reading or listening with concentration and then deep reflection on what is read. Many have felt that though Internet has accelerated information processing, we seem to have lost the capacity to think deeply, calmly and seriously.