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

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### LIVING THE HIGHER LIFE

#### I

WHO is there among us who has not felt at some hour the power of his own soul within himself? And having felt such an experience, who is there who does not wish for its continuity? Why is it that if we can be soul-satisfied and soul-energized at one time, we fail to retain that clear vision and fall again into confusion and perplexity? Is there some way to work consciously at raising the level of our consciousness? At making of our life a real art in terms of scientific principles? And the answer is: there is. Theosophy is the science of the Soul. In this scientific era, the great service of science is that it ushers in the reign of law. We accept science in the physical world but fail to extend it to the world of the soul. Theosophy knows rules of soul-life, mind-life and sense-life, and hence can teach us how to live the higher life.

What do we mean by “higher life”? When we speak of living the Higher Life, it implies that there is a Lower Life, which is not only the life of the lusts and immoral animal life, but also includes the humdrum life of many who toil without an objective or without understanding. This shows that the first requirement for the living of the higher life is a basis of knowledge and understanding, a certain realization of what life means and what its purpose is. When man has certain great ideas and thoughts which energize him from within and that enable him to take a higher interest in the daily routine of

events and occupations and to evaluate experiences in terms of Soul growth, he is able to live the higher life. Otherwise, he is constantly influenced and disturbed by the material side of things, thus becoming the slave of outward circumstances. The Higher Life demands as the very first condition a change in the inner attitude of man. Life becomes low or high, useless or useful, uninteresting or interesting, and confusing or clear in terms of man's conception of its purpose, in terms of the ideas held concerning men, events and things.

That is why the Higher Life has been described by all great sages and philosophers as the Life of High Thinking. Wordsworth advocated "Simple living and high thinking," which implies that high thinking brings about a change in our lives when we begin to raise our point of view from the petty and selfish plane of the personal to the high level of universal and impersonal principles. Our life becomes simple. But high thinking must come first, which can become the basis for judging as to what the necessary things in our life are, that we should retain and what the unnecessary that should be given up. Life will lose its complexities, which puzzle and confuse us, and will become less burdensome and less trying, because we shall have the understanding that can enable us to see under its baffling changes of multitudes of different aspects the singleness of its purpose and the underlying unity of all its expressions. This shows that if we take care of our inner attitude, if we gain purity of motive and accuracy of vision, the bonds of karma will fall away from us. Spiritual freedom results from a true perspective of life. Thought is the soul of action, and our thinking in each and every case determines the quality of our life.

As for life in itself, we feel at two stages that life is troublesome and productive of pain. (1) When we are fully engrossed in sense-life, running after sensual objects, we chase what looks to us as realities, then suffer and get confused. Shri Krishna says, "those enjoyments which arise through the contact of the senses with external objects are wombs of pain, since they have a beginning

and an end” (*Gita*, V). The fundamental error and mistakes of our present civilization lie in the idea that happiness can be found in the pursuit of material objects. We cling to mere externals, to outer forms, and feel lost and bewildered when these are shattered to pieces. (2) When after repeated sorrow and suffering we come to realize that no objects of possession can give us a permanently happy and peaceful frame of mind, then we enter the second stage. After realizing that man cannot live by bread alone, having tasted the fruit of some uplifting thoughts, some aspirations or ideas, we feel the oppression of the lower life that all of us have to live. This is greater mental suffering. In both stages we suffer, but in the first we suffer irresponsibly like children, through sheer ignorance, and in the second we suffer with a moral anguish because of some knowledge.

It is at this stage of evolution that a man, dissatisfied with his own self and his own life, asks the question which marks the awakening of his soul nature and says: “What is the purpose of life? What do I want to do? Where do I desire to go?” It represents an important stage in human growth and progress and indicates the beginning of the great quest, which includes a quest for the truth, for the rational explanation of things, and for understanding and knowledge. That quest is of course a long one, but the man in whom has arisen the desire to search and seek, has taken the first step.

In his long journey of evolution, man must go through varied experiences, through trials and tests of different kinds, encountering sorrow after sorrow until each lesson is learnt. First, when man turns outside, he follows the inclinations of his senses and pursues shadows. The basis of his action is desire of the personal self, rooted in selfishness and egotism. His objectives are varied; he wants money, fame, power, love, happiness, emancipation, and so forth. But whatever they may be, if his objectives are centred in selfishness, man goes after them only to find out that he has been chasing shadows and that none of these things has removed the burden of life, or brought him inner contentment and inner enlightenment. Even when one or the other thing is obtained and man seems to have reached

his aim, he finds that he lacks the knowledge to take care of his possessions. If he goes after money and obtains it, the question comes up—what will he do with his wealth? If it is power he was after, then the next problem is, how to use that power? If he wanted self-emancipation, then he begins to find that it has brought him into uttermost loneliness. However, in going through these steps, desiring first wealth, then fame, then power, then the fulfilment of human love, something is learnt by man about the duties and the responsibilities of life, and the next great stage is entered.

Having realized the illusionary and evanescent nature of the external, man then seeks repose and solace in the world of mind and ideas, he faces a great danger in the temptation to run away from the burdens of life by retiring into solitude and giving up human activities. He wishes to secure inner contentment by renouncing the lower life, the daily routine of human contacts and experiences, and so he flies from the field of battle as Arjuna in the *Gita* wanted to do. That is why the institution of religious monasteries arose in the West—places of retirement, where men and women got away from the struggle and turmoil of life and gave their whole attention to the acquirement of their own inner peace and contentment. And it is that same false notion which has driven many in India to take *Sannyasa*.

This is not right from a spiritual point of view, and a lesson has to be learnt, that happiness and emancipation are nothing unless they are used to benefit others. Just as through desire-action we learn about duty, so too through outward renunciation we must learn about sacrifice and the unity of nature. The great teaching of the *Gita*, as of all theosophical textbooks, is that nothing is to be gained by running away from the burden of life, but that each one of us must perform his own duties and discharge his own obligations. “The selfish devotee lives to no purpose. The man who does not go through his appointed work in life—has lived in vain,” says the *Voice of the Silence*. And adds: “Accept the woes of birth.” Shri Krishna repeatedly reiterates to Arjuna the necessity for the

performance of *dharma* or duty. The duty of each one is determined by two things: First, by our own capacity—what are our highest faculties and aptitudes, what are the fields in which we can serve the best. Thus, for example, if one has no aptitude for music, one certainly should not be a musician, it is not his own *dharma* or duty. Second, the inner faculties and the environment examined judiciously indicate what our duty is, and that duty has to be attended to.

In his effort to fulfil his own duties, man learns the necessity to acquire knowledge of basic laws. Having seen that he cannot run away from his own environment but must learn to adapt himself to that environment, he recognizes that it is only through a change of mental outlook and of his own attitude that his condition will improve. Practically then it implies that we must change the inner attitude to the outer things of life and attend to them. And this change of attitude implies knowledge and high thinking, such that we begin to view these outer things in terms of their cosmic relationship. We think in terms of cosmic principles and perceive under every form and in every incident a universal principle. That is why the study of Theosophy is recommended, because through such a study we are able to gain cosmic or universal ideas, ideas which broaden the process of our thought and raise its quality.

*(To be concluded)*

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HOLD fast to dreams  
 For if dreams die  
 Life is a broken-winged bird  
 That cannot fly.  
 Hold fast to dreams  
 For when dreams go  
 Life is a barren field  
 Frozen with snow.

LANGSTON HUGHES  
 "DREAMS"

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT KAMA AND KAMADEVA

KAMA, Manmatha or Madana is the Hindu god of erotic love and carnal desire, attraction, pleasure and beauty, as well as the personification of the concept of kama. He is depicted as a handsome young man decked with ornaments and flowers, armed with a bow of sugarcane and shooting arrows of flowers. He is often portrayed alongside his consort, Rati. She is his female counterpart representing sensual pleasures. Kama means desire or longing; Manmatha means one who agitates the mind, and Madana means one who intoxicates with love.

The story goes that Brahma, the Creator, after creating the universe with its plants and animals, and all other creatures, desired to create something new and with a difference. He created a damsel and named her Sandhya, the indefinable hour between sunset and darkness. Soon after, Brahma created a brother for her, a youth of great beauty, the god of love or Kama. Brahma told him that he would be called Kama because “your shafts will rouse passion in the hearts of men and women, which is vital for the sustenance of the world.”

When Kama asked, “How am I to know that I am all that you say? When can I test my powers?” God Brahma ordered him to spread love in the world by shooting arrows of flowers. Kama decided to first use the arrows against God Brahma, and so he shoots him with floral arrows. Brahma got attracted to Sandhya and desired her. Later, Kama shot his arrows towards all the other gods in the assembly. The Prajapati Dharma became worried after this and called God Shiva, who watched them and laughed at both Kama and Brahma. God Brahma regained consciousness and cursed Kama to be burnt to ashes by Lord Shiva in the future. But after Kama’s pleading, God Brahma assured him that he would be reborn. According to another version of the myth, found in the *Skanda Purana*, Lord Brahma created Kama from his mind to trigger passion

in the agents of creation (*Prajapatis*) after they refused to create.

Rati, the beauty of beauties, who was born out of the vital fluid of Daksha, the progenitor of gods, was offered in marriage to Kama by Daksha. Brahma asks Kama and Rati to go to Shiva and attack him with all their weapons so that he is brought to the same predicament in which he had found Brahma and all the other gods. Kama tries to induce a mood of love in Shiva but fails. He comes back and reports, “I have never been so much ignored in my whole existence. I followed him everywhere, but he showed no awareness of my presence.”

At about this time, a son named Taraka was born to one named Vajranga. When Taraka grew up, he performed penance for one thousand years to attain strength and invincibility. Brahma was constrained to grant him boons for his austerities. All the gods, including Indra, were terrified and pleaded with Brahma not to grant the boon of invincibility. Brahma approached Taraka and conveyed that a boon such as invincibility must have a limitation. Taraka said, “Very well, I accept this limitation: no one in any of the worlds should be able to kill me except one born to Shiva,” being well aware that Kama had failed to have any influence on Shiva. When both Brahma and Vishnu failed to vanquish Taraka, the gods came together and decided to appeal to Shiva. However, Shiva could beget a son only if he gave up his penances.

The story mentions Parvati, the daughter of Himvan, the lord of the Himalayas. When Parvati attained girlhood, she accompanied her father when he visited Mount Kailas, where Shiva was meditating. But Parvati insisted on going with her father when he visited Kailas and ultimately began to stay behind to serve Shiva as a disciple-attendant. The gods were hopeful that Parvati could be of help to them. To deal with Shiva’s indifference, they turned to Kama and asked him to do the needful so that Shiva would take interest in Parvati. Kama is reluctant to take up the task. The gods try to persuade him, saying that though he failed once, he may succeed now with the help of Parvati, who has youth and beauty. It was up



to him to make Shiva notice her qualities.

Kama went to Kailas with his weapons. Shiva was meditating, and Parvati was in attendance. Kama aimed his first arrow and sent it off at the precise moment when Parvati came close to Shiva with a tray of flowers in hand. He succeeded in producing the first stirring, as Shiva opened his eyes slightly and noticed the beauty of the fingers holding the tray. When Parvati was sweeping the ground, Shiva opened his eyes, and then Kama sent his second arrow, which made Shiva admire Parvati's lips. The arrows caused disturbance also within Parvati, who did not perform her duties with the usual self-forgetfulness. After Kama had sent the fourth arrow, Shiva was greatly disturbed and found it difficult to turn his mind back to meditation. He was aware that some external influence was at work and at last spotted Kama, who was hiding behind the bush, and as a result, when Kama aimed his fifth arrow, it failed to reach Shiva. Then Shiva was angry and opened the third eye on his forehead. Once upon a time, Shiva had reduced to ashes a whole city of *asuras* called Tripura. Now, with his third eye, he reduced Kama to ashes. After that, Shiva resumed his meditation.

Rati, Kama's wife, approached Shiva and begged him to help her. Shiva replied, "Kama is not lost; he is bodiless. His grossness has been burnt up, but he lives in essence." Also, he promised that Kama would remain in the presence of Shiva like his other unseen and invisible attendants. Rati was told that Kama was not destroyed but existed in a sublimated state.

The story goes that Parvati was advised by sage Narada that it was not possible for her to win Shiva's heart with physical beauty. She must undertake a great penance. After undertaking penance for a prolonged period of time, one day Shiva appeared before Parvati and accepted her as his wife. Taraka was killed by the six-faced god Subramanya, the son of Shiva and Parvati.

Shiva is generally depicted with a third eye in the centre of his forehead, which is usually closed. The third eye is supposed to have appeared or sprung in the middle of Shiva's forehead when his

consort, Parvati, playfully covered both his eyes with her hands, as Shiva sat rapt in meditation. Immediately, the universe was plunged into darkness, and chaos reigned supreme. Shiva formed the “Third-Eye” to restore order, and it is said that fire emerged from his Third-Eye to recreate light. The fierce light from his Third-Eye is so powerful and destructive that he is said to open it only to destroy all that is unconscious, dark and dualistic in the universe. In other words, the opening of the Third Eye of Shiva marks the end of all illusion.

H. P. Blavatsky mentions that during the course of evolution there were races of men with three eyes and four arms. The “third eye” was once a physiological organ, but later on, owing to the gradual increase of materiality and disappearance of spirituality, this “third eye” got atrophied, and was gradually transformed into a simple gland and exists today as the pineal gland. (*S.D.*, II, 295-96)

The opened “Third-Eye” represents spiritual intuition and omniscience. When there is a conjunction of *Buddhi* with *Manas*, *Buddhi* is activated, which is termed as the opening of the “Third-Eye,” and also represents the exercise of Spiritual Will. When Kama aimed an arrow at Shiva, it caused a stirring of desire within Shiva, so that on spotting Kama, Shiva is supposed to have *opened his third eye* (spiritual intuition, which also represents exercise of Spiritual Will) and burnt Kama. But then, at the request of Kama’s wife, Rati, Siva transformed Kama to *ananga*, or formless, *i.e.*, Kama became Kamadeva, meaning he ceased being a tempter—*passion gave way to compassion*. Shiva is a destroyer and regenerator. He destroys things on one plane to bring them to life on a higher plane. Kama, at one level, is the desire for sensual gratification, but at another level, it is the desire for the happiness of all beings. The human principle of *Manas*, when freed from *Kama* or lower propensity, turns toward the still more luminous faculty of *Buddhi* for illumination, thereby becoming increasingly receptive. It manifests as intuitive “flashes,” and at times as a direct vision—a sort of momentary clairvoyance.

H.P.B. mentions that in esoteric phraseology, “The Eye of Shiva”

is known as “*Dangma*’s opened eye.” *Dangma* means a purified soul, an initiate or a Mahatma. His “opened eye” is the inner spiritual eye of the seer, which far transcends the ordinary clairvoyance and has a faculty of spiritual intuition through which direct and certain knowledge can be obtained. The “Eye of *Dangma*” enables an initiate to perceive the essence of things, free from the influence of Maya.

We say, “Behind Will stands Desire.” Desire is the mover of the Will. At the cosmic level, *divine desire* is the same as *divine will*. It is *Kamadeva* or Eros, described as an all-embracing desire for universal good. It is the first feeling of infinite and tender mercy that arose in the consciousness of creative ONE FORCE, for all that lives and feels, needs help and kindness. It is the divine desire to create happiness and love. Divine Will, we might say, works in terms of the infallible and impartial Law of Justice.

“Says the *Rig Veda*, ‘Desire first arose in IT, which was the primal germ of mind, and which Sages, searching with their intellect, have discovered in their heart to be the bond which connects Entity with non-Entity,’ or *Manas* with pure *Atma-Buddhi*” (*The Theosophical Glossary*). This is a description of Kamadeva or Eros, which is the Desire that first arose in the *Parabrahmam*, a purely abstract principle, and also called the *primal germ of mind*. Kamadeva was the *first movement*, which stirred the ONE, to create, after manifesting from the purely abstract principle. “Primal germ of mind” seems to refer to the Universal Mind, which has always existed and is described in the *Transactions* (p. 24) as “another name for the Absolute, *out of time and space*.” Thus, Kamadeva is referring to the desire that first arose in the Absolute or *Parabrahmam*. Therefore, after manifesting in the purely abstract principle, its first activity is being described as the “first movement,” which stirred the ONE, or stirred Brahma (manifested Logos), to create. When it is said that this Eros connects Entity with Non-Entity, it is referring to connection of the *Manas* with *Atma-Buddhi* (or Monad) in man.

“In the metaphysical sense the “Fire of friction” [*Pavamana*] means the Union between *Buddhi*, the sixth, and *Manas*, the fifth,

principles, which thus are united or cemented together; the fifth merging partially into and becoming part of the *monad*.” (S.D., II, 247)

The spiritually advanced person does not have to control his desire because his desire flows harmoniously in the direction of his will. For this to happen, Mr. Judge suggests that we must gradually purify our desires and make our “will” the absolute ruler. A time must come when our whole nature is intent on achieving union with the divine in us. Then “will” begins to work in a different direction independent of desire, becoming free from the domination of desire.

Lord Buddha, the great psychologist, teaches a doctrine of conditioned co-production, which mentions *nidanas*, or the chain of causes, that show how birth, old age, disease, death and suffering arise depending upon conditions or causes. Depending upon *sparsha* (contact of the senses with sense-objects), arises *vedana* (feeling or sensation). The sensation produced could be painful or pleasant. Depending upon sensation, there arises *trishna* or craving, hunger or, thirst for excitement. It is the flame of desire, which burns unsatisfied, birth after birth. The transition from sensation to craving, from passive feeling to active desire, is the battlefield of the spiritual life. To win a victory over oneself is to experience the feeling and yet check the desires.

In *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 7*, we are given steps to purify our desires, beginning with killing out the desire for the things of matter. The second step is to overcome subtler desires such as those for power, knowledge, love, happiness or fame. How to achieve this? The answer is, “Life itself teaches these lessons,” because even when we get what we want, we are likely to lose it, or it may not be what we had expected it to be, or it loses its charm once we have attained it. Thus, our life experiences show that it all turns to dust and ashes in the mouth. Gradually, after many such experiences, we begin to intuitively perceive that satisfaction is attainable only in the infinite, so that at last, we begin to use our “Will” to centre all our desires on the Eternal. “Desire only that which is within “you.” Theosophy teaches the sevenfold constitution of man, of which Kama or

passions and desires is the fourth principle in man, which is called the balance principle. “It stands in the middle, and from it the ways go up or down. It is the basis of action and mover of the Will....For whether we wish to do well or ill, we have to first arouse within us the desire for either course.” A good man, to reach the stage of a sage, has to first arouse in himself, and then continue for several lifetimes, the desire for progress and to lead the Higher Life. A bad man who keeps alive in him the low, wicked, and selfish desires for several lifetimes becomes at last a depraved and debased human being. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, Indian Ed., p. 50)

It appears that the desire for sentient existence, which impels the Ego towards greater perfection, flows from *Atma-Buddhi* (Monad). The desire for material existence and sense-life seems to flow from the personal man, which can drag down the Ego and is the cause of its entanglement in the wheel of life and death.

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THE EXPENSE of spirit in a waste of shame  
 Is lust in action; and till action, lust  
 Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,  
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,  
 Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight,  
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had  
 Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait  
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad;  
 Mad in pursuit and in possession so;  
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;  
 A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;  
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.  
 All this the world well knows; yet none knows well  
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
 “SONNET NO. 129”

## DR. B. W. RICHARDSON—NERVOUS ETHER

### III

WE HAVE seen that “the second principle, called Prana or *Jiva* in modern Theosophy, is described by Paracelsus as the *Archaeus* or *Liquor Vitae*” (*Theosophy*, March 1938). In *The Ocean of Theosophy*, it is described as “a universally pervasive principle. It is the ocean in which the earth floats; it permeates the globe and every being and object on it.” Also, the two, *Archaeus* and “Nervous Ether,” are identical. (*S.D.*, II, 539)

In the article, *Transmigration of Life-atoms*, H.P.B. writes that “the ‘*Jiva*’ or life-principle, which animates man, beast, plant, and even a mineral, certainly *is* ‘a form of force indestructible,’ since this force is the one life, or *anima mundi*, the universal living soul,” and this force manifests itself differently in different aggregations of atoms, such as in minerals, plants, animals, etc., and these in a way represent various forms or states in which the force manifests itself. Since this force or life-principle is omnipresent, it cannot leave any object or body. If it were to become *inactive* even for an instant in a stone, then the particles of that stone would lose their cohesive property and disintegrate, and then this force or life-principle would remain in each of its particles in a dormant state. This force, when it is disconnected from one set of atoms, transfers its *vis-viva*, or living power or energy of motion, to another set. In other words, it manifests itself in that other set as kinetic energy, but it is still present in the first set of atoms as potential energy, or latent life. (*H.P.B. Series No. 25*, p. 32)

These observations are useful in understanding the concept of death. Dr. Richardson observes, “The body fully renewed by it, presents capacity for motion, fulness of form, *life*. The body bereft of it presents inertia, the configuration of shrunken death, *the evidence of having lost something physical that was in it when it lived*.” H.P.B. remarks that this life-fluid has not deserted the body,

as Dr. Richardson thinks. “It has only changed its state from activity to passivity, and become latent owing to the too morbid state of the tissues, on which it has no more hold. Once the *rigor mortis* absolute, the ‘*Liquor Vitae*’ will re-awaken into action, and begin its work on the atoms *chemically*. Brahma-Vishnu—the creator and the Preserver of Life—will have transformed himself into Siva the *Destroyer*.” (*S.D.*, I, 538)

*Rigor mortis* means the rigidity or stiffness of the body after death. It is due to a biochemical change in the muscles that occurs several hours after death. After this the life-fluid or life-principle works on the atoms chemically. And then instead of being a creator, it works as a destroyer. The process of dying has been described as Vishnu, the preserver, becoming Siva, the destroyer (*S.D.*, I, 526). It is life that kills. H.P.B. says that every physiological change and every change in the tissues of the body, which allows the life to act, is produced by the *creators* and *destroyers*, which we know as “microbes,” erroneously, but they are (fiery) “lives.” Mr. Judge observes that microbes, bacilli and bacteria are composed of minute lives. “Their action forced forward by the Life Energy—called Prana or Jiva—will explain active existence and physical death.” These *lives* build the forms and also destroy them, expelling the Egos from old forms to inhabit new forms. In other words, it is Life, which creates and destroys all forms, and thus is responsible for life and death.

The footnote on pp. 262-63 (*S.D.*, I) points out that “fiery lives” are “the seventh and the highest subdivision of the plane of matter. The physical body of man undergoes complete change every seven years, and its destruction and preservation are due to the alternate function of the fiery lives as “builders” and “destroyers.” They are “builders” or “creators” when they sacrifice themselves in the form of vitality to restrain the destructive influence of the microbes, as they supply these microbes with vital constructive energy and compel them to build up the material body and its cells. They become “destroyers” or “devourers” when they stop supplying the microbes

with the vital constructive energy and allow them to run riot as destructive agents.

Further, H.P.B. explains that the “Nervous Ether” is *animal vitality* diffused in all nature. “The animal tissues only absorb it according to their more or less morbid or healthy state....It descends in a larger supply to vegetation in the *Sushumna* sun-ray which lights and feeds the moon, and it is through her beams that it pours its light upon, and penetrates man and animal, more during their sleep and rest, than when they are in full activity” (*S.D.*, I, 537). We may understand this better if we try to understand the importance of sleep. Theosophy teaches that life energy exists around us like an ocean, and when we are awake, the life waves rush into the body with greater intensity every hour. Since our power to resist is limited, we get exhausted and fall asleep. Children are unable to resist the current, and hence they fall asleep quickly. But during sleep, we *absorb* life energy instead of resisting. The life waves adjust themselves to the molecules of the body to restore the equilibrium. In other words, during sleep, the life energy is absorbed or assimilated by the healthy organs of our body. The physical organs are rested and recharged. “If this periodical adjustment did not occur, the life current would destroy us. Any derangement of the body that tends to inhibit this adjustment is a cause of sleeplessness, and perhaps death,” writes Mr. Judge. Explaining the necessity for sleep, H.P.B. writes:

“It is said by Occultism to be the periodical and regulated exhaustion of the nervous centres, and especially of the sensory ganglia of the brain, which refuse to act any longer on this plane, and, if they would not become unfit for work, are compelled to recuperate their strength on another plane or *Upadhi*....As a man exhausted by one state of life fluid seeks another; as, for example, when exhausted by the hot air he refreshes himself with cool water; so sleep is the shady nook in the sunlit valley of life.” (*Transactions*, 70-71)

Dr. Richardson observes that “It [Nervous Ether or life energy] holds the nervous system throughout in perfect tension during states of life (*true*). By exercise it is disposed of (*rather generated*)...and



when demand for it is greater than the supply, its deficiency is indicated by nervous collapse or exhaustion. It accumulates in the nervous centres during sleep, bringing them, if I may so speak, to their due tone, and therewith raising the muscles to awakening and renewed life....”

On p. 515 fn. (*S.D.*, I), we read, “The names of the Seven Rays [of the Sun]—which are, *Sushumna*, *Harikesa*, *Viswakarmā*, *Viswatryarches*, *Sannadha*, *Sarvavasū* and *Swaraj* are all mystical, and each has its distinct application in a distinct state of consciousness for occult purposes.” The *Sushumna* Ray lights up the moon and is cherished by the initiated yogis. The seven rays seem to be related to seven states of consciousness. On page 516 (*S.D.*, I), certain questions are asked: “Why is the *Sushumna* ray believed to be that ray which furnishes the moon with its borrowed light? Why is it ‘the ray cherished by the initiated Yogi?’ ... We say, because light, or rather all its occult properties, every combination and correlation of it with other forces, mental, psychic, and spiritual, were perfectly known to the old adepts.”

H.P.B. writes that during a dream state, our Ego uses astral senses and must use another set of senses when it enters into a deep sleep state. Thus, during sleep, our physical senses get a chance to recuperate so that they are fit to act in the waking state. A different quality of *prana*, coming from the *Sushumna* ray of the Sun, reaching the sleeping man through the Moon, seems to help in recuperating the strength of brain centres and sensory ganglia. Thus, as the man exposed to the blazing sun feels refreshed in the shade, where the quality of sunlight is different, so also the man who falls asleep is refreshed by the life which reaches equilibrium during his sleep. This can be seen in the aura of the person. The one who is exhausted and is about to fall asleep, his aura is of an intense golden-orange hue, composed of atoms whirling with an almost incredible spasmodic rapidity. As against this, the one who wakes up refreshed after sleep appears to be bathed in rhythmical vibrations of life currents—golden, blue and rosy.

However, when too much of this nervous ether is present in the nervous system, then, due to a lack of proper absorption by body tissues, there is disease and death. Such a shortage or excess of nervous ether would not be there if it was produced by the body, because the body maintains dynamic equilibrium through homeostasis or the self-regulating mechanism, and maintains stability under varied conditions. But this vitality is not the product of the body, and therefore, there is excess or shortage experienced depending on the health or ill-health of the organs of the body, which in turn affects their ability to absorb this vitality. Rather, this nervous ether is independent of the body but is connected with Sun-force and hence is an emanation from the Sun.

According to Dr. Richardson, the nervous ether, or life energy, or life-principle can be poisoned by the diffusion of gases and vapours from the outside, as well as from whatever food is swallowed, or by the gases created due to decomposition as a result of disease. But all this is still at a physical level. According to Paracelsus, *Archaeus* (life-principle) is a magnetic fluid, which has powers of attraction and repulsion. We are told about universal magnetic fluid or Spiritual light, which flows from the only magnet, which is the Central Spiritual Sun. All and everything—sun, moon, stars, earth, etc.—are floating in this magnetic fluid and have become magnetic by induction. Hence, minerals, plants, animals, human beings and also sidereal bodies are giving off magnetic emanations that in turn affect others. Likewise, the cosmic forces also affect the astral body of man by means of this medium.

Paracelsus hints at the magnetic or auric exhalations, which are life-fluids impressed by good or bad psychic impressions. We may call it magnetism. The astral body is the vehicle of *Prana*, and just as blood circulates through the body, life energy or *Pranic* currents circulate in the astral body. The *Pranic* currents circulating in the astral body affect the body and ultimately stream forth as our magnetism in the form of magnetic fluid. Every person has a magnetic exhalation. A person may be in perfect physical health,

but his exhalation may be harmful, if there is moral sickness, for others who are sensitive to such subtle influences. These magnetic exhalations are more intense from the eyes, palms, fingers, soles of the feet, etc. Just like physical disease, impure magnetism can be communicated by touch, and hence the reluctance to shake hands in India. A mesmeric healer projects the magnetic fluid from himself to any object or being, *consciously* guided by his will. A pure and healthy mesmerizer cures his patients by projecting or imparting his healthy, vital fluid. A morally diseased healer conveys to his patient the moral poison of his own mind and heart.

Theosophically speaking, the quality of prana can be changed for the better or for worse, based on the kind of thought-ideations, habits, and the extent to which one's personal life is harmonized with the spiritual principles. Each one can attract to himself those lives that are consubstantial with his own nature.

We are then told how Dr. Richardson explains nervous excitation or convulsion, which is a violent, involuntary contraction of the muscles. He says that the tension or the strain on this material is generally too high or too low, based on the changes in nervous matter or matter which constitutes nerves, brain, spine, etc. Referring to the brain and spinal cord, which are both enclosed within bony structures, namely, the skull and spinal column, respectively, he says that when these are under great tension or strain, it causes excitation or vibration of the ether, which in turn can set all those muscles which are controlled by the spine and brain into uncontrolled motion, or what we call convulsions. H.P.B. says that only the occultists know the primary cause of such nervous excitation. Finally, when the life principle is deficient or in excess, it can lead to death.

*(Concluded)*

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WE must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

## THE MOMENT OF CHOICE

WHATEVER we meet with in life—pleasurable or painful, good or evil—is the outcome of the choices we make in thought and action. There are no chance happenings or accidents. Thought precedes action, and desire is the propelling force. Jesus truly said that if one looks at a woman with the eye of desire, he has already committed adultery, though physical action may not have taken place, and evil results will accrue to him. If one has thoughts of hate against anyone, he has already done violence against the person he hates, and the Karmic results follow to afflict him.

One's hateful thought will injure unseen the person hated; and a reactionary force is set up in the victim's nature; so that, either in this life, or in the next, or some other life, he will be the cause of hurting the one who thus set up the cause of it, by his thoughts of hate towards him.

Contrarily, the karma of benevolent thoughts and feelings towards fellowmen, whether they are good or bad, will bring to the individual's life harmony and benevolence in turn. It is thoughts, feelings, intention and motive which produce good or evil Karma, not the show of outward courtesies. A mere show of goodness in outer behaviour is of no consequence; the inner feeling and thought are the producers of good and evil Karma.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita* forgiveness is lauded as one of the divine virtues which one must cultivate. Jesus says that every offence done against us by anyone must be forgiven. So also teaches the Buddha. If someone injures me by word or act, I must forgive the offender and not retaliate. Why? There is a scientific reason why I should forgive. Because, firstly, no hurt would have come to me from him if I had not offended him in some way in the present life or in one of the past lives. So, the hurt that came to me from the offender is just, and I suffer. How then do I respond to the hurt received?

I have now two options: either retaliate and punish him in revenge or, in recognition of the law of cause and effect, that the hurt that

came to me is caused by myself in relation with him in the past, accept the responsibility and forgive him of the offence done to me, with the full understanding of the just law of Karma. The Law brings about wise and just adjustment of the discord produced and restores harmony. Relying on the Law, I must wisely forgive the offender with all my heart.

If I choose not to forgive but to retaliate and wreak revenge against him, even in thought and feeling, instead of leaving the result to the never-erring Law, which would punish the offender, I instantly set in motion the Law of Retribution and Compensation by which I will be punished, and my enemy, against whom I revenged and hurt him, will be compensated by reward.

By giving in to revenge not only do I suffer myself thus, but I also strengthen the evil passion of anger and malice in myself and increase the sum of the dark quality of hatred and evil passion in the world, which degrades all mankind, and adversely reacts on the animal world also and impedes their evolution to higher life. Whether individuals or communities by mutual antagonism and hatred, become Karmically entangled in a spiral of violence in the long run spanning many lives, thereby both would suffer, besides increasing the sum of evil in the world. Rev. Desmond Tutu rightly said that there is no future without forgiveness. Hence it is said in the Bible, “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.”

Unhappiness, misfortunes, diseases, pain, suffering, social disturbances, epidemics come into our lives because of our thoughts and actions in ignorance of our true nature and of the absolutely just, wise, intelligent and equitable Law of Karma and of the truth of One Life, which pervades and binds all in one vast Brotherhood in a harmonious progressive order. We must take knowledge, and think and act with Wisdom and Compassion. This is the Science of Life.

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THE smallest seed of faith is better than the largest fruit of happiness.

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

## THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE

### FRAGMENT ONE—XII

**“THE NAME of the third Hall is Wisdom, beyond which stretch the shoreless waters of AKSHARA, the indestructible fount of Omniscience.”**

In the *Mundaka* Upanishad a man called Saunaka asked Sage Angiras the question: “What is that knowledge through which everything becomes known?” The sage replied that there are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired. The higher or *Para-Vidya* and the lower or *Apara-Vidya*. The Delphic Oracle said: “Man, know thyself.” In order to become the knower of All Self, one has first to become of Self the knower. This is what the *Chandogya* Upanishad teaches, and its emphasis is on the realization: “*Tat Tvam Asi*” or “Thou art That.” This is Para-Vidya or Soul-wisdom.

There is “Head-learning” or “Rational knowledge” on the one hand, and “Soul-wisdom” or “Intuitive knowledge” on the other. In other words, truth is of two kinds—Relative and Absolute. Absolute Truth or Absolute Knowledge—which is Wisdom—has to be reached or realized by each one for himself. Relative knowledge is purely rational knowledge and has its own limitations. Our knowledge of things is limited by our perceptive faculties. We know an object in terms of our sense perceptions. For instance, a blind person may know a rose only by its smell. A scientist may even know its chemical composition. But the rose *as we see it* is not identical with the rose *as it is in itself*. So, Immanuel Kant said that there is something like a “thing-in-itself.” Absolute knowledge is the knowledge of the “thing-in-itself.”

When we consider “truth” in its highest sense, we realize that even the teachings of all the scriptures put together do not contain the whole truth. Mr. Crosbie says, “Truth is not a man, nor a book, nor a statement.” Scriptures are only pointers—means of reaching the truth. “As many benefits as there are in a tank stretching free on all sides, so many are there for a truth-realizing Brahmana in all the Vedic rites.” (*Gita*, II)

Regarding the Absolute knowledge or Wisdom, H.P.B. says, “Esoterically then, Job’s statement must read: ‘With the Ancient (man’s Higher Ego) is Wisdom, and in the length of days (or the number of its re-incarnations) is understanding.’ No man can learn true and final Wisdom in one birth.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 32*, p. 5)

The Wisdom that comes “from the above,” *i.e.* our higher nature, is the only true Wisdom. To gain wisdom, one needs to put into practise the spiritual teachings and so change the quality of mind to make it porous to the influx from the above. As a result, the incarnated consciousness of the aspiring soul unites with Buddhi, giving rise to Wisdom. Thus, Wisdom is something which we possess potentially, but its realisation would take us many lives. The difficulty of reaching the Absolute Truth has been expressed thus, “outside a certain highly spiritual and elevated state of mind, during which Man is at one with the UNIVERSAL MIND—he can get nought on earth but relative truth or truths, from whatsoever philosophy or religion.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*, p. 11)

*The Voice of the Silence* says, “Blend thy mind and Soul.” H.P.B. says that the acquirement of divine wisdom requires sacrifice and devotion of a man’s whole life. In a sense, it involves pushing the mind out of the orbit of animal life and tearing oneself away from the ordinary ways and ordinary life that we are used to living.

In one sense, the “Hall of Wisdom” refers to the divine Astral or Akasa, in which all the archetypal ideas are recorded. All the divine and spiritual thoughts get impressed on this plane, which can be accessed when the mind unites with Atma-Buddhi.

That which lies beyond the “Hall of Wisdom” has been described as “shoreless waters of Akshara, the indestructible fount of omniscience,” which the footnote explains to be “The region of the full Spiritual Consciousness, beyond which there is no longer danger for him who has reached it.” This has reference to *Turiya* state. In the book, *The Dream of Ravan*, we read that man is in a SPIRIT-CONDITION in the *Turiya* state, a state of high spiritual consciousness, a state beyond dreamless sleep. In this state, the individualized spirit

lives the ecstatic life, where it possesses true knowledge and the universal, eternal, ever-present intuition. It appears that *Turiya* is that state in which one's individual consciousness is merged with the *Atma* or Higher Self, being the highest state of *Samadhi*. In *Letters That Have Helped Me* (pp. 58-59), Mr. Judge writes, "In the Spirit or *Atma* all experiences of all forms of life and death are found at once, and he who is one with the *Atma* knows the whole manifested Universe at once. I have spoken of this condition before as the *Turiya* or fourth state."

**If thou would'st cross the first Hall safely, let not thy mind mistake the fires of lust that burn therein for the sunlight of life.**

The first hall is the hall of waking consciousness, or that of physical objective existence. In this hall burn "the fires of lust." Lust means an intense, often uncontrollable desire. It commonly refers to strong sexual craving. Generally, it implies an overwhelming passion for anything like power, money, food, or life itself, often with a negative connotation of being selfish and uncontrolled. Mr. Judge writes that today man shows himself to be moved by passion and desire. In some of the western countries, the glorification of it is "exhibited in the attention to display, to sensuous art, to struggle for power and place, and in all the habits and modes of living where the gratification of the senses is sometimes esteemed the highest good." (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, Indian Ed., p. 54)

The object of lust presents a possibility of supreme happiness to human minds that run after them and live for them. But these desires are either not satisfied, or they turn to dust and ashes in the mouth when satisfied. A realized ambition becomes a bore. When one gets what one desired, the thing acquired loses its charm or some other desire takes its place, and one remains dissatisfied and unhappy. The fire of lust destroys, because desire for the things of matter can only be enjoyed by the separated personality. The fire of Sunlight or Wisdom, gives life. We are asked not to mistake fires of lust for sunlight. Most of the time, we are dazzled by the glamour, which in reality is the seemingly mysterious and elusive fascination. With the



result, it does not show the thing as it really is. Things seen in fire and sunlight are not the same. Sunlight shows things more clearly.

**If thou would'st cross the second safely, stop not the fragrance of its stupefying blossoms to inhale. If freed thou would'st be from the Karmic chains, seek not for thy Guru in those Mayavic regions. The WISE ONES tarry not in the pleasure-grounds of senses. The WISE ONES heed not the sweet-tongued voices of illusion.**

The Second Hall corresponds to the astral region, and hence the caution that if one acquires lower *Iddhis* or powers, one should not get fascinated by them. They are like drug-producing flowers with stupefying fragrance that tend to take the aspirant away from the true path. In reaching the spiritual goal, our mind and heart must not be permitted to wander, “for the path is narrow and the wanderings of a day may cause us years of effort to find the road again,” says Mr. Judge. It is easy to “wander off” in by-lanes, lured by the dazzle of psychic development and psychic powers. The one who pursues psychic development without purifying the moral nature walks the broad and easy path that ultimately leads to destruction. Pursuit of psychic powers is dangerous because it leads to involvement with subtle but lower, material forces of nature (elementals), which in turn leads to accentuation of lower, personal nature. Even though one may be able to control desires of the flesh—abstaining from meat-eating or wine drinking—and might even make great intellectual progress, one has to fight a difficult battle to surmount pride, jealousy, and other desires of the mind.

For a true spiritual aspirant, the psychic powers are mere by-product of spiritual progress. After all, the ultimate aim of spiritual progress is to break the karmic chains and reach Nirvana. To become free from these chains, we are asked *not to* look for our *Guru* in the Astral regions. H.P.B. describes the “true Guru,” thus:

“The real Guru is always an Adept in the Occult Science. A man of profound knowledge, exoteric and esoteric, especially the latter; and one who has brought his carnal nature under subjection of the

WILL: who has developed in himself both the power (*Siddhi*) to control the forces of nature, and the capacity to probe her secrets by the help of the formerly latent but now active powers of his being—this is the real Guru.” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 1)

Thus, Theosophically, true Guru is a perfected being or a Mahatma. A Mahatma is someone in whom the Higher Manas is conjoined with *Atma-Buddhi*. They are men of great learning, having perfected themselves in prior periods of evolution and endowed with powers over space, time, mind and matter. They are the embodiments of the Law of Karma and hence, would do nothing to contravene the Law. Though they do help deserving individuals in their spiritual endeavours and beneficently influence the destiny of nations, it is only as much as the Karma of the nation and the individual permits. They write: “Cycles must run their rounds...and we, borne along the mighty tide, can only modify and direct some of its minor currents.”

Is it necessary to go in search of a guru? Unless our inward eyes open, it is useless to go in search of a Guru. Many false prophets and teachers have led astray people, who are glamourized by the charisma and handsome exterior of the so-called spiritual teachers. The aspirant to higher planes of being needs to undergo a specific course of training, for which the guidance of a guru is necessary. We are assured, “When the pupil is ready, the Master will appear.” A true guru who makes the spiritual rebirth possible, who brings about the inner, spiritual transformation, is not to be found in the psychic and material world, but beyond them in the Spiritual world. We must not try to reach out to Them with our minds. It is through gentle service, strong search, and humility in study and work that we will at last gain that wisdom which will enable us to *know* them.

(*To be continued*)

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WHAT would life be, if we had no courage to attempt anything?

—VINCENT VAN GOGH

## PERSONAL ACTION VERSUS STATE POLICY

EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE that one encounters is unique, and hence life cannot come with a comprehensive instruction manual. Each person has to navigate the vicissitudes of life by working out the best possible course for themselves in every situation. This is admittedly very hard, and hence people usually seek help, which is typically extended in one of the following forms.

Religious help is often offered as codes of conduct whose validity is predetermined by the claim that it was divinely revealed. Examples in this category are the Pentateuch, Manu Smriti, Sharia, etc. All these religious injunctions demand a certain conduct without offering any justification for it, other than that it was divinely ordained. Even if you admit to their idea of divinity, they do not help when their commandments come into conflict in a given situation. For example, if you had to lie to save a life, you would either have to break the commandment to not bear false witness or the commandment to not kill. Nearly all of life's salient circumstances offer choices between competing virtues. It is almost never the case that there is a fork in the road between patently obvious moral and immoral choices for any sufficiently complex situation in life. So, dogmatic religious codes of conduct cannot be taken as a true guide for our actions.

New Age self-help comes in the form of variously distorted contemplative practices from ancient traditions such as Patanjali's Yoga Sutras or Buddhist Dhyana Sutras, reinterpreted in materialistic terms. Many such New Age gurus deny or stay silent on the existence of Free-Will since they do not admit of the reality of Self—a perversion of the Buddhist idea of *Shunyata*. By denying Free-Will, they also unburden themselves of any teleological explanation, because if agency is an illusion, then purpose is obviated. So, all that remains to be solved for them is how best to experience the concatenation of causes and effects unfolding around you as life. And their answer is invariably some form of presence in the now, assuming the mental posture of a witness, mindfulness, etc. Morality

is only needed when Free-Will is admitted and can be summarily dispensed when denied. So, if you are looking for guidance on how to better direct your Free-Will to navigate the landscape of life, then you better look elsewhere.

Psychological help comes in the form of therapy wherein all your prior actions are explained away as the result of unconscious trauma or repressed carnal desires expressing themselves in perverted ways. Not only does this line of thinking absolve you of all responsibility for your current predicament but instils a victim narrative that fosters resentment. Such help is designed to make you feel better in the moment at the cost of learning from your mistakes and progressing in the long-term.

Perhaps the worst of all is the help proffered by some of the self-styled god-men who have gilded the new-age distortions with a veneer of Eastern tradition to create a business empire worth billions of dollars. They offer a quick fix for all your troubles with some simple breathing exercises, meditation practices, *kriyas*, affirmations, and of course a *quid pro quo* payment to the “guru” to appease the karmic deities.

In this bewildering maze of life choices, made worse by the above-listed traps masquerading as help, the conscientious man desperately needs Theosophy! Because only Theosophy offers the correct understanding of the occult metaphysics behind all ancient world traditions. And from this understanding of true reality as opposed to illusions mistaken for reality, one can derive ethical imperatives for oneself in every circumstance of life. Once we understand the metaphysical truths and take them as axioms, we can use the dialectic method to derive from those universals the correct solution for any particular. In this article, we will explore one such application to help resolve the moral confusion in the polarizing war of ideas in almost every democracy the world over.

At the outset, it should be noted that Theosophy has nought to do with politics, which it sees as ephemera of the day, while its focus is on the development of the inner man whose evolutionary

arc is measured over Manvantaras, not over election cycles. Even so, the zeitgeist of our times is the stark polarization of society along political boundaries, thus sequestering the thinking man into one or the other ideological tribe, a form of non-religious sectarianism. Since ideas rule the world, it behooves us to analyse the competing war of ideas to find the rock of adamant on which is seated Truth.

Politics writ large is characterized by left and right-wing ideologies whose fundamental positions can be characterized along the axis of collectivism versus individualism. Collectivist ideology advocates for the interest of the collective to override that of the individual. In its extreme form it becomes Communism/Socialism, about which H.P.B., in her article, “What are the Theosophists?” said that Theosophy is “hostile to the insane dreams of Socialism and of Communism, which it abhors—as both are but disguised conspiracies of brutal force and sluggishness against honest labour” (*The Theosophist*, October 1879). On the other hand, Individualism holds individual rights and liberties to be sacrosanct and proscribes the state’s ability to work towards egalitarian outcomes. In its extreme form, it begets unconscionable wealth concentration in the hands of the few while depriving large swathes of the population of basic needs, thus fostering social unrest and ultimately collapse.

Theosophy holds that from the stage of *thinking* Man, evolution no longer proceeds through natural impulse but rather through *self-induced and self-devised efforts*. Hence, individual liberty is a necessary condition for progress. However, it is not sufficient. For what is progress? Which way is up? What is the metric? Krishna says in multiple places in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that a progressed soul reaches his abode, his estate and becomes one with him. And his nature, as defined by the first name of the thousand names of Vishnu, is *Vishwam* or the ALL. In Upanishads as well, the nature of the first cause is denominated *Akhandam* or impartite, or WHOLE. Therefore, progress is the expansion of the idea of Self from the illusive, separative personality to the Truth of Unity in Universality. Going from the individual self to the universal SELF is moving up. The

barometer of success is the “truer realization of the Self” and “a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.” Hence, the path of progress is the voluntary adoption of ever-increasing responsibility for the collective. For this, individual liberty is necessary, as state-enforced morality, at times, degrades rather than elevates man. However, along with this liberty there needs to be concomitant education of Eternal Verities so Man understands the living reality of Universal Brotherhood and voluntarily lives for the benefit of his fellow men. Liberty, without a concomitant understanding of the metaphysical reality of Unity and its ethical imperative of responsibility, reduces man to a hedonic automaton that we find him to be in our modern individualistic times.

Another source of moral confusion in current times is the seeming conflict between the ideals of Pacifism and Righteous Aggression. The case for Pacifism is made in almost all world religions worthy of that name. Jesus says, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth’: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (*Matthew*, 5:38). In the *Voice of the Silence*, we are told that “The pupil must regain *the child-state he has lost* ere the first sound can fall upon his ear.” And in *Light on the Path*, “Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters it must have lost the power to wound.” In the Tenth and Sixteenth Chapters of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Krishna extols *Ahimsa* or non-violence, as an exalted virtue. But in the same *Gita*, Krishna enjoins Arjuna in numerous places to fight the war. This seeming contradiction is clearly explained in the light of Theosophy. As far as the individual is concerned, all forms of offence *and defence* for the sake of the personal-self are to be relinquished. If the *only* victim of a transgressive act is our personal-self, then we should not seek retribution—trust in the LAW, forgive and forget. For example, if someone insults us in public and our ego is hurt as a result, our basal instinct is to lash out in self-defence. Whereas, the only victim of such slander is our personality, defending which, we fall into a cycle

of violence and get bound by Karmic chains. In such cases, non-violence is enjoined. But when one is operating in the capacity of a leader or a representative of a group, then it becomes their duty to defend that group against unjustified attacks. Arjuna as an individual is urged to non-violence but as the head of a state, he is entreated to fight in defence of the state. In the history of the Theosophical Movement, we see that H.P.B. and W.Q.J. sustained innumerable personal attacks against which they did not defend themselves. However, when Prof. Coues levelled slanderous charges against H.P.B. in a vindictive attempt to traduce the Theosophical Movement, then W.Q.J. arose to defend H.P.B. by suing the newspaper that carried such calumnies for libel.

Lastly, the tension between the two competing virtues of Compassion and Justice arises in numerous life circumstances, leaving the more conscientious among us in considerable *Dharma Sankata* or the pangs of doubt, in choosing between two seemingly righteous but contradictory choices. In the *Voice of the Silence*, Compassion is said to be the “Law of Laws.” In the *Dhammapada*, Buddha says, “If asked, give even a little.” But compassion does not absolve us of discernment. H.P.B. says in the article “Let Every Man Prove His Own Work,” “It takes a very wise man to do good works without danger of doing incalculable harm.” So, when we are faced with life circumstances where, showing compassion to one would render injustice to another, then we truly need wisdom to act righteously. Here, the teachings in the *Key to Theosophy* under the topic of self-sacrifice become salient, wherein H.P.B. says that we can only sacrifice that which we wholly own and that which benefits us and nobody else. So, we do not have the right to deny justice to one in showing compassion to another. But if in showing compassion, the only one incurring any potential loss is ourselves, then we are obligated to be compassionate. For example, when one offers their seat to another standing in a crowded bus, the “injustice” in that circumstance is only accrued to oneself.

However, as we expand our circle of concern, we begin to see

that compassion and justice have to be balanced and we need to approximate our actions more and more to that of the Law of Karma which is both merciful and just. For example, it is the duty of a manager to let go of (remove) underperformers. If under a false sense of compassion, a manager allows an obvious underperformer to be employed in his team, then the other members of the team will have to unjustly pick up his slack. And because of the broken-window syndrome, the entire team's productivity will eventually collapse and the manager would be in dereliction of his duty. However, if the manager truly felt compassionate towards an underperformer, he could still fulfil his duty by letting the person go but use his *own* money to support the person until he finds employment. The ultimate expression of this expanding circle of concern is that of the Masters of Wisdom who have taken on concern and responsibility for all of Humanity and hence become the very embodiment of the Law of Karma. "The Mahatmas are the servants, not the arbiters of the law of Karma."

In conclusion, modern society is rife with moral confusion around three important topics, all of which have the same solution. For individualism versus collectivism, the state is enjoined to protect individual liberty while the individual is entreated to voluntarily adopt responsibility for the collective. So, an ideal society would be collectively individualistic and individually collectivistic. For pacifism versus righteous aggression, individually non-violence is a virtue but for a state and its representative, it becomes their duty to protect society. For compassion versus justice, individually we have to give up "justified" rights to progress spiritually, but collectively we need to approximate our actions to that of the Law of Karma and balance mercy with justice. All salient situations of life present competing virtues and lessons of life are only learned in the struggle to apply knowledge to navigate such vicissitudes. Thus Krishna, after giving Arjuna the whole of the knowledge of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, still said, *yathechchhasi tathâ kuru, i.e., "act as seemeth best unto thee."*



## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In a sense, on a voyage of life, we are all sailing on the ship of Theseus, a hero of Greek mythology. He was the king of Athens who rescued the sacrificial victims who were held hostage by the Minotaur, who is described as a beast with the head and tail of a bull and with the body of a man. Theseus killed the Minotaur in the maze of Labyrinth and then with the rescued hostages, he sailed aboard a ship to the isle of Delos. To honour Theseus, every year, the citizens of Athens re-enacted his voyage to Delos on his ship. As time passed, some of the planks and sails of the ship were replaced. At one point, all the parts of the ship had to be replaced. This gives rise to the philosophical question: Was the rebuilt ship still the ship of Theseus or something entirely different?

Some 1200 years later, Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher, “compounded the question by proposing that if a second ship were to be built using all the discarded parts of the original, which would be the real ship of Theseus, the older one built of new parts or the new one built of old parts? What is the quiddity, or the fundamental essence, that defines the ship of Theseus?”

Heraclitus asserts that you cannot step into the same river twice, because the second time when you step into the water it is not the same water that you first stepped into, and you yourself are also not the same person who first walked into the water. This is being used by the Greek philosopher to convey the idea that everything—human beings, rivers, clouds and Earth—is perpetually changing. Nothing is static or permanent.

We are told that out of the 300 trillion cells that make up our body, around 300 billion cells are replaced every day. In seven years, all the cells of our body will be replaced, and that would mean we will be 100 per cent different from what we are today. Likewise, the atoms that constitute our bodies are constantly being thrown out and we absorb atoms from other people and other sources. This molecular interchange shows that “everything on earth is connected

in an unending circle of life” and blurs the boundaries separating races, religions, nationalities, showing that “we are literally part of one another. All of us are fellow passengers on the ship of Theseus,” writes Jug Suraiya. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, December 8, 2025)

There is a concept called *spatio-temporal* continuity, which says that all objects change continuously as they travel through space-time. From time to time, their parts may be replaced, and their composition may change. Yet their identity remains.

The Ship of Theseus is the brilliant thought-experiment which explores, what makes you, “you”? Is it our body? Is it our mind? Is it our memories? If so, what happens when some of those memories fade?

The word “identity” is derived from the Latin *idem ficare*, meaning “to make the same as ‘I.’” Thus, to begin with, our body, feelings, or our possessions are not “I.” But as we grow, we tend to equate them or associate them with “I.” We identify ourselves with the ever-changing perishable body, with its conditions and relations, which are also ever-changing. We say, “I am happy, or I am sad,” “I am sick, or I am well.” These expressions are because of the self-identifying attachment to forms or conditions which are changing. We were likewise attached to other forms and conditions in the past, and in the future will be attached to another set of forms and conditions. But through all these conditions and forms, which are changing continually, there is that in us, the “we,” which has remained unchanged and unchanging, writes Mr. Crosbie. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 189-190)

Theosophy distinguishes between two identities, the personal and the individual. What we call our personal “I” or personality is the complex thought that “I am Mr. Smith” or “Mrs. Brown.” The feeling of “I am So-and-So” arises out of a long series of daily experiences strung together by the thread of memory. These experiences produce the sense of *Egoity* only while they last, which we call *personality*. But, there is a deeper sense of identity than the feeling, “I am Mr. or Ms. So-and-So.” It is the feeling of “I am I,” which constitutes *true*

Individuality. Self-consciousness belongs to man alone and proceeds from the higher *Manas* (Mind). It is this entity that bridges the gap between life and death.

In *The Ocean of Theosophy*, Mr. Judge points out that a continuous exchange of atoms has been going on all the time. Atoms from our body are being replaced by other atoms, and thus our body undergoes a complete alteration and renovation every seven years. At the end of our days, our body is believed to have changed at least seven times (pp. 39-40). In an answer to a question, Mr. Judge mentions that such recombination and recycling of atoms illustrate the idea of universal brotherhood. He writes: “If we have all, as Egos, used over and over again the atoms physical which all other Egos, have used, we lose all individual property in the atoms and each is common owner of all.” (*“Forum” Answers*, p. 66)

We continuously impress the atoms that we use with the lower, psychic or higher, spiritual impressions—depending upon our thoughts. When these atoms are impressed by evil thoughts and actions, they get attracted to lower kingdoms, by magnetic affinity, and go into the formation of lower animals or brutes. This is the real meaning of the doctrine of Metempsychosis (*H.P.B. Series No. 25*, pp. 33-34). It is in this sense that man is said to be reborn as an animal. Man is responsible for the evolution of the lower kingdoms, as he has to raise “the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature, nature, and dignity of conscious god-hood.”

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We are constantly seeking companionship and wish to share our grief as well as joy. In order to get away from the void that haunts us, we often get into unworthy and shameful relationships. We have the need of merging with other fragments of the universe, and they in turn are reaching out towards us. This fact implies that man, as he is now constituted, is not complete, and that there is something in him that is born for union with the spirit of the universe itself. It is interesting to bear in mind that the man who lives purely in the

outer life, who oscillates between pain and pleasure, whose victories are outer victories and whose goal is an outer goal, is the one who is terribly lonely. They are the people who lack the ability to take nourishment from within their own being. They seek social companionship, games, theatres, etc. to drown out the “noise of silence” they feel within themselves.

However, as man progresses, he becomes aware of the deeper roots of his being and realizes that the outer universe is the crystallization of some reality which cannot be apprehended by the senses. Likewise, when he has the inspiration and experiences courage in moments of distress and challenges, he realizes that these come from the source that cannot be weighed or measured. We experience most undeniably that when we set ourselves to the task of creation, our mind refuses to bring forth anything distinctive. Then suddenly comes the flash, an idea, a picture or a poem. Beauty is revealed to us. We then express the same through one or the other medium. And during the moments of creation, we are lifted into a new world.

As these experiences come more frequently, we begin to turn our minds toward the hidden side of life. We begin to seek our joy and satisfaction within. This can happen even among young people. There are some of them who prefer to be left alone for an afternoon or a day or two. They find a tremendous richness within their own mind and heart, which they know is not isolated richness, not something they enjoy all by themselves, but there is a sense of communion. They feel kinship with plants, birds, and all the living things around them. People who experience this, young or old, realize that in aloneness come the moments in which they prepare themselves for the outer life, which is to be lived with their fellow beings, at home, in the office, wherein their views, their desires, and their wills may sometimes come in conflict with those around them.

These inwardly turned individuals realize that it is during this period of peace and silence that they can draw something of the nourishment that the spirit of the universe is giving to all created things. “If we could only realize that no one is doomed to loneliness

and that loneliness comes because we have separated ourselves from the Spirit within, and that for every human being this hunger can have its satisfaction!” When we have succeeded in finding divine companionship, we will know that nothing else can take its place, writes Sister Daya. (*East and West Series*, April 2025)

It is true that sooner or later we must learn to be on our own and stop being other-possessed. But it must happen naturally and gradually. We are prepared for independence only when we have fully appreciated inter-dependence and passed through various experiences that the company of other human beings—good, bad and indifferent—has to teach us. The key to being *truly* independent is to cultivate detached attachment, and that is not at all easy. A time must come when we should not feel the need to communicate our problems and sorrows. We sort them out ourselves. “Do your crying and sighing within you. If you cannot receive the small events of life and their meanings without crying them out to all the world, think you that you are fitted to be trusted with the mysteries?” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 36*, p. 4). Mr. Crosbie draws our attention to some good maxims to remember and apply: “Never ask another to do for you what you can do for yourself.” “Know where your things are and get them for yourself when you need them.” “You are valuable only when you are helpful, not when you require help.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 121)

The mystic traditions of Islam emphasize the need to be away from the activities of life and spend periods of time in quiet contemplation. Right Loneliness is to be achieved by one who combines in himself the capacity of a voluptuary and a stoic—one who is able to enjoy all the pleasures of life to the fullest and yet is not cast down if any or all the pleasures are denied. Right Loneliness is preceded by Right Purity and Right Thought and is followed by Right Rapture. These are inner states. Right Loneliness is the last but one stage on the Path. It implies inner equipoise and absolute detachment from worldly matters when one lives *in* the world but is not *of* the world.