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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### PHILOSOPHY OF SARVODAYA

ON THE 30th day of the month of January every year India observes Martyr's Day in grateful memory of patriotic men and women who attained martyrdom in their struggle for freedom of the country from the colonial yoke. It was on this day in 1948 that Mahatma Gandhi who led the vanguard of the nonviolent freedom Movement was assassinated. This day is also named as Sarvodaya Day, which means *uplift and progress of all*. He advocated the model of social uplift and progress of *all*, which, he said, is entirely possible if we understand the truth of human solidarity, and its natural corollary, non-violence. The idea brought forward by Gandhiji is not new but an ancient philosophy of innate divinity of man and the possibility of all human beings, irrespective of caste, creedal, or class distinctions, to attain to highest human perfection.

Obviously, Sarvodaya does not mean economic progress alone, but also moral development and spiritual awakening which inspires every individual to strive for the good of all through realisation of his identity and solidarity with humanity. It is the one true basis of all reforms. Mere material progress without such a moral awakening invariably gives rise to tyranny of social injustice and a regression from the path of true human progress. Students of Theosophy readily recognise in the utterances of Gandhiji on Sarvodaya the underlying self-evident scientific foundation of the theosophical idea of Universal Brotherhood and perfectibility of human beings. We can discern the implied idea of—though not articulated by him in so

many words—the laws of Karma and Reincarnation, in his advocacy, and practical application of Truth and Nonviolence in all aspects of individual and collective life of humanity. This is borne out in the sayings of his on the subject *vide infra*. (*The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, by R. K. Prabhu and U. R. Rao, Chapter IX, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad)

No individual may gain spiritually when those surrounding him suffer as there is essential unity of man and of all that lives and breathes. Humanity and all life are so integrated that the whole world gains when one man gains spiritually, and the whole world regresses to an extent corresponding to the decline in spiritual life of even one man. Spiritual laws do not operate in a domain of its own unconnected with the rest but pervade as an undertone all aspects of individual and collective life of mankind. If we call these omnipresent spiritual laws as God then realization of spiritual unity of all life means the supreme condition of total identification of the individual self with God. This is possible by self-surrender to the Supreme Law. It is only then that man attains to real freedom. As man loses himself, he finds himself in the tireless service for the good of all, and in that ceaseless sacrificial labour is found the bliss of true freedom. This is the man's ultimate aim which should guide all his activities—social, political, or religious. The only way to see God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. "I am part and parcel of the whole and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity." Gandhiji said that the manual spinning wheel by which he spun the yarn to make hand spun cloth was the symbol of the service of the humble, the lowly and the lost. "Spinning, therefore, for such is the greatest prayer, the greatest worship, the greatest sacrifice. He who spins before the poor, inviting them to do likewise serves God as no one else." The spinning wheel symbolises service "Unto the Last." But such selfless service is not possible without self-purification, purification in all walks of life, the observance of the law of *Ahimsa*. Purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's

surroundings. The path of purification of heart is hard and steep, to attain to which one has to become passion-free in thought, speech, and action, to rise above the opposing currents of love and hate, attachment and repulsion. Gandhiji was humble enough to say that he had not reached that state of triple purity but that he had wholly dedicated his life to attain that end by incessant striving.

Gandhiji's emphasis on Ends and Means in thought and action implies the Karmic law of cause and effect. He abided by this law in all his undertakings, and illustrated it in various ways. As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between the two, any more than there is one between the seed and the tree. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means, which proposition admits of no exception. He strikes the keynote of right action that leads to liberation when he said, "The Creator has given us control (and that, too, very limited) over means, none over the end... We cannot command results; we can only strive. And so far as I am concerned, it is enough satisfaction for me to know that I have striven my most to discharge the duty that rested on me."

Closely connected, says Gandhiji, with the ethic of Ends and Means, as a corollary, is the ethic of Rights and Duties. If we discharge our duties, rights will take care of themselves, since the source of rights is duty. Neglecting duty, if we run after rights they will escape us like a will-o-the-wisp. Action is duty, fruit is the right. Right performance of one's duties is the only right that is worth living for and dying for. Any other approach to life contains in it the seeds of *himsa* or harm. If all insist on rights and no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos. But, if instead of insisting on rights if everyone performs his duty there will immediately ensue rule of order among mankind. If a wretched parent, for instance, demands obedience from his children while he himself is negligent of his duties excites nothing but contempt. This ethic holds good in all human relationships—employer and labourers, landlord and tenant, the ruler and his subjects, husband and wife, and so on. Happiest relations will naturally come to prevail if this rule of true

human life is established. Disturbances, discord and conflicts that we see in India and elsewhere in the world is due to lack of awareness and commitment to these ethical principles.

Universe exists and is sustained by the law of sacrifice which is also the inherent law of Man who is an integral part of the whole. This law of sacrifice is known as Yajna. It means action in thought, speech and deed, directed to welfare of others that includes all humanity, done without desiring any return for it. All actions performed other than as Yajna promotes bondage. Yajna came with Creation itself, said Gandhiji; therefore, the body that has been given us only in order that we may serve the whole creation with it. We are debtors all our lives, and are thus forever bound to serve the universe. What comes to us as fruit of sacrifice is a gift, and as debtors we are entitled to no other consideration. Gandhiji illustrated this as applicable in all walks of life. A householder does not cease to be one if he regards life as a duty rather than an indulgence. A merchant who operates in the sacrificial spirit may be dealing with crores of rupees, but if he follows the law of sacrifice, he uses his ability as service, and will never resort to cheating or speculation, does no injury or cause no injustice to anyone. He pointed out that such a one is not an idealistic imaginary figure but such are indeed seen to be functioning both in the East and the West. Life of sacrifice, Gandhiji pointed out, is the pinnacle of art, and is full of true joy. “Self-indulgence leads to destruction, and renunciation to immortality, joy has no independent existence.”

In the Gandhiji’s philosophy of Sarvodaya, students of Theosophy readily discern the quintessence of Theosophical duty, which is comprehensively set forth by Madam H. P. Blavatsky in her work *The Key to Theosophy*. Duty is that which is due to humanity, teaches Theosophy, to our fellowmen, near and far, and especially to those poorer and less fortunate than ourselves. “This is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, leaves us spiritually insolvent and moral bankrupts in our next incarnation” (p. 227, Indian edition). Not only man degrades himself individually by his neglect but, as

Gandhiji pointed out, retards and degrades the whole of humanity in view of human solidarity and interdependence of all life. Theosophy teaches that the ignorance, selfishness and neglect of social duty on the part of the members of one section of society who have the means and the ability is closely connected with the stunted and arrested development of the other less endowed sections. There is no other remedy for the awful spectacle of social injustice and degradation of masses but in practical carrying out with wisdom, duty as Yajna, by every individual for the uplift of all.

Gandhiji well understood that individual is inseparably bound with humanity and all life, and that action of one affects for good or ill the condition of the whole, and that individual happiness and salvation depends on those of all of humanity, for which reason every individual is duty bound to unselfishly labour for upliftment of the whole as sacrifice-Yajna.

“Progress can be attained, and only attained, by the development of the nobler qualities....Every Theosophist, therefore, is bound to do his utmost to help on, by all the means in his power, every wise and well-considered social effort which has for its object the amelioration of the condition of the poor. Such efforts should be made with a view to their ultimate social emancipation, or the development of the sense of duty in those who now so often neglect it in nearly every relation of life.” (*ibid.*, p. 233)

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PHILOSOPHY is not so much a conceptual reconstruction as an exhibition of insights.

Thought is different from life, but it cannot be indifferent to it.

Religion is behaviour and mere belief.

We invent by intuition, though we may prove by logic.

Dharma is an elastic tissue which clothes the growing body. If it is too tight it will give way....If it is too loose it will trip us and impede our movement.

—S. RADHAKRISHNAN

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE LOST WORLD—I

THE LOST WORLD is a science fiction novel by British writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, published in 1912. It is about an expedition to a huge, isolated plateau in the Amazon basin of South America where prehistoric animals—including dinosaurs—are claimed to be still living and thriving. The book also describes a war between indigenous people and a vicious tribe of ape-like creatures. Edward Malone tells the story from a first-person point of view. The novel begins with Malone visiting Gladys, a woman he loves and plans to marry. However, Gladys tells him that she wants an adventurous man whose dangerous exploits have made him famous. Malone, who is a young reporter for the *Daily Gazette*, asks the editor for a dangerous assignment to impress Gladys. His task is to approach the notorious Professor George Challenger, a scientist, who dislikes the popular press intensely and physically assaults intrusive journalists. Malone goes to meet him masquerading as an earnest student. However, Challenger, who has seen through the masquerade and also confirmed that Malone's scientific knowledge is non-existent, gets angry and forcibly throws him out. Malone refuses to press charges with a policeman who saw his violent ejection into the street. As a result, Challenger takes him in and after extracting the promise of confidentiality reveals that he has discovered a "lost world" deep within the Amazon rainforest, teeming with prehistoric creatures such as dinosaurs and pterodactyls, which are large flying animals that lived millions of years ago. At a noisy public meeting, Challenger experiences ridicule, most notably from a professional rival, Professor Summerlee. When Malone learns that an expedition is to be organized to investigate the validity of Challenger's astonishing claims, he decides to join the expedition. His companions are Professor Summerlee and Lord John Roxton, an adventurer who helped end slavery on the Amazon. For Malone, proving the existence of a world full of dinosaurs promises both fame and adventure, but little does he know that this expedition will become far more perilous than anticipated.

When they enter the heart of the Amazon and have to navigate through uncharted territory, they encounter myriad threats, from deadly flora to ferocious wildlife. They also come across hostile tribes, and finally reach the lost world with the aid of indigenous guides, who are superstitiously scared of the area. Summerlee retains his scepticism, although he has been able to make other scientific discoveries in the fields of botany and entomology. As they were walking through the jungle, Challenger sees a winged animal, which he calls a pterodactyl, but Summerlee insists is a stork. Lord John Roxton also sees and agrees that it is not a stork but has no clue what it really is, until at night it flies down and is seen by all at close range, and steals their dinner. After this Summerlee apologises to Challenger.

Challenger's hypothesis begins to materialize as extraordinary creatures—dinosaurs and other primal beings—come into view. They discover many plants and creatures thought to be extinct including Iguanodons, which are large herbivorous dinosaurs found as fossils from the Late Jurassic and Early Cretaceous periods, in a wide area of Europe, North Africa, North America, Australia, and Asia. They narrowly escape an attack from pterodactyls. At night a ferocious Megalosaurus is about to break through the thorn bushes surrounding their camp. Roxton averts the disaster by bravely dashing at it, thrusting a blazing torch at its face to scare it away. The night after, Malone studies fauna near the central lake including a Stegosaurus, the Jurassic dinosaur, but escapes the Megalosaurus. Stegosaurus means a roof lizard. It is a genus of herbivorous, four-legged, armoured dinosaur from the Late Jurassic Epoch, characterised by the distinctive kite-shaped upright plates along their backs and spikes on their tails. Megalosaurus means a big lizard. It is an extinct genus of large carnivorous theropod dinosaurs of the Middle Jurassic Epoch.

The expedition is attacked by some kind of ferocious land dinosaur, but even more dangerous are the primate inhabitants of the plateau. This is the way Lord John Roxton describes the Ape-



men to Malone: “It was in the early morning....Suddenly it rained apes. They came down as thick as apples out of a tree. They had been assembling in the dark...before we knew where we were they had us spread-eagled on our backs. I call them apes, but they carried sticks and stones in their hands and jabbered and talked to each other, and ended up tying our hands with creepers, so they are ahead of any beast that I have seen in my wanderings. Ape-men—that’s what they are—Missing Links, and I wish they had stayed missing.” Challenger, Roxton, and Summerlee are all taken hostage by this tribe of ape-men. While they are in captivity, they discover that the “ape-men” are at war with a tribe of indigenous people, who live on the other side of the plateau, and call themselves “Accala.” Roxton manages to escape, and he and Malone mount a rescue operation that succeeds in freeing Challenger and Summerlee as well as many Accala Indians, who were held captive, which includes a young indigenous man who is a prince of this tribe.

The rescued indigenous people take the party to their village, who, with the help of the young prince, eventually succeed in discovering a tunnel leading back to the outside world. During their time with the tribe, Roxton plans how to capture a pterodactyl chick, and succeeds in doing so. The clash with primitive tribes shows that their quest is not just about discovery but survival, and complicates their understanding of civilization. The encounter with the ape-men, regarded as “missing links,” adds philosophical layers to their rapidly deteriorating circumstances. Not only do they bring back tales of dinosaurs but also a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

At a public meeting at Queen’s Hall Challenger produces the young pterodactyl as proof, transfixing the audience, and leaving them in no doubt of the truth. The explorers are feted as heroes, and in ensuing confusion, the pterodactyl makes its escape and is last seen as heading off to the southwest in the probable direction of its home. Malone finds that Gladys, the woman he loved, has now changed her mind and married a very ordinary man.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was best known for his Sherlock Holmes series. His work spans various genres—short stories, books on wars, and later in his life, works of both fiction and nonfiction that focused on spiritualism. Additionally, he was a lecturer, a detective, a physician and an eye specialist. His novel, *The Lost World* had a significant influence on science fiction, inspiring works that include Michael Crichton's *The Lost World* and the related *Jurassic Park* movies.

According to some critics, the novel is interesting from the historical perspective because the prehistoric creatures they encountered were based on the paleontological findings of that time. One of the themes of the novel is “Evolution.” The novel frequently refers to the Darwinian theory of evolution. We see that the Indians annihilate the less developed “ape-men” who are described as “missing links” between humans and apes. At one place in the novel, Professor Challenger says regarding the ape-men and the Indian, that he, a scientist, would only account for it by an invasion from outside. “It is probable that there existed an anthropoid ape in South America, who in past ages found his way to this place, and that he developed into the creature we have seen [“ape-man”], some of which...were of an appearance and shape which, if it had been accompanied by corresponding intelligence, would...have reflected credit upon any living race.” As to the Indians, he says that they would have migrated to this place under the stress of famine or of conquest, and they would have fought against wild beasts, and especially the ape-men who would regard them as intruders, and “wage a merciless war upon them with a cunning which the larger beasts would lack.”

Theosophy has definite views concerning the concept of “missing links.” The great similarity in anatomical structure and behaviour had led scientists to think that man has descended from the apes, or that man and apes have common ancestors. The “missing links” is the link that would help to trace back man and apes to a common ancestor. In the first place, there is no “common ancestor” to man

and apes. Theosophy speaks of unnatural union between mindless man and huge female animals, and teaches that such union was possible because man as well as animals were in semi-astral forms. “Medical science records such cases of monsters bred from human and animal parents, even in our own day. The possibility is, therefore, one of *degree*, not of fact” (*S.D.*, II, 689). The apes produced through such union, in semi-astral form, consolidated into physical and later dwindled in size, producing the “lower apes” of the Miocene period.

After this, man was endowed with mind, and hence with power to think and choose, and also with self-consciousness. But once again, men with mind belonging to the Atlantean Race, repeated the sin of the mindless, by uniting with the lower apes of the Miocene period, giving rise to the species of apes—Orang-outang, gorilla and chimpanzee—now known as anthropoid apes (*S.D.*, II, 683 and 689). They are described as “human presentments,” and are half descended from man—distorted copies of early humanity. These apes are described as truly “speechless men,” and will become speaking animals (or men of a lower order) in the Fifth Round. Theosophy teaches that in the Third Round, man had a gigantic Ape-like form on the astral plane, and also, at the close of the Third Race, in the Fourth Round. In a way, that accounts for the human features of the apes, especially, the anthropoid apes. (*S.D.*, II, 688)

H.P.B. writes that we do not agree with the conclusion that man has descended from apes, because these anatomical resemblances shown by Darwin, have been exaggerated, and secondly, these resemblances can be completely explained when we find out that the anthropoid apes are the result of union between man with mind and lower apes. Also, this sort of resemblance between man and apes is not to be found if we turn to older deposits, *i.e.*, the fossil remains of earlier periods of lower apes. In other words, we may say, it is anthropoid apes that have descended from man. (*S.D.*, II, 87 fn.)

*(To be Concluded)*

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## SOUND AND ITS POWER

### II

LIKE all other powers, speech can be used constructively or destructively. Constructive or Creative speech which ever blesses is that of the sages and seers. Blessings as well as curses are powers of speech. How is it that we do not possess this power? It is because the creative power of speech is also dependent upon the heart feeling and the quality of thoughts. Mr. Judge observes:

“Words are things....Upon the lower plane of social intercourse they are things, but soulless and dead because that convention in which they have their birth has made abortions of them. But when we step away from that conventionality they become alive in proportion to the reality of the thought—and its purity—that is behind them....Let us use with care those living messengers called words.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, Indian Ed., p. 11)

Very frequently, if not always, we use words like “thank you,” “sorry,” “all the best,” etc., only as a matter of convention. These words should be spoken meaningfully, backed by intense and pure emotions. The Buddha tells us: “Better than a thousand-word speech of empty words is one pregnant sentence hearing which one feels peace.” When a person practises daily meditation, he acquires one-pointedness as also a deeper understanding of what is read. When such a person speaks the listeners become aware of his deeper understanding and his speech tends to steady the wandering minds of the listeners. The listeners gain in attentiveness. It is said that when Buddha spoke, at least a few among the listeners “entered the stream” there and then. This kind of speech originates from *Buddhi-Manas*. “Speech comes only with knowledge. Attain to knowledge and you will attain to speech,” says *Light on the Path*. It is only when the disciple has acquired the knowledge of the real nature of things, and conquered the sense of separateness, so as to never raise his voice to condemn another or in self-defence or excuse, that he becomes capable of speaking in the presence of the Masters.

*Mantrika-Sakti* is the force or power of letters, speech or music. A *mantram* is defined as “a collection of words which, when sounded in speech induce certain vibrations not only in the air, but also in the finer ether, thereby producing certain effects” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 154). There are single words, such as “wife,” which are natural *mantrams*, used continually by the common people in many countries. There are other mantramic phrases used by ordinary people, though ignored by the cultured classes. Very often, proverbs, which may be regarded as crystallizing aspect of folk wisdom, have a mantramic quality, such as “A stitch in time saves nine” or “Honesty is the best policy.” A mantramic slogan can play the part of arousing patriotic or revolutionary sentiments. A mantramic phrase may produce in a particular individual a peculiar and lasting vibration that may lead to a total change of life. There are many men in Germany, Austria, Italy and Ireland who can bring about extraordinary effects on horses, cattle, and the like, by peculiar sounds uttered in a certain way. To a large extent the creative and destructive power of a *mantram* or spoken word stems from sound. H.P.B. says that SOUND is a tremendous Occult power; it is a stupendous force, and when that is directed with *occult knowledge*, then it cannot be counteracted with even the electricity generated by one million Niagaras. “Sound may be produced of such a nature that the pyramid of Cheops would be raised in the air, or that a dying man, nay, one at his last breath, would be revived and filled with new energy and vigour.” (*S.D.*, I, 555)

H.P.B. says that she was saved *thrice* from death by the power of sound. Probably here we may also include the incident in which when the horse that H.P.B. was riding went wild and she was thrown off the back of the horse with only her foot caught in the saddle. A Master of Wisdom used the power of sound to keep her body above the ground. H.P.B. says that using the power of sound one can *resurrect* or bring back to life “a man or an animal whose astral ‘vital body’ has not been irreparably separated from the physical body by the severance of the magnetic or odic chord,” *i.e.*, so long

as the cord which joins the physical body with the astral is not broken. (*ibid.*, p. 555)

Students of Theosophy must study simple forms of mantram quality for the purpose of reaching the hidden mind of all who need spiritual help. “You will find now and then some expression that has resounded in the brain, at last producing such a result that he who heard it turns his mind to spiritual things.” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 158)

All this relates to natural, unconsciously-used *mantrams*. Mr. Judge says that there are scientific *mantrams* and these could be found in the ancient Sanskrit language. In India, from ancient times, the occult power of *Mantras*—sacred verses chanted in a particular way—has been recognized. The effect of these *mantras*, depend on the inflection or accent given and the sound produced. A single letter can be used mantramically by one who knows how to pronounce it. The effect produced by any *mantram* is determined by the numbers, syllables, intonation of the sacred metre, and rhythm. For instance, *Aum* can be pronounced as two or three syllable word. When it is pronounced with right intonation it becomes an invocation, an affirmation and a benediction. Manu in his laws ordains: “A Brahmin, at the beginning and end of a lesson on the Vedas, must always pronounce the syllable OM, for unless OM precedes, his learning will slip away from him, and unless it follows, nothing will be long retained.” When a *mantram* is pronounced slowly and in a certain rhythm, one effect is produced; if pronounced quickly and in another rhythm, there is a different result, awakening and attracting good or evil spirits.

A scientific *mantram* must be pronounced correctly otherwise it can produce adverse effects. There is the story of a demon who wanted a strong son to kill Indra. However, he got a son, Vritra, who was killed by Indra. This was due to a minute change in the accent of the Vedic *mantram*. He mispronounced the word “Indrasatru” and therefore got a son, Vritra, who was killed by Indra instead of him becoming the slayer of Indra. Although Vritra had a

boon that he would not be killed by any weapon made of wood or metal or stone, Indra killed him with foam.

In his book, “The Science of Stotra and Mantra,” Swami Shri Savitanandji explains why the *mantras* are mostly in the Sanskrit language. Research in the science of sounds in the West has led to the understanding that “*Mantras* are not simply arbitrary arrangement of sounds but based on a scientific logic. Specific arrangement of words and sounds is important to generate specific vibrations.” He gives an example of a woman who played an instrument called an “eidophone” to demonstrate how sound vibrations can create shapes on a curtain placed in front and on the sand below. Once she successfully created the shape of a flower using sound vibrations. But the same shape could not be generated again. Therefore, she repeated her experiment for eight days and only then she could generate the shape again. This shows that a “certain number of vibrations of certain sounds create specific shapes. If one wishes to create a specific shape, one must use the correct sound pattern/combination with a specific number of vibrations. Even if certain sounds, beats, or music sound similar to them, the required sounds cannot be replaced.” Hans Jenny, a Swiss scientist, studied sound waves and their effects and published a book on the same.

Jenny created an instrument called Tonoscope to study the connection between sounds and forms, to observe the action of the human voice on various materials in diverse mediums. His Tonoscope allows one to discover what kind of shapes or designs are created by the vibrations of certain sound sequences, without the use of any electronic device. When the “Aum” sound was generated, the shape of “Aum” was created on the curtain and sand. “Such sound-symbol concordance takes place only in the case of Sanskrit and ancient Hebrew. This is not the case with the sounds of French, German, English, and Chinese languages,” writes Swami Savitanandji. (pp. 47-48)

He gives example of the composition of the *Atharvashirsha* (collection of *mantrams* addressed to Lord Ganesha), which is such



that if one recites it with absolutely correct and clear articulations and a sincere heart, then waves created by these sounds will slowly form an image of Lord Ganesha. Swamiji explains it in terms of what is seen on television screen. “No relay centre transmits images. These images are converted into thousands of [electromagnetic] waves, and transmitted. The technology of the television allows them to form images on screen. The same science underlies stotras.” (*ibid.*, pp. 52-53)

H.P.B. goes deeper into the matter of “Sound Pictures” explaining that though apparently these shapes are the result of musical notes sung into the eidophone, they had subtler forces acting behind the veil of physical matter. According to Hindu philosophy the five principles or *Tattwas*, namely, Akasa (ether), Vayu (air), Agni (light and heat), Apas (water) and Prithvi (earth) are only different forms of vibration, which produce the phenomenal world on the *Sukshma* (subtle or astral) and *Sthula* (gross or Physical) planes.

A similar recognition for precision and depth of Sanskrit language comes from a NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) scientist named Rick Briggs who suggested Sanskrit to be most suited for use in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). In 1985, Rick Briggs, a scholar at NASA Ames Research Centre, published a research paper “Knowledge Representation in Sanskrit and Artificial Intelligence” in the spring issue of Artificial Intelligence magazine. In his seminal paper, Rick Briggs, highlights the striking parallels between Sanskrit and the requirements of artificial intelligence systems. While most natural languages are found to be unsuitable for conveying many ideas that require great precision and mathematical rigor—a fundamental requirement in the field of AI—Sanskrit, with its rigid grammatical structure and ability to represent ideas, logically and clearly, stands apart as an exception. His article demonstrates that Sanskrit, a natural language, can serve as an artificial language also. Both systems strive for unambiguity. “Both Indian and AI schools encode in a very clear, often apparently redundant way, in order to make the analysis accessible to inference.”



He lauds the achievement of Indians and explains: “a search for clear, unambiguous understanding is inherent in human beings.”

The Gayatri mantra is considered to be the most sacred verse of the *Rig-veda*. It is addressed to the Sun as *Savitri*. H.P.B. explains that the Gayatri metre consists of *thrice eight* syllables, and is considered the most sacred of metres. It is the metre of Agni, the fire-god, and becomes at times the emblem of Brahma himself, the chief creator, and “fashioner of man” in his own image (*Isis*, II, 410). The text of the Gayatri mantra, in Sanskrit, is as follows:

*Aum Bhur Bhuvah Swah, Tat Savitur Varenyam  
Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi, Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat*

In his article, “A Commentary on the Gayatri,” W. Q. Judge, interprets Gayatri mantra, thus:

“Unveil, O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, that face of the True Sun now hidden by a vase of golden light, that we may see the truth and do our whole duty on our journey to thy sacred seat.”

Surya as the sun was worshipped by Indians from the Vedic period onward for his help in destroying sins and bestowing blessings. Theosophy teaches that behind the physical sun is the True Sun or Central Spiritual Sun. The Sun symbolizes the very *Atman* in man. Mr. Judge comments that the whole verse is an aspiration in the highest sense. “Unveil” is the cry of the man who is determined to know the truth; the cry is made to the Higher Self. Just as the True Sun is hidden behind the physical sun, so also, the Higher Self is hidden by the passions and desires, the personal self and the thirst for life. The sun we see is not the true sun, and so also the light of intellect is not the true sun of our moral being.

*(To be continued)*

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## THE PITFALL OF KNOWLEDGE

LEARNING is like imbibing food. The act itself is pointless unless what is eaten is effectively digested and the energy thus produced is directed towards wholesome purposes. However, once the taste buds have been tickled, gluttony shortly ensues. Once the subtler sensibilities of the intellect have tasted the fine wine of knowledge, many people seem to “‘read from the pricking of some cerebral itch,’ with a motive similar to that which ends in the ruin of a dipsomaniac” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 71). This is all the more true in the case of Theosophical knowledge because unlike any other superficial subject, it is acutely germane, it being the study of *oneself* and is infinitely deep, “giving the greatest minds their fullest scope.” As comprehension grows and the student begins to gain some foothold on this new landscape, they find a sudden thirst for more knowledge. In time, the student finds that they have read all the standard texts on Theosophy and the allure of the “unpublished” raises its ugly head. Some novel occult nuggets such as the seven *pranas* and their vehicles grab the student’s attention and off they go greedily digging for more. History has warned “hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.” Those who succumb to the temptation are invariably drawn into the whirlpool of distorted texts, sensational claims and finally the promise of practical occultism. Many are the well-meaning students who have been sucked into this maelstrom which unbeknownst to themselves takes them away from the true path. This is the great pitfall of knowledge—the desire to acquire more of it for oneself. Occultism has a special, insidious allure of its own—one that is fully exploited by the dark forces. So, what is the remedy?

When Sinnett was given enough instructions and material, the masters expected to see it being put to altruistic use, to lift the masses out of ignorance. They said “do not suffer any month to pass without writing a Fragment, long or short for the magazine” and other such works of promulgation. We, the students of Theosophy in the current

age are in a far more fortunate situation. We have been given so much more material to work upon, to assimilate and from that understanding do our bit to help dispel the stifling darkness around us. “Everything that Humanity needs has been given to us” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 272). “It is possible for every enquirer to obtain or study Masters’ Message as it was written by one qualified to do so. This was done in order that there should be no need of intermediaries between those who would know and the knowledge itself.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 407)

Just like obesity and physical sickness is the result of unexpended energy from food, spiritual decrepitude is the invariable result of knowledge accumulated without due verification or thorough understanding. But mere regurgitation of verbatim knowledge adds no value to the enquirer taking his first steps. We need to attune ourselves to the cry of current humanity. Apply the dialectic method to metaphysical facts and derive ethical imperatives *relevant* to the needs of our time and selflessly broadcast it. Just like how a disciple, once made fit, is given a staff and sent off into the world, students can cautiously expose themselves to the milieu of modern thought, remaining firmly rooted in the assimilated theosophic wisdom and change it for better. Remembering that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump “as it undoubtedly will if we are true to our trust” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 154). Science is no longer in the 19th century and religious dogmatism no longer holds sway in the west. And yet the same underlying human conundrum remains. In all times, “what one ought to do” has always fundamentally been a question of values for which Science never had an answer and Religion ever dogmatized. Theosophy alone can provide satisfactory answers but it needs student-volunteers *in the world* to harvest its rich produce to feed the hungry. To effectively harvest, one needs to be perspicacious and have an acute understanding of the season in which the harvest is being made.

Until we have expended all that can be done with the material that is already given us, we have no right to go looking for more.

#### THE PITFALL OF KNOWLEDGE

Doing so would leave us in dereliction of our duty as custodians of knowledge that has been vouchsafed to us by those who self-sacrificed to keep the link pure and unbroken. As any serious student of Theosophy can attest, the depth of one's understanding of Theosophy only increases when one's knowledge is put to work towards the CAUSE for which it was given. "Ask, and it shall be given you," said Jesus. "But the disciple cannot 'ask' in the mystic sense in which the word is used in this scripture until he has attained the power of helping others." The sweet waters of understanding only well-up in those that exert themselves in drawing from this inexhaustible source, so as to slake the thirst of the multitudes. Endlessly discussing metaphysics only titillates the intellect, and "intellect alone is cold, heartless, selfish, because it is not lighted up by the two other principles of *Buddhi* and *Atma*" (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, Indian Edition, pp. 58-59). Pontificating on some novel occult trifling obtained from outside the standard may mislead and cause confusion in the mind of earnest unwary seeker. Learn so you can teach. Teach and you will understand. Understand and you will reflect. Reflect and you will embody. Embody and you will exemplify. This is the way.

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I READ more of the *Bhagavat Geeta* and felt how surpassingly fine were the sentiments. These, or selections from the book should be included in a Bible for Mankind. I think them superior to any of the other Oriental scriptures, the best of all reading for the wise men....

I saw Emerson and had full discourse, mostly on the *Geeta* and the genius of Oriental faith. I know of no literature more purely intellectual. Its philosophy and poesy seem to me superior to, if not transcending greatly, all others.

—BRONSON ALCOTT

## THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE

### PREFACE—II

MYSTICISM may be defined as the rising of an individual soul to the awareness in which it sees itself as identical with the Universal Whole and bows in reverence to THAT. Today, mysticism has degenerated into psychic emotionalism. The dictionary meaning of a mystic is, “a follower of a mystical way of life,” or “a person who claims to attain, or believes in the possibility of attaining insight into mysteries transcending ordinary human knowledge, as by direct communication with the divine or immediate intuition in a state of spiritual ecstasy.” The term mystic is derived from the Greek noun *mystes*, which originally meant an initiate of a secret cult or mystery religion. The term *mystes* also means a person who kept secrets.

It is not surprising that some of the ideas of the great mystic work *Paramartha* are also found in the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* provide a key to understanding the Vedas. H.P.B. writes: “The *Upanishads*—*Upa-ni-shad* being a compound word meaning ‘the conquest of ignorance by the revelation of *secret, spiritual* knowledge’—require now the additional possession of a Master-key to enable the student to get at their full meaning....The name, ‘*Upanishads*,’ is usually translated ‘esoteric doctrine.’ These treatises...are generally attached to the *Brahmana* portion of the Vedas, as their third division....They treat of and expound the secret and mystic meaning of the Vedic texts. They speak of the origin of the Universe, the nature of Deity, and of Spirit and Soul, as also of the metaphysical connection of mind and matter. In a few words: They CONTAIN *the beginning and the end of all human knowledge*.” (*S.D.*, I, 269-70)

*The Voice of the Silence* has been derived from the *Book of the Golden Precepts*, and the original *Precepts* are engraved on thin, oblong plates or discs and preserved on the altars of the temples—temples which were attached to Mahayana (Yogacharya) Schools. “They are written variously, sometimes in Tibetan but mostly in

ideographs. The sacerdotal language (Senzar), besides an alphabet of its own, may be rendered in several modes of writing in cypher characters, which partake more of the nature of ideographs than of syllables” (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. ii). A symbol that represents an idea or a thing rather than the sounds of a word, is called an ideograph. For instance, some of the street signs are ideographs, meant to convey a specific meaning without using words.

In the *Theosophical Glossary* we read that Senzar is “the mystic name for the secret sacerdotal language or the ‘Mystery-speech’ of the initiated Adepts, all over the world.” According to Ralston Skinner (*S.D.*, I, 308), “language,” means expression of ideas by human speech or by any other instrumentality. Mystery language is “the Sacerdotal secret jargon employed by the initiated priests, and used only when discussing sacred things. Every nation had its own ‘mystery’ tongue, unknown save to those admitted to the Mysteries.” We have examples of sacred languages such as, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Pali, etc. which were used in writing of the scriptures, as well as, in various religious writings. Speaking of the “Mystery language, that of prehistoric races,” H.P.B. says: “It is not a phonetic, but a purely pictorial and symbolical tongue. It is known at present in its fulness to the very few, having become with the masses for more than 5000 years an absolutely dead language” (*S.D.*, II, 574). H.P.B. also speaks of a universal language of symbolism and allegory. In the article, “The Negators of Science” H.P.B. writes:

The Hierophants and Initiates of the Mysteries in the Secret Schools...had one universal, Esoteric tongue—the language of symbolism and allegory. This language has suffered neither modification nor amplification from those remote times down to this day. It still exists and is still taught. There are those who have preserved the knowledge of it, and also of the arcane meaning of the Mysteries; and it is from these Masters that the writer of the present protest had the good fortune of learning, howbeit imperfectly, the said language. Hence her claim to a more correct comprehension of the arcane portion of the ancient texts

written by avowed Initiates—such as were Plato and Iamblichus, Pythagoras, and even Plutarch... (*H.P.B. Series No. 19*, pp. 47-48)

Another method (*lug* in Tibetan) is to use the numerals and colours, each of which corresponds to a letter of the Tibetan alphabet. There are thirty simple and 74 compound letters.

Also, there is Ideograph which could be composed of twelve zodiacal animals and seven colours. Each colour is used in its triple shades—light, primary and dark. There is a combination of zodiacal animals and colours and the five elements. There are two modes of reading the Ideograph—the Indian and the Chinese mode.

The easiest method is that “which allows the reader to use no special, or *any* language he likes, as the signs and symbols were like the Arabian numerals or figures, common and international property among initiated mystics and their followers” (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. iii). This is made clearer in *S.D.* (I, 310): “Like the Arabic figures which are plain to a man of whatever nation, or like the English word *and*, which becomes *et* for the Frenchman, *und* for the German, and so on, yet which may be expressed for all civilized nations in the simple sign & [ampersand]—so all the words of that mystery-language signified the same thing to each man of whatever nationality.”

The *Book of the Golden Precepts* contains some of the pre-Buddhistic precepts and certain others of a later date. There are about 90 distinct treatises, of which H.P.B. had learnt about 39 treatises by heart. This book is based on only a few of the precepts. One reason being, H.P.B. had been travelling for first twenty years of her life, making notes. These notes were not in order, and in those days, there being no typewriter, recorder or a secretary, she used to manage everything on her own. It would have taken her a very long time to put all the notes in order. Therefore, she translated only those precepts that she had learnt by heart. Another reason for giving only a few precepts was to give only that knowledge for which people were

ready. Our world is “too selfish and too much attached to objects of sense to be in any way prepared to receive such exalted ethics in the right spirit.” These lofty ethics are for the select few; those who earnestly pursue self-knowledge.

The question may arise, what should one do in one’s daily life to get self-knowledge? Self-knowledge is *Atma Vidya*, *Para Vidya* or Wisdom. In the *Mundaka Upanishad*, sage Angiras is asked the question by Saunaka: “What is that by knowing which everything else becomes known?” The sage replies that there are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired. The higher (*para*) and lower (*apara*). The lower is composed of the knowledge of the Vedas, grammar, etymology, astrology, and so forth. The higher knowledge is that by which the Imperishable or changeless Reality is attained.

The lower knowledge is relative knowledge that is acquired by observation and reasoning. The higher knowledge is true knowledge or wisdom. We all possess wisdom potentially, but its realization would take us many, many lives. The Wisdom which comes “from the above,” *i.e.*, our higher nature, is the only true Wisdom. To avail of it one needs to put into practise the spiritual teachings and so change the quality of the mind that it can become porous to the influx from above. It means tearing oneself away from the ordinary ways and ordinary living. However, the everyday experiences are like raw materials, required to develop the qualities like love, goodness and altruism. Mr. Judge writes: “Every impulse from above, every prompting of the divine within must be met at once with hearty welcome and response. If you feel as if something urged you to visit some sick or afflicted neighbour or friend, obey the suggestion without delay....In short, put yourself at once in line with the Divine ways, in harmony with the Divine laws. More light, more wisdom, more spirituality must necessarily come to one thus prepared, thus expectant.” (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 32)

In the Thirteenth Chapter of the *Gita* (sloka 7), Shri Krishna states some of the qualifications for the acquirement of Wisdom. Thus: “True wisdom of spiritual kind is freedom from self-esteem



(humility), hypocrisy, injury to others, *kshanti* or patience, uprightness or sincerity, respect for spiritual instructors, purity, steadfastness or firmness and self-control.” In other words, Krishna shows that spiritual growth is development of moral qualities and not just intellectual acquirement of knowledge.

Eastern literature is full of ethics. For instance, Shri Krishna advises Arjuna, “Kill out all desire of life.” Likewise, *Sutta Nipata* says, “Kill out sensation: look alike on pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat.” Krishan says, “The Mind (*Manas*) which follows the rambling senses, makes the Soul (*Buddhi*) as helpless as the boat which the wind leads astray upon the waters.” (*Gita*, II, 67)

Therefore, H.P.B. says that selections have been made from only those treatises which are suitable for the few real mystics. It is only such mystics who can understand and appreciate the words of Krishna-Christos or “Higher Self”: “Sages do not grieve for the living nor the dead. Never did I not exist, nor you, nor these rulers of men; nor will any one of us ever hereafter cease to be” (*Gita*, II, 12). In other words, the real mystics are those who are not identified with their personalities, and can differentiate the changing and perishable from the unchanging and imperishable, which quality is essential for those who wish to acquire Wisdom or self-knowledge.

What such an understanding involves has been made clear in the Thirteenth Chapter of the *Gita*. Krishna begins with the explanation of what *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* are, which relates directly to our own constitution. *Kshetra*, explains Krishna, is the body. In fact, all the lower principles of man are known as the field, the *Kshetra*, and the Soul that is incarnated in that body is *Kshetrajna*, the knower of that field, the knower of the body. *Kshetrajna* is the principle of man which incarnates in the body, and tries to work through that body, as the man in the field works, tills and prepares his own field. However, there is a principle which is higher than the body and the soul, for it knows both the body, and the knower of the body. In Sanskrit, it is *Kshetri*, the Master and the Lord of the man who tills

the field. It is the Divine nature. The man who is working in the field knows all about that particular field, but he may turn from the field to the Owner, to his own Master, who has sent him to work in that field, and begin to inquire about the nature of that Owner. Then he becomes one with the Owner, he understands the purpose and object of his being in that field, and he knows his own nature.

Likewise, the incarnated soul knows about its own body, which through its connection with *Prakriti* appears to have forgotten its divine nature. But to understand its innermost essence and nature, it must turn its attention from the body and place it on the Divine Source, which is above the *Purusha* and *Prakriti*; it is like a moon in the sky which is not affected by any disturbance in the reflecting surface, though the reflection gets distorted when the water is disturbed. Then the incarnated soul acquires the knowledge of its Sovereign and Immortal Spirit, which illumines the man in the body, and shines upon that man in terms of knowledge.

(Concluded)

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IMAGINATION is more important than knowledge.

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvellous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.

Few people are capable of expressing with equanimity opinions which differ from the prejudices of their social environment. Most people are even incapable of forming such an opinion.

Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge in the field of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the Gods.

Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.

—Sayings of ALBERT EINSTEIN

## THEOSOPHY AND PLATO ON CITIZENSHIP

### I

EVERY year, Republic Day is celebrated in India on 26th January. Though India became a free nation on August 15, 1947, it declared itself a Sovereign, Democratic and Republic state with the adoption of the Constitution on January 26, 1950. In Theosophical tradition there is a great feeling for India as a special place, a special country and a special tradition in our world. One of the Masters of Wisdom wrote that they, who are above all personal identifications, nevertheless, are imbued with the love for their motherland so deep and passionate that it has survived the universalizing effect of their studies and their *sadhana*. Each citizen of India should cultivate *desh-bhakti*, which includes, besides the feeling of love and loyalty towards one's country, the kind of devotion that puts nation before oneself.

We can explore the subject of citizenship in the light of philosophy of Theosophy which is ageless, and does not belong to any particular period or state of society, and that of Plato, who belonged to a great civilization which was getting into difficulties in his lifetime and whose contribution has remained as a foundation of thinking, for several centuries, since he lived around 500 BC.

What is the nature of the state? Is it simply a legal or a political arrangement? Not in the least. Not even the democratic form of government is the only possible or the best form, at all times, for a state. The state is a great brotherhood, a great fraternity of those who are alive now, those who have lived in the distant past, and generations yet to come. Indian tradition speaks of very great kings mentioned in the fourth chapter of the *Gita*. In *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, Mr. Judge expounds a little those verses in the *Gita* that refer to Vivasvat, Manu, Ikshvaku and the *Rajarshees*. He speaks of ancient kings, so ancient that they are far before the beginning of history. "Up to the period marked by the first earthly king called Ikshvaku, the ruler was a spiritual Being whom all men knew to be

such, for his power, glory, benevolence, and wisdom were evident.” Hence, there could be no rebellion even in thought because a reason for a complaint could not exist under their rule. These may be dreams perhaps, as Mr. Judge says they are dim folk memories of a bygone and glorious cycle of time. But somewhere in the background of political thought these dreams remain. Plato, arguing dialectically and logically through the first eight books of the *Republic* has to put his final view, as it were, in a myth, in his last book. He makes Socrates say that this is not the description of any actual city.

There is a difference between the state and the government. In the simplest terms, governments come and go. Governments can be good or bad. The state does not come and go. Even if a country is conquered, the state does not vanish. Hence, the state is one of those things which claims the loyalties of human hearts. There are certain things in life, such as principles, great people, institutions, which have a right to our loyalty. The State is one of them.

In *Tao Te King*, Lao Tzu says, “If the great kingdom has no further desire than to bring men together and to nourish them, the small kingdom will have no further desire than to enter the service of the other.” A city is not a collection of streets and buildings, but the idea of the city implies “no further desire than to bring men together and to nourish them.” Great philosophers have felt that the idea of the city, the idea of the state, is something which tells us about how human beings are to live together. Because live together they must. An isolated life would be, as Locke said, nasty, brutish and short. A life in cooperation is the only one really possible for human beings. The state, as it were, is a vast and subtle means by which the cooperation of human beings is given a form, a great institutional structure.

But what is that cooperation for? Plato says, as other great philosophers have said, that cooperation is, so that the *holiness* of each individual might be nourished and reflected in the actual life of the state. Theosophy would endorse this totally, because in the first place, the individual is an immortal. The individual is a spiritual unit

that undergoes experience in this mortal world. All things in this mortal world perish, sooner or later. States, civilizations and even the continents are destroyed by geological changes, but the soul goes on. And so, as Patanjali said, the universe exists for the sake of the soul's experience and emancipation. Thus, the soul is involved with the world in order to gain experience. However, it also has to seek its emancipation from the particular conditions which constitute a civilization, a culture, the characteristics of that society, etc. There is involvement for experience and emancipation of the soul itself. That is why Aristotle had to say that the state exists to hinder hindrances. There are things which hinder the development of the soul.

In the *Key to Theosophy* (Indian edition, p. 231), H.P.B. draws our attention to the contrast that existed in the West in the late nineteenth century. She writes: "In the present state of society, especially in so-called civilized countries, we are continually brought face to face with the fact that large numbers of people are suffering from misery, poverty and disease. Their physical condition is wretched, and their mental and spiritual faculties are often almost dormant." On the other end, there are people who are not subject to such conditions, but who, in fact, do not use their faculty and therefore also lose their moral, intellectual and spiritual development by indifference to the state of the less fortunate. H.P.B. sees sociology in spiritual terms and therefore towards the end of her last message to theosophists, in April 1891, she wrote that western civilization is on the path of perishing because it will continue to sink into mere luxurious materialism in which it will decay and putrefy as civilizations have done in the past, and the only way to avert this catastrophe is to overcome the terrible social distinctions, the hatred of class for class, and the competition between them. Then she appeals to the theosophists, saying that Theosophy can save our civilization from sinking into this luxurious materialism, and if students of Theosophy individually feel that they have gained anything from studying Theosophy, let them spread it, out of

gratitude and for the sake of this civilization, which is threatened by its own internal errors.

How does a given society, a given country, a given civilization become what it is? For example, our present condition is materialistic, full of law-and-order problems with too many tensions between countries and the threat of aggression and war. Why does this happen? In the *Key to Theosophy* H.P.B. remarks that “all good and evil things in humanity have their roots in human character.” Basically, it is the character of individuals that determines what they do. For example, in the old Greek city-state, there was what one might call direct democracy, *i.e.*, when there was a big public question to be discussed, all the citizens of a city used to gather in the public square and people expressed their various points of view. The same thing happened when there was an important case. The accuser and the accused stated there, as it were, the points of view for the prosecution and defence, and the entire gathered community of citizens gave a verdict. But even this is not a candidacy, an ideal way. It was exactly under this arrangement that Socrates was condemned to be given a cup of hemlock and put to death. It was exactly under this arrangement that various very good people were exiled from Athens. So that on the one hand people said with great pride, “I am the citizen of no mean city,” and yet, it was the public group that condemned Socrates.

On the other hand, Montesquieu, the great French philosopher points out that when you have representative democracy, the actual citizens elect, or in one way or another choose representatives to govern them or to legislate for them. Then, he says, a little ironically, that it implies that if the elections take place every five years, there is freedom for the citizens once in five years and the rest of the time the freedom is only for the representatives, the legislators. This is a problem that exists. It has to be understood.

How *shall* we bring about social reform? All of us feel that our society should not be like this, that the poor should be looked after, that individuals should be free, that censorship should not be

arbitrary, and that we should be able to solve the problem of corruption. H.P.B. says: “To seek to achieve political reforms before we have effected a reform in *human nature, is like putting new wine into old bottles.*” Make men feel and recognize in their innermost hearts what is their real, true duty to all men, and every old abuse of power, every iniquitous law in the national policy, based on human, social or political selfishness, will disappear of itself....No lasting political reform can be ever achieved with the same selfish men at the head of affairs as of old” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 229). For example, if public officials are willing to take bribes, or in fact demand them, and if citizens are willing to give them, changing the law has very little effect.

H.P.B. insists that the only practical way of changing a society, changing a state, is to change the individuals, their way of looking at life, their understanding, in short, their *character*. The Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed by the Indian Government in 1929, to restrict and prevent the practice of child marriage. But despite the existence of this Act, child marriage continues to be a prevalent issue in India, especially in rural areas and in certain cultural and religious groups. Thus, apart from enactment of a law there is also the question of enforcement of the law.

(*To be concluded*)

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AROUND a man who has been pushed into the limelight, a legend begins to grow as it does around a dead man. But a dead man is in no danger of yielding to temptation to nourish his legend or accept its picture as reality. I pity the man who falls in love with his image as it is drawn by public opinion during the honeymoon of publicity.

Only he deserves power who every day justifies it.

On a really clean tablecloth, the smallest speck of dirt annoys the eye. At high altitudes a moment's self-indulgence may mean death.

—DAG HAMMARSK JÖLD

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What makes cats a symbolic part of Egyptian culture? In ancient Egypt, cats were something more than pets as they had the ability to keep homes pest-free. They were fierce guardians that would ward off deadly creatures such as venomous snakes and scorpions with their stealth and agility. They were revered for their life-saving abilities. They symbolised protection, fertility and divine power, linked to the goddess Bastet. In old Egypt cats were viewed as being of magic. Cats figure in Egyptian art in the form of statues and painting. In Egyptian mythology one reads about other gods and goddesses transforming themselves into animals, but it is only Bastet, the goddess of home and fertility that is able to take on the form of a cat.

“The importance of cats in Egyptian culture vividly stands out in art found in tombs depicting cats...chasing birds with elegance...or playfully frolicking in tranquil surroundings....In addition to appearing in tomb paintings the cats were even mummified and entombed with their masters. The symbolic funerary goods were thus seen to provide a vehicle through which the deceased could take over the body of the mummified cat in the afterlife.”

“Even more fascinating, some ancient texts depict cats in epic battles, slaying Apopis, a terrifying snake deity who would dare to challenge Ra, the Sun God, into the dark, dangerous Underworld.” Cats were worshipped as physical representatives of gods and their portrayal in art constantly reminds people of the power and influence of gods. (*The Times of India* Trending Desk, December 23, 2024)

Symbols are important because they convey more than the obvious meaning and thus raise our consciousness. Regarding the symbols used by the ancients, H.P.B. writes that every one of these symbols is an embodied idea, wherein the Divine Invisible is contained within the earthly visible. (*Isis*, I, 22)

The symbology and sacredness of cat and her connection with the moon have been explained by Gerald Massey in the *Secret*



*Doctrine* (II, 304-05). Gerald Massey, the poet and Egyptologist, says that the Egyptians portrayed moon as cat because “they had observed the simple fact that the cat saw in the dark, and that her eyes became full-orbed, and grew most luminous by night. The moon was the *seer* by night in heaven, and the cat was its equivalent on the earth; and so the familiar cat was adopted as a representative, a natural sign, a living pictograph of the lunar orb.” Science teaches that almost all the nocturnal animals are able to see in the night, but of these the cat and the owl are able to see things far more clearly in the darkness of night. “The name of the cat in Egyptian is *mau*, which denotes the *seer*, from *mau*, to see.” Thus, the moon is a “seer” in the night. A psychic or spiritual *seer* sees things using astral or spiritual eye; things which are hidden and not seen by the physical eye. Metaphorically, when moon is portrayed as male god, such as Soma, he represents Wisdom, which is all-seeing.

In the *Theosophical Glossary* we read that the Egyptian goddess Basht or Pasht is cat-headed goddess. She is the wife or female aspect of Phtah, which is the Egyptian *logos* and creator, the *Demiurgos* or the creative principle. “She is also called *Beset* or *Bubastis*, being then both the re-uniting and the separating principle. Her motto is: ‘punish the guilty and remove defilement,’ and one of her emblems is the cat.” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

Cat was sacred in Egypt for several reasons: as a symbol of the Moon, who is during night, “the eye of Osiris” or the “Sun.” “One of the mystic reasons was because of its body being rolled up in a *circle* when asleep. The posture is prescribed for occult and magnetic purposes in order to regulate in a certain way the circulation of the vital fluid, with which the cat is pre-eminently endowed.” Pythagoras recommended circular prostration and posture during the hours of contemplation. Pliny says that during worship the body must be rolled up in a ring. “The nine lives of a cat” is a popular saying based on good physiological and occult reasons. (*S.D.*, II, 552 and fn.)

Osiris is connected to the Sun, and Isis to the Moon. Cat is a

lunar symbol and therefore sacred to Isis. Egyptian Isis is identified with the occult principle of nature. (*S.D.*, I, 67)

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We all seek happiness and though in our present times it may seem to revolve around money the fact is that “he alone is the happy man who has learned to extract happiness, not from the ideal conditions, but from the actual ones about him.” This is the secret of happiness and when that is realized one will make the most out of life today, where he is, and not wait until he gets rich or until he can travel abroad. After the office or business hours we should be able to engage ourselves in some wholesome recreation which can help us unwind. Humour was Lincoln’s life-preserver. He always kept a copy of the latest humorous work and read some of it when fatigued, annoyed, or depressed. For some others it could be reading novels, playing billiards, taking a walk, or travelling. There are those who are able to remain happy because they always look on the bright side of life and do not allow worries and anxieties to disturb their good night’s sleep. “How true it is that, if we are cheerful and contented, all Nature smiles with us.” According to Goethe, every day, one should hear a little song, read a good poem and try to speak a few reasonable words.

“A well-balanced life is a cheerful life; a happy union of fine qualities and unruffled temper, a clear judgment, and well-proportioned faculties.” Some of the happiest homes that the author had seen were those of poor people who did not have rich carpets covering the floor, as also no library, piano or works of art. However, they did have peace and harmony, contentment, unselfishness, and readiness to contribute to the happiness of all. “The keynote of the home is in the hand of the resolutely cheerful member of the family, and he or she will set the pitch for the rest,” writes Orison Swett Marden. (*East and West Series*, December 2024)

We mistake pleasures for happiness. Anything that pleases our senses, mind and heart gives us happiness. True happiness consists

in not desiring anything in particular but in being happy with whatever Karma brings to us. In *The Dhammapada*, by a process of elimination, one by one, we are asked to discard those feelings and tendencies which make us suffer. As a good teacher having infinite patience, the Buddha reiterates that hatred, longing, anxiety, worldly possessions have to be given up if one wants to become happy.

If we want lasting happiness, we must be prepared to surrender pleasures of little worth (*preyas*) for the sake of pleasures of the greater worth (*shreyas*). True happiness results when even for a few moments we forget ourselves, because at that point we are able to establish contact with our higher nature—the God within. When we are admiring a painting or listening to a piece of music or watching a sunset, we do forget ourselves for those moments. This bliss is something experienced during meditation. This happiness is also experienced when we forget ourselves in helping another or in doing good works without self-interest. Nothing earthly can give us lasting peace and joy. Paradoxically, so long as we are searching for happiness, we are bound to be unhappy. But when we have ceased to make happiness our goal, we have it as a kind of by-product.

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Are brain chips (BCs) the path to human evolution or a step toward control? Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyer writes that when he first heard that Elon Musk aimed to implant computer chips in human brains he wondered if human beings would consent to give up their free will and their ability to think for themselves. Whether they would entrust their emotions and career to a chip, even if the medical risks could be overcome. Will BCs become as common and indispensable as Internet and Smartphones?

Brain chip is a medical device that can be used for patients who have failed to respond to traditional remedies. Elon Musk's company *Neuralink* carried out first human implant in early part of year 2024.

Brain chips have been used to help paralysed patients to control a robotic arm or move a cursor. They can also be used to treat depression, schizophrenia, dementia and other ailments of the mind.

It is not easy to restrict use of any technology, as was evident in the case of Amniocentesis and sonography which were invented to detect possible defects in fetuses but over a period, were used for detecting female babies and aborting them. This risk is greater in case of BCs, which are devices to control the mind.

Daniel Gelernter, head of the hedge fund RG Niederhoffer Capital, and a computational neuroscience expert is of the view that in few years, brain chips will be marketed to everyone just like the Smartphones in the present times. “The benefits of brain chips will be vastly beyond what external devices offer today....We will be able to send messages to friends by thinking of them, and to hear their replies played in our minds....We’ll be able to talk to anyone in any language. We’ll be able to remember an infinite amount of information, to retrieve any fact....If we have criminal ideas, or perhaps just countercultural notions, they will be referred to the proper authorities before it’s too late,” writes Gelernter, as according to him our memories will be organised for us by AI (Artificial Intelligence) under policies crafted by experts with society’s best interests at heart. With BCs controlling minds and actions of billions of humans “we may no longer be humans anymore,” writes Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyer. (*The Economic Times*, November 8, 2024)

There are around 86 million neurons, *i.e.*, nerve cells connected to each other by synapses. Every activity, such as the hand or leg movement, or experiencing any feeling or thinking, involves generating of an electrical signal, which is sent from one neuron to another. The Brain Chip Implant (BCI) technology involves the implantation of microelectronic devices or neural interfaces into the brain, enabling bidirectional communication between neurons and computers. In the area of brain-computer-interface, implanting of brain chip by *Neuralink*, is considered to be a revolutionary step, as

it establishes a direct and seamless interface between the human brain and external devices. This device is able to record and decode the brain activity. If the technology proves successful, then the company hopes to create direct brain-to-computer interfaces that connects a person's thoughts to digital devices.

Such brain chip implants are expected to monitor and treat conditions like epilepsy, Parkinson's diseases, etc., by directly interfacing with the brain. Also, such implants can help direct neural control of devices such as, prosthetic limbs that can restore movement in individuals with paralysis or amputations. Such implants can also augment human cognitive abilities and enable individuals to enhance memory, learning, etc. through direct neural interfaces with digital systems. However, it appears that Musk's long-term vision is to combine human consciousness with artificial intelligence (AI). It is generally felt that the merger of human intelligence and artificial intelligence sought by Musk would be as much an artificialization of the human as a humanization of the machine.

There are several risks associated with these implants. For instance, implanting of the device involves surgery, and the same involves the risk of infections, bleeding and damage to brain tissues. Though these implants have been tested on animals, the probable long-term effects are not fully understood, which could include changes in cognition, personality, or mood, among other potential effects. Moreover, as these brain implants would collect a significant amount of data about an individual's brain activity, it raises concerns about who would have access to this data and how it would be protected.

Ultimately, it is crucial to keep in mind that man should not become a slave to a machine but triumph over it. It appears that while these implants combined with AI may enhance cognitive abilities, they may not leave any scope for exercise of free-will, as also for creativity. However, truly creative thought must forever remain in the province of the human mind.