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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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TRADITIONS, SUPERSTITIONS, TRUTH

IS there an element of truth in traditions and superstitions? Many superstitions result from lack of knowledge of causality, others from unenlightened fears. Another word for superstition is "blind belief." Many superstitions could be based on accidental luck or misfortune. For instance, if wearing a particular dress or ornament brought good luck on a certain occasion, then there is a tendency to repeat that dress or ornament. Subsequently if the dress or the ornament continues to bring "luck" it is our faith or belief that works in making it "lucky." Hence we have a series of superstitions, such as, if a cat crosses our path, it is bad omen. It is good luck to find a four-leaf clover; and breaking of a mirror brings seven years of bad luck.

However, we must not throw away the baby with the bath water, as some of these superstitions/beliefs are based on truth. For instance, the belief that certain part of the day or the year is auspicious/inauspicious. Just as early morning atmosphere is conducive to study and meditation, so also the time between Christmas and Easter is auspicious. H.P.B. writes:

Let no one imagine that it is a mere fancy, the attaching of importance to the birth of the year. The earth passes through its definite phases and man with it; and as a day can be coloured so can a year. The astral life of the earth is young and strong between Christmas and Easter. Those who form their wishes now will have added strength to fulfil them consistently. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 28, Foreword*)

Many people avoid doing important work during a certain part of the day called *Rahu Kalam*, which is indicated as inauspicious in the Hindu Almanac.

Likewise, belief in the power of the “evil eye” is not a superstition. When people fix their thoughts in envy upon a person who suddenly gets rich, he may get adversely affected and may lose money. So also the envious glance of a person on a beautiful vase or a car or any other object or person may result in damage or injury to the same. Evil eye is the destructive power of thought. Our thoughts coalesce with elementals and become an entity. The rod gets charged when electricity is passed through it and anyone touching it would experience shock. Like the charged rod, elementals carry powerful, bad thoughts from one person to another person and cause him harm.

Often, things that people are not able to explain, they class as superstition. American investigators who failed to explain the Indian rope trick by an Indian fakir, in 1889, concluded that the fakir was the symbol of Indian benightedness, and that his childish tricks could frighten his countrymen but could not fool westerners. The British were convinced that the Indians were superstitious savages. In the article “Superstition,” H.P.B. observes:

Greatly *mistaken*, or as grossly unjust is he who affirms that...strange beliefs are limited to paganism, or that they are the direct result of the heathen religions alone. They are international; the cumulative production and necessary effect of countless generations of the arts of an unconscientious clergy of *every religion* and in every age. Adopted by the archaic priestly, hierarchies, the policy of subjecting the ignorant masses, by working on their untutored imaginations and credulous fears, with the object of getting at their purse *via* the soul, was found effectual and was universally practised by the priest upon the layman from the first dawn of history down to our modern times....SUPERSTITION is the cloaca of all dogmatic creeds that are based upon blind faith. Literally speaking, it is the sewer carrying off the putrid waters of the Chaldeo-Noachian deluge. Unstemmed it ran in a straight course, through

Paganism, Judaism and Christianity alike, catching up in its current all the garbage of human dead letter interpretations....(*The Theosophist*, December 1881)

Often, belief in the supernatural is classed as superstition. For instance, belief in Nature spirits, like elves, dwarfs, djins, etc., is universal and yet considered a superstition by so-called enlightened people. These invisible beings take objective shape under certain conditions and become visible to people.

Among the Irish, just as much as among the people of India, there is a deep-seated belief in the supernatural. In the country districts, people believe that the devil would stay in the house after it is vacated, and hence they break the windowpanes to make way for the devil to escape. The “devil” is the group of elementals impressed by the thoughts of the people who occupied the house. Hence it is advised that one must bless the house before leaving it.

Belief in the fairies is comparable to belief in the *devas* among the Hindus. Physiology is aware that *lymphatic* cells play an active part in the process of filtering of the poisons that may have been injected directly into the blood stream. The lymphatic cells separate them and these poisons appear through intestinal walls. H.P.B. observes that the Latin word “lympa” is derived from the Greek *nymphē*, “a nymph or *inferior Goddess*.” The ancient Greeks and the Latins are known to have shared in the same “superstitions” as they believed that every atom of matter in the five Elements is an emanation from an inferior God or Goddess, and these in turn are emanations from a superior deity. The *kosmic trimurti* is a scientific symbol of the material universe and its gradual evolution, and this is suggested by the etymology of the names of these deities. For instance, *Brahma* comes from the root *brih*, “to expand,” and Vishnu from the root *vis* “to pervade” or “to enter into” the universe of matter. This shows what Hindus meant by endowing every atom with mind and consciousness. “Place their Pantheon, composed of 30 crores (or 300 million) of deities within the macrocosm (the Universe), or inside the microcosm (man), and the number will not be found overrated, since they relate to the atoms, cells, and

molecules of everything that is.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 20*, pp. 20-21)

In India, people are reluctant to shake hands. This is not an idle fancy or superstition, because every person has a magnetic exhalation. A person may be in perfect physical health, but his exhalation may be harmful 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. Hence the reluctance to shake hands. Careful physicians wash their hands before leaving each patient. Just like physical disease, impure magnetism can be communicated by touch. In Russia, maidens make wreaths of green leaves and throw them into water. If the wreath sinks she will die unmarried in a short time. H.P.B. explains that impure magnetism has in it the germs of early death and such magnetism has attraction for earth at the bottom of the stream. (*Isis*, II, 610-12)

According to sociologists, traditions and social customs are the *cement* of the society. Traditions are often used by leaders of the society to keep their hold over people. Typically, we have religious traditions. *Pandits* and *purohits* expound the *shastras* and tell people to do things with a view to making money. For instance, a *pandit* in the village will advise that one can be absolved of the crime of killing a cat if he makes a cat of gold and offers it to the deity. Often profound truth is hidden beneath a meaningless tradition, such as the one mentioned in *The Light of Asia*. When Buddha was walking by the *rajagriha*, in the morning, he beheld Singala, a brahmin, who was bowing down to earth and sky and was scattering rice, red and white, in all four directions. When Buddha asked him the reason, he replied: “It is the way Great Sir!” He explained that it was the tradition followed by his ancestors to ward off evil from all directions. The Buddha said, “Scatter not rice,” but offer loving thoughts and acts in all directions.

There is some truth in the belief of evil coming from the four directions. H.P.B. explains that there are four Maharajahs or *Devas* who preside over four cardinal points. They are Regents or angels,

which rule over the cosmical forces of North, South, East and West. These beings are also connected with Karma, but they need *material agents*, such as four kinds of winds, to carry out the Karmic decree. Science admits that some of these winds have evil while others have beneficent influence on mankind. So also the Bible says that the glory of the god comes from the East while wars, epidemics and calamities come from North and West. But is it the Maharajahs who punish humanity by sending calamities? No. Man himself, acting individually and collectively, attracts every calamity. *We* produce causes by our thoughts and acts and they awaken corresponding powers in the sidereal world. And these powers are magnetically drawn to and react upon those who produced the causes. (*S.D.*, I, 122-24)

Smriti are traditions imparted orally. *Manu-Smriti* is the most important. It lays down the code of conduct for individuals, societies, families, etc. It is these traditions which prepare a person for the higher spiritual life. However, we need to distinguish between true and false traditions.

There are, then, both true and false “traditions,” and it is possible to establish philosophical criteria for distinguishing between them. H. P. Blavatsky added that the subtle work of learning how to distinguish between the two is a vital prerequisite to advanced discipleship. Some might say, however, with considerable pertinence that the most perplexing customs and conventions are those which seem “somewhere in between” the two described. That such exist there can be little doubt. Perhaps they belong to that lost heritage of Krishna—“being thus transmitted....the mighty art was lost.” Originally pure, originally having to do only with the acquirement of self-knowledge, some traditions may have become confused with the twistings and distortions which contrive to place emphasis on *external* means for the gaining of a higher spiritual state....In an intelligent society...tradition can become the “cement” of mutual assistance on the path of the Higher Self. (*Theosophy*, Vol. 41)

The tradition of paying respect to one’s elders, teachers, parents,

etc., prepares the child to revere and recognize the *guruparampara* chain. He learns to respect every teacher, right from the person who taught him his alphabet to the one who gives him spiritual birth. It is lack of this tradition in the West that makes spiritual life difficult for a Westerner. Again, we see that superstition/tradition, among the Hindus, of not shaking hands with others, is the foundation for the *sine qua non* condition in spiritual life, of not allowing one's magnetism to become impure by external influences. Thus:

A *Lanoo* (disciple) has to dread external living influence alone (magnetic emanations from living creatures). For this reason while at one with all, in his *inner nature*, he must take care to separate his outer (external) body from every foreign influence: none must drink out of, or eat in his cup but himself. He must avoid bodily contact (*i.e.*, being touched or touch) with human, as with animal beings....A disciple has to live, so to say, in his own atmosphere in order to individualize it for occult purposes. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

How and why did the tradition of *Sati* or "widow burning" take such a firm hold? It is because people *blindly* follow the traditions. The woman dying on the funeral pyre of her husband is made to understand that she will get "freedom" if she becomes a *Sati*. The rite of "widow burning" is nowhere sanctioned in the Hindu scriptures. Prof. Wilson was the first to point out that by changing "*yonim agre*" to "*yonim agne*" (womb of fire) the practice of *Sati* was introduced. According to the hymns of the *Rig Veda* and Vedic ceremonies contained in the "*Grihya Sutras*," the wife accompanies the corpse of her husband to the funeral pyre, but she is addressed with verses taken from the *Rig Veda* and ordered to leave and go back to the world of the living. (*Isis*, I, 541 and fn.) One of the ways to distinguish between good and bad or true and false traditions is to use our reason and discrimination. We have to follow the intuitive feeling from within which says, "This must be true."

Many traditions are universal. Traditions and folklore of giants is no fiction. Every nation has believed in the existence of giants.

There is a tradition among people of most nations in the world that since the beginning of humanity men have existed in a high state of civilization. H.P.B. writes:

No mythological story, no traditional event in the folk-lore of a people has ever been, at any time, pure fiction, but that every one of such narratives has an actual, historical lining to it. (*S.D.*, I, 303)

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ANALYSING OUR VICIES

From all blindness of heart, from pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy, from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, Good Lord, deliver us.

—CHRISTIAN LITANY

Look around you, my friend: see the “three poisons” raging within the heart of man—anger, greed, delusion, and the five obscurities—envy, passion, vacillation, sloth, and unbelief—ever preventing them seeing truth.

—A MASTER OF WISDOM

An inward moral death reigns throughout all. Men’s souls are dead when they are born....One died mad of pride; one phrenetic with anger; one leprous with sensuality, one had the fever of ambition; one suffered from the insatiable craving of greed; one from the malignant venom of revenge; one from the jaundice of jealousy; one from the eating cancer of envy; one from a surfeit of self-love; one from the paralysis of apathy.

—*The Dream of Ravan*

THE above quotations are thought-provoking. We must begin again to analyse these vices, watch for their effects, and so get a deeper view. Let us also look at Mr. Judge’s article, “Culture of Concentration,” where he tells us what happens to the newly-forming *permanent* astral body when we give in to some of these vices. As would-be aspirants to the spiritual life, we shall find in this article much food for thought.

“Three poisons” are mentioned in the second quotation. There is first of all anger which causes uncontrollable trembling and pulls apart or bursts into fragments the newly-forming astral body. These fragments fly back into the body and we have to begin building over again. We can experience this for ourselves, for it takes time for us to get to the steady centre of consciousness and calm the quivering body after a burst of anger. We also know that anger is explosive.

As we are told to look for the cause behind every effect, we must seek the cause of anger. The dictionary tells us that it may be prompted by a sense of wrong, and a growing resentment or indignation. So we see that anger has many causes and that there are other poisons related to it.

The opposite virtues or qualities to be cultivated include *Kshanti*-patience which will prevent us from falling prey to irritability; *Dana*-love which keeps us from hurting another; *Shila*-harmony which puts an end to disharmony in word and act. *Light on the Path* tells us that our voice must lose the power to wound. What causes the desire to wound? Delusion, based on many thoughts and sensations, on the pride of self and the greed to possess.

What is greed? In *The Dream of Ravan* it is called an insatiable craving. *Through the Gates of Gold* gives good descriptions of this craving and where it leads to. The greed to possess, to hold, to take from another, to demand more and more, works on all planes. Sensuality is one form, ambition is another, envy yet another, but all are rooted in the love of self and the feeling of insecurity. All these lead to such a disturbed condition that no progress is possible. Jealousy arises, envy takes hold of us, and we want what others have and take what does not belong to us. We centre our consciousness on possessions.

If we can find the cause of this insatiable craving of greed we can start to destroy it by practising the opposite virtue—dispassion which keeps us from desiring more and more possessions. The possessions which come to us in the natural course are lawful; those that we snatch from others or from Nature herself are unlawful, for perfect balance must reign throughout. So it is said that the “spoiler robs, to render.” Nothing that we possess is ours, for everything belongs to all. Hence the idea that we are only the trustees of whatever possessions, physical, moral or mental, we have. Karma brings us our own; selfishness makes us take more; unselfishness alone will rid us of this craving.

Looking at the offsprings of greed, we find such vices as envy, resentment, vanity, pride and fear. We fear to lose what we have,

and fear shrivels up the newly-forming permanent astral body which coagulates and contracts. Have we not here a picture of the miser?

What is delusion? It is that which we see through our defective sense-organs, sensations, preconceptions and prejudices. It leads to unbelief. It comes from slothfulness which will not let us examine and prove anything, but makes us take the attitude that we alone are correct. One who is obsessed by a sense of his own importance is like the fool who sits high up in a tower, unperceived by any but himself. He has to come down to appreciate his real position, and be ready to learn, to seek advice, to be humble. Pride makes us mad; vanity destroys the newly-forming astral because it draws to our sphere elementals which fracture it as with an explosion. This, by repercussion, changes the whole nature, and may result in insanity and excesses of one kind or another.

To get rid of our delusion, we need to control our ideas, thoughts, sensations. We certainly need *Viraga* as also *Virya* to have sufficient energy to “fight our way to the supernal Truth” out of the mire of falsehoods and delusions. The fight against delusion has to continue throughout every aspect of life. The reason for living and the inner motive behind everything must be to live to benefit others. That is the central position to be maintained. When that is the motive for living, all our vices will fade away, except perhaps one—pride. “A sense of pride would mar the work.” To avoid this, we have to make ourselves one with Nature’s Soul-Thought. Any lurking idea of separateness will disturb the balance of Nature. Today we are only conscious of our separateness from others. The very idea of our identity with others makes us feel lost. But in reality we are lost only when we are separate, for separateness implies that our puny self is pitted against great nature’s forces. To go outward and draw all into ourselves, to feel at one with Nature in all her forms, is to lose our sense of “I” while becoming the greater “I” of the Universe. We must open our doors of self to let in all creatures, even the ill and the wicked. We need strength to help the wicked if we would not fall prey to them, at the same time struggling to recognize their brotherhood with us.

INSTINCT, REASON, INTUITION

LITTLE is known to modern science of the true nature and origin of, and inter-relationship between, Instinct, Reason and Intuition. Modern psychology describes them to be epiphenomena of neurological functions. Theosophy, however, throws clear light on these three mysteries, and shows that in these are epitomized the whole science of evolution of the universe.

Instinct is a direct perception of what is right, within its own realm. Intuition is direct cognition of truth in all things. Reason is...the balance between instinct and intuition. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 263)

Instinct is manifested in all the lower kingdoms of nature also in man; but in man it is more or less obscured by reason. Reason is a faculty exhibited only by human beings by virtue of the development of mind and brain. Intuition is the highest spiritual faculty, far above both reason and instinct, capable of being developed and exhibited by man alone, and which, when fully developed, illuminates reason and makes man perfect.

Birds seasonally migrate, across the oceans and continents, to escape the cold winters of the North for warmer habitats of the South for breeding and feeding. Their navigational skill, the precision with which they navigate their annual migratory path and reach their destination, and the punctuality of their arrival and departure therefrom for their original homes at the end of the season, is a marvel on which there are only conjectures by science as explanations. Similar marvel is exhibited by salmon when they migrate hundreds of miles from the sea, through the estuaries to the rivers, and swim miles upstream to the place in the fresh waters where they had hatched out of the eggs, and lay eggs in the same place to breed their young ones in their turn. Every species of animals, from the bacteria to the whale and the elephant, exhibit unerring skill, intelligence and discrimination in self-preservation, reproduction, feeding, nesting, seeking right remedy in sickness and so on. Architectural skills of ants, their social and political

organization, show high degree of intelligence and orderly social behaviour. Bees exhibit similar skills in building the hives on geometrical patterns, and in their social organization. Some species of ants are able to foresee the coming of storms and take safety precautions. Plants show remarkable perspicacity in their behaviour and struggle for life. Even unicellular and multi-cellular micro-organisms show intelligence, free-will and discernment within the limits of their life cycles. For instance, the epithelial cells in the intestines display remarkable instinctive intelligence and discrimination in choosing the particular nutrients in right amount to be absorbed and reject the rest. Science of Genetics has unraveled the marvels of the intelligent, co-ordinated and concerted actions of DNA and RNA molecules in the building and maintenance of organisms. Every organ and cell in the body of man, animal and vegetation exhibits uncanny intelligence and skill, not only in their individual behaviour but in their collective co-ordinated action as well.

Among the people who live close to nature, as the forest dwellers and tribes, instinct is active. Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, shows that the instinct of the first early races showed them the natural remedies for ailments. Thus:

We see what indicated the way to man to find relief for all his physical ailings. It is the instinct of the early races, when cold reason had not as yet obscured man's inner vision....Its indications must never be disdained, for it is to instinct alone that we owe our first remedies. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 434)

In the recent tsunami disaster in India and South-East Asia in which thousands perished, most of the animals escaped. Elephants in forests, domestic animals and birds, sensed in advance the coming disaster and moved away to safer places, whereas man, with his superior faculty of reason, was taken unawares.

The explanation of the mystery of instinct, reason and intuition is to be found in the double evolution of Spirit and Matter, as taught in the ancient science of life. Spirit is the one Universal and Eternal source of all forces, of manifestations of all intelligence and

consciousness in the universe, and in which is inherent evolutionary impulse for self-manifestation, in accordance with the Cyclic and Karmic Law inherent in itself. Differentiating the primordial pre-cosmic Root-Substance (*Mulaprakriti*), an aspect of itself, along seven descending Cosmic planes, and reflecting itself as *Jiva* or Monad (or Soul), the Universal, Eternal Spirit (*Purusha*) which is One, evolves the universe and enters into it as many myriad kinds of life forms. Thus comes the universe into manifestation, from within without, from the Unknowable Absolute Life. The *Jivas* evolve through forms, from the lowest elementary forms progressively to higher forms by transmigration, the orderly process being regulated by the Law of Karma. Thus, there is no dead or "inorganic matter," but all is life, is conscious, and has the potentiality of omniscience and omnipotence of Spirit latent in itself. At last, the omniscience and omnipotence of the Supreme Spirit inherent in each, is brought to full self-expression and self-manifestation—or conscious godhood.

Viewed from this angle, it can be easily seen that instinct is the "instantaneous and unerring cognition of an omniscient mind," manifested in the mineral atom, the amoeba, the plant, the animal, and also in man—where *finite* reason has not overshadowed it. Instinct is the very divinity in action through the life-forms in their ceaseless progress towards higher life. It grows and develops in accordance with the law of the double evolution, spiritual and physical (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 425). "Each perfected species in the physical evolution only affords more scope to the directing intelligence to act within the improved nervous system" (*Ibid*). Instinct is the spiritual unity of the five senses, called the *sixth sense*, which the animals exhibit.

That instinct is the facility acquired by life-forms through repeated experiences gained through transmigrations, in their respective kingdoms, is easily seen in such voluntary actions as walking, eating, using of limbs for various activities, etc., which we first learnt to do with deliberate effort, and then, habitually through practice. Each creature, as each cell in it, acts with unerring

regularity and precision by the force of habit developed through repeated experiences from an immense past. A baby throwing out its arms for self-protection, the young ones sucking their mothers as soon as born, the duckling and the turtle taking to water as soon as hatching out of the egg, are all the result of *acquired intelligence* or soul-memory.

Reason is the faculty of the lower mind and its instrument, the physical brain. Modern science considers mind to be the product of brain activity. Theosophy shows this to be a fallacy. Mind or *Manas* is a spiritual principle of self-reflective consciousness (*Ego*), which proceeds from the World-Soul or *Mahat* in Sanskrit. During incarnation, only its lower aspect enters into relationship with the brain and body, in accordance with its Karma, for experience and progress, while the higher divine aspect overbroods, the mortal. It is this mystery of dual nature of mind that contains the key to all the psychological mysteries that science cannot solve and for which it offers only untenable materialistic speculations.

Reason is always tinged with desire-*kama*, and is limited to the physical senses. It is, therefore, liable to err. This is so always, unless man learns the higher science of mastering the involuntary actions of the senses and organs and hinders at will the modifications of the brain-mind, all of which are his instruments. Man has to free himself entirely from *Kama* and merge his purified consciousness with the Higher Divine Ego, and attain to faultless perception of truth. Otherwise, reason proceeding from wrong premises, deluded by the hundred chords of desire, obscuring both instinct and intuition, leads man to sorrow and bewilderment.

Intuition is the direct cognition of truth in all things. It is the highest spiritual faculty in man but lies dormant as long as man remains in bondage to the senses and the mind. True Self of man is the Higher *Manas* in union with *Buddhi* and *Atma*. When *Manas* escapes from the *Kama-Manasic* trappings and takes a firm inner stand in the Divine Self and pays heed to its promptings, it is progressively purified and merges with *Atma-Buddhi*, and acquires omniscience of Spirit. This is Intuition by which truth in everything

and truth in the abstract, are directly cognized. It soars far above reason as the vision of the highflying eagle soars far above that of the ant crawling on earth.

How did the three, Instinct-Reason-Intuition, come to be?

There was one race of purely physical creatures, another purely spiritual....The union of these two races produced a third—the Adamite race. Sharing the natures of both its parents, it is equally adapted to an existence in the material and spiritual worlds. Allied to the physical half of man's nature is reason, which enables him to maintain his supremacy over the lower animals, and to subjugate nature to his uses. Allied to his spiritual part is his *conscience*, which will serve as his unerring guide through the besetments of the senses; for *conscience* is that instantaneous perception between right and wrong, which can only be exercised by the spirit, which, being a portion of the Divine Wisdom and Purity, is absolutely pure and wise. Its promptings are independent of reason, and it can only manifest itself clearly, when unhampered by the baser attractions of our dual nature. (*Isis*, I, 305)

Hence human knowledge has three ascending steps, according to Plotinus, the disciple of the great Ammonius Saccas: “opinion, science, and *illumination*.” He explains it by saying that “the means or instrument of opinion is sense, or perception; of science, dialectics; of illumination, *intuition* (or divine instinct). To the last, *reason is subordinate*; it is absolute knowledge founded on the identification of the mind with the object known” (*Ibid.*, I, 434). Hence, instinct, reason and intuition are the three stages of evolution of the *Jivas*, beginning as sparks of the Supreme and culminating, in its arduous path of physical, intellectual and moral evolution, into self-analyzing consciousness in full possession of *Paramartha*—Divinity.

How can we develop Intuition? We can develop it by exercising the spiritual faculty latent in us—rousing it from dormancy into activity. It can only be accomplished by, first, acquiring *right knowledge*, and then by *right reasoning* and *right living*. Mr. Judge writes:

The power to know does not come from book-study, nor from mere philosophy, but mostly from the actual practice of altruism in deed, word and thought; for that practice purifies the covers of the soul and permits that light [of Spirit] to shine down into the brain-mind. As the brain-mind is the receiver in the waking state, it has to be purified from sense-perception, and the truest way to do this is by combining philosophy with the highest outward and inward virtue. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 190)

ONE man's justice is another's injustice; one man's beauty, another's ugliness; one man's wisdom, another's folly; as one beholds the same objects from a higher point. One man thinks justice consists in paying debts, and has no measure in his abhorrence of another who is very remiss in this duty, and makes the creditor wait tediously. But that second man has his own way of looking at things; asks himself which debt must I pay first, the debt to the rich or the debt to the poor? the debt of money, or the debt of thought to mankind, of genius to nature? For you, O broker! there is no other principle but arithmetic. For me, commerce is of trivial import; love, faith, truth of character, the aspiration of man, these are sacred; nor can I detach one duty, like you, from all other duties, and concentrate my forces mechanically on the payment of moneys. Let me live onward; you shall find that, though slower, the progress of my character will liquidate all these debts without injustice to higher claims. If a man should dedicate himself to the payment of notes, would not this be injustice? Does he owe no debt but money? And are all claims on him to be postponed to a landlord's or a banker's?

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

TIRUKKURAL—THIRUVALLUVAR'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

II

IT is a tribute to the universality of the spirit of the *Kural* that at various times different religions and sects—Jainism, Buddhism, Vaishnavism, Saivism—have claimed the author as their own. Some Christian scholars, who have studied and translated the *Kural*, find in it the echo of the “Sermon on the Mount.” In the *Kural* there are echoes of the finest principles of various religions. “What is revealed in the Vedas is brought out clearly in the *Kural*,” said the great poet Arisilkizhar at the Madurai *Sangham*—the Taxila of the South—when the book was submitted by the writer for examination. Kalladar praised it as “the only book which harmonizes with all the religions of the world without condemning any of them.” Several poets in the course of the last centuries have taken him as their beacon light. Father Beschi, who came to South India in the early 18th century, learnt from the *Kural* and recommended it to Europeans. “Nothing in the whole compass of human language,” it has been claimed, “can equal the force and wisdom of the sententious distichs of the *Kural*.” The book has been translated into Latin, German, English, Hindi and Marathi. We can only conclude that the book is a synthesis and that when he wrote it, Valluvar's mind and vision had outgrown geographical and racial boundaries and had risen above all distinctions.

Kural is the poet's great and only work, which consists of 133 chapters, each containing 10 couplets; and thus numbers 1330 couplets or 2660 lines. *Kural* means “anything short” and this is the shortest species of stanza in the Tamil language. Though short, in value it far outweighs the whole of the remaining Tamil literature.

The *Kural* is in three parts, dealing with the threefold objects of life, namely, *Arram*, *Porul*, *Inbam*, corresponding, respectively, to *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, i.e., Virtue, Wealth and Happiness. The fourth object of life, namely, *Moksha* or final release, comes naturally as the result of perfection in the first three. The plan of the book reflects Truth in all its aspects and proportions; and the

division into chapters and sections is based on a perfect logical sequence. Valluvar's approach to moral doctrine is marked by a very thorough knowledge of human psychology and a desire to help imperfect men in their struggle against evil by giving them practical hints. Throughout we can see how the poet brings everything down to the level of practicality without losing hold of the ideal.

The *First Book* consists of 38 chapters; chapters 5 to 24 deal with the "Householder's duties" and chapters 25 to 38 deal with "Asceticism" (*Illaram* and *Turavaram* in Tamil).

The *Second Book* consists of 70 chapters dealing with policy in worldly affairs, including *statecraft*, full of interest for the scholars, historians and politicians of our day. The principles of conduct contained in these are not meant only for princes and those around them but for all engaged in secular affairs.

The *Third Book* deals with *Kama* or Love. This section is not properly understood by many, but mistaken as sexual love. What is *Kama* in its pure and original meaning? Says H.P.B. in *The Theosophical Glossary* under *Kamadeva*:

Kama is the first conscious, *all embracing desire* for universal good, love, and for all that lives and feels, needs help and kindness, the first feeling of infinite tender compassion and mercy that arose in the consciousness of the creative ONE FORCE, as soon as it came into life and being as a ray from the ABSOLUTE. 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*. There is no allusion to *sexual* love in the conception. *Kama* is pre-eminently the divine desire of creating happiness and love; and it is only ages later, as mankind began to materialize by anthropomorphization its grandest ideals into cut and dried dogmas, that *Kama* became the power that gratifies desire on the animal plane.

This section of the *Kural* is an allegory exhibiting the play (*lila*) of the Divine Spirit with the embodied Soul, a theme not uncommon

in Indian literature.

The chapters of the *Kural* dealing with the "*Grihastha Ashrama*" must be studied in the light of *Divine Wisdom*—THEOSOPHIA.

The basis and the foundation on which the whole philosophy of Theosophy rests is the "three fundamental propositions of *The Secret Doctrine*," which deal with GOD-LAW-BEING. Valluvar brings out these great Ideas in his *Kural*.

God or Deity is the source of all things; It is beginningless and endless, eternal and omnipresent; It is the origin of all; all things proceed from It. The First chapter of the *Kural* is headed "In Praise of God" and the very first verse runs thus: "'A' is the origin of all letters; likewise God is the origin of this world." Doesn't Shri Krishna say in enumerating his Divine *Vibhutis* (Universal Divine Perfections): "Among letters I am the vowel 'A'?" "A" is the first of all the letters by eminence and affinity. Valluvar points out that the idea of the Supreme is the first impression the world produces on the reflecting mind. H.P.B. writes of the letter "A":

It is a letter of great mystic power and "magic virtue" with those who have adopted it, and with whom its numerical value is *one*. It is the *Aleph* of the Hebrews, symbolized by the Ox or Bull; the *Alpha* of the Greeks, the one and the first; the *Az* of the Slavonians, signifying the pronoun "I" (referring to the "I am that I am"). (*Glossary*)

Also, in the following verse we get a clue to Valluvar's conception of God. He says: "Of what avail is learning, if due reverence is not paid to Him who is Immaculate Wisdom?" Describing the state of those who have reached the goal of evolution he says: "Those who find refuge at the Great feet (of Him) who lives in the lotus of the heart (of the devotee) live eternally in heaven." Says *The Voice of the Silence*:

Of teachers there are many; the MASTER-SOUL is one, Alaya, the Universal Soul. Live in that MASTER as ITS ray in thee. Live in thy fellows as they live in IT....The "MASTER-SOUL" is *Alaya*, the Universal Soul or *Atma*, each man having a ray of it in him and being supposed to be able to identify himself with and to

merge himself into it. (p. 54 and fn.)

In the subsequent verses the poet points out that good and evil spring from the darkness of the mind and that those who still the five senses and walk in Truth will ever live in happiness.

In *The Voice of the Silence* we are asked to mistrust the senses; to brush away the dust of our illusions by the gentle breezes of Soul-Wisdom and to look inward.

The *Gita* says: “The man who restraineth the senses and organs and hath faith obtaineth spiritual knowledge, and having obtained it he soon reacheth supreme tranquility.” (Chapter IV)

In the seventh verse Valluvar describes God as the peerless, whom none resembles—the Eternal Adorable One, whom no symbol can express and no form confine—“Be-ness” in terms of the First Fundamental Proposition of *The Secret Doctrine*. He calls God a sea of virtue or of righteousness; the word he uses is “*arravayhiantanan*”—“virtue’s sea, the fair and loving one.” Only those who have taken refuge in the Lord who is the sea of righteousness can safely complete the whole round of existence. “Poor wanderers of a stormy day—from wave to wave we’re driven,” wrote the poet Moore.

In the next verse he describes God as “Lord of eight attributes,” and says that the head that does not bow down and worship in spirit and in truth “the Lord of eight attributes” is like the palsied limbs. What are the eight attributes that the poet had in mind, it is difficult to say. One of the commentators enumerates thus: Essential purity; Intuitive wisdom; Infinite intelligence; Essential freedom; Infinite grace; Omnipotence; and Infinite Love. As this is the ninth verse, we may conclude that the poet sums up the qualities referred to in the previous verses. If that be correct, then the eight attributes could well be: Eternity; Wisdom; Omnipresence; Happiness; Freedom from the pairs of opposites; Purity, Incomparability and Love.

He closes the first chapter by stating that only those who cling to the feet of God can cross the widespread ocean of mortal birth and be absorbed into the Divine Essence. This is the doctrine of

metempsychosis and in the language of *The Secret Doctrine*: “The obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul...through the Cycle of Incarnation or ‘Necessity’ in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term.”

The language in which the poet expresses the mental attitude of the true worshipper is worthy of our consideration. In verses 2 to 10, the same idea is expressed—that of drawing near to or worshipping at the feet of God, the idea being that of profoundest, most loving and clinging humility. We see in Valluvar a noble, truth loving and devout man. The eclectic poet has selected the choicest epithets existing in the language.

(*To be continued*)

YOUR love and compassion towards your friends is in many cases actually attachment. This feeling is not based on the realization that all beings have an equal right to be happy and to overcome suffering. Instead, it is based on the idea that something is “mine,” “my friend” or something good for “me.” That is attachment. Thus, when that person’s attitude towards you changes, your feeling of closeness immediately disappears. With the other way, you develop some kind of concern irrespective of the other person’s attitude to you, simply because that person is a fellow human being and has every right to overcome suffering. Whether that person remains neutral to you or even becomes your enemy, your concern should remain because of his or her right. That is the main difference. Genuine compassion is much healthier; it is unbiased and it is based on reason. By contrast, attachment is narrow-minded and biased.

All sentient beings should be looked on as equal. On that basis, you can gradually develop genuine compassion for all of them. It must be said that genuine compassion is not like pity or a feeling that others are somehow lower than yourself. Rather, with genuine compassion you view others as more important than yourself.

—HIS HIGHNESS THE DALAI LAMA

WORD—EXPRESSED THOUGHT

THE *Secret Doctrine* (II, 42) tells us that “*Evolution*, not *creation*, by means of WORDS is recognized in the philosophies of the East, even in their exoteric records.”

We are familiar with the idea that there is no *creation*, and that all is evolution, but perhaps we fail to grasp the implication that evolution is by means of WORDS. That is to say, as it started by the WORD, so is it continued by means of WORDS.

The question arises, how can words cause the continuous process which is evolution?

If we look up the meaning of “word” in a dictionary, we find that it is defined as a “unit of spoken or written language,” and “language” is “any method of expressing thoughts.” A word is, therefore, a means of expressing thought.

Perhaps we can see why all manifestation began with the WORD, *i.e.*, by thought expressed. “Desire first arose in IT,” we learn, and awakened to activity the Thought in the Universal Mind. This Thought was expressed in the WORD. The result was Sound, the Sound being of the nature of that Thought, itself the result of past Manvantaras. This Sound vibrates throughout infinitude, and is the cause of evolution.

Again, *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 93) speaks of “the mystery of Sound and Speech, as an effect and corollary of the cause—Divine Thought.” And H.P.B. quotes P. Christian who, she says, expressed “an esoteric teaching accepted by all the Eastern Schools of Occultism” when he wrote:

To pronounce a word is to evoke a thought, and make it present: the magnetic potency of the human speech is the commencement of every manifestation in the Occult World. To utter a Name is not only to define a Being (an Entity), but to place it under and condemn it through the emission of the Word (Verbum), to the influence of one or more Occult potencies. Things are, for every one of us, that which it (the Word) makes them while naming them. The Word (Verbum) or the speech of every man is, quite unconsciously to himself, a BLESSING or a

CURSE; this is why our present ignorance about the properties or attributes of the IDEA as well as about the attributes and properties of MATTER, is often fatal to us....

Sound is the sensation produced through the organs of hearing, a vibratory disturbance in the atmosphere, a tone or note produced by regular vibrations. We have the idea that every unit in manifestation vibrates in response to the WORD, for that WORD does not cease at the dawn of manifestation; it is inherent in the whole. Its continuation is through the units of manifestation, for all things emit a sound. As human beings use language, *i.e.*, words, they are also the agents carrying out the work of evolution by this means. It is for this reason that we are warned to be careful of our words.

...*the spoken word has a potency unknown to, unsuspected and disbelieved in*, by the modern “sages.”...Sound and rhythm are closely related to the four Elements of the Ancients; and such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken corresponding powers, union with which produces good or bad results, as the case may be. (*S.D.*, I, 307)

By trying to realize the connection between the WORD, our own words and the sound pertaining to all parts of manifestation, we shall be helped once again to get an idea of the UNITY of and through all, including the highest and the lowest. Also to see that from one point of view all is ruled by thought. The devotion and reverence due to the Highest has to be felt also for the lowest atom.

Draw a deep line in your thought between that ever-incognizable essence, and the, as invisible, yet comprehensible Presence (*Mulaprakriti*), or Schekinah, from *beyond and through which* vibrates the sound of the *Verbum*, and from which evolve the numberless hierarchies of intelligent *Egos*, of conscious as of semi-conscious, *perceptive* and *apperceptive* Beings, whose essence is spiritual Force, whose Substance is the Elements and whose bodies (when needed) are the *atoms*....Every physical point is but the phenomenal expression of the noumenal, metaphysical point. (*S.D.*, I, 629-30)

This brings home to us the potency of the Word, which is

expressed thought. We are the expression of our thought, but it is expressed through language, whether of articulate sounds, of the emotions, or of spiritual symbols and emblems. H.P.B. speaks of “Abstract Thought and concrete Voice” (*S.D.*, I, 99 fn.), and of “the mystery of Sound and Speech” (*S.D.*, I, 93). Thought, Voice, Sound.

Quoting Pymander, *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 488) says:

“THOUGHT, the divine, which is LIGHT and LIFE...produced through its WORD, or first aspect,” the *other, operating* THOUGHT.

This “*operating* THOUGHT” is explained to us (II, 490) in a way which, if applied, will be very useful to us in our daily life:

There was *no* “EVIL thought” that originated the opposing Power, but simply THOUGHT *per se*; something which, being cogitative, and containing design and purpose, is therefore finite, and must thus find itself naturally in opposition to pure quiescence, as the natural state of absolute Spirituality and Perfection. It was simply the law of Evolution that asserted itself; the progress of mental unfolding; differentiated from spirit, involved and entangled already with matter, into which it is irresistibly drawn.

Applying this, we see that all our thoughts should be cogitative, having design and purpose. That is to say, we must cogitate, think over, meditate or ponder; we must design or plan what we want to do; the purpose to be kept in mind is rooted in the desire-sponsored thought. Reflected in our own thought process is that which took place in the beginning:

...absolute wisdom mirrors itself in its Ideation; which, by a transcendental process, superior to and incomprehensible by human consciousness, results in Cosmic Energy (*Fohat*). (I, 328)

Further,

The *Logos* is the mirror reflecting DIVINE MIND, and the Universe is the mirror of the Logos, though the latter is the *esse* of that Universe. As the *Logos* reflects *all* in the Universe

of Pleroma, so man reflects in himself all that he sees and finds in *his* Universe, the Earth. (II, 25)

Any desire, therefore, must be mirrored in thought before energy can be born. The combination of these, working in matter on all planes—for no thought or desire can be formulated without a basis of matter—produces a sound which results in the vibrations thrilling through matter, bringing construction or destruction.

It is good to remember that conscious thought should precede our words. If we regret our words we must realize that it is our conscious thought which has become sub-conscious and has produced those words. Our regret for them must make us search for the underlying thought so that we can change it.

Secondly, we must begin to value more the tone of our voice, for sounds are destructive as well as constructive. It is interesting to note the kind of music that is so popular today—jarring, coarse, disturbing to the inner thought as to the outer atmosphere—for it gives us knowledge of the kind of thought that is at the base of our present civilization. Our own harsh sounds, angry words, hoarse-laughter, loud voices, all should show us that we can be destructive agents. The great sounds of Nature which vibrate through the apparent silence cannot be heard when our own sounds are loud and harsh. When silence seems to drive us mad, we need to stop and think. One of the destructive aspects of present-day life is noise, *e.g.*, that of machines. Periods of silence are essential, and therefore we find that quiet reflection is recognized today to be essential to mental health.

Thirdly, *what* we speak, the words used, are important. Therefore the *Gita* recommends the repetition of sacred texts. If study purifies the brain-mind, words of Truth and Wisdom purify our whole character and our surroundings.

Finally, let us try to remember that whatever we say is but the expression of the Divine Thought through the instrumentality of our sevenfold nature. Our abstract thought becomes concrete through our words and their sound.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

Question: In case of accidents and suicides, the person dies before his time. He remains in *Kamaloka* (astral region) as an entity (with all six principles) *minus* the physical body. Is it wrong to try communicating with such beings by their loved ones? If so, why?

Answer: Theosophy advises against communication with the dead. It is almost never the real person whom we contact but the “shells,” which comprise the lower mind, passions and desires, and astral body. What goes under the name of “spiritualism” today, has been well known for centuries in India, as “*bhuta* worship,” *i.e.*, an attempt to communicate with the devil or astral remnants of the deceased person. The “shells” are like the clothes of the man and not the real spirit. The astral substance absorbs, sponge-like, all scenes, pictures and impressions of all thoughts, retains the same, and throws them off whenever the conditions permit. It works like a gramophone record. The shell possesses automatic memory and consciousness and can become visible under certain conditions. It need not be the shell of the dear departed one, but the imagination of the sitters and the medium is very potent during the *séance*, which gives shape and form to the shell.

In case of *natural death*, the higher triad (*Atma-Buddhi-Manas*) or the spiritual man, almost immediately escapes to *Devachan* or *Swarga*. Normally, the communication takes place with the shells. There are only two exceptions, where the communication is with the “spirit” of the dead: (1) A few minutes after or shortly before the physical death; *or* (2) sometimes a very pure sensitive/medium is able to hold communication with the Ego—the spiritual entity—in *Devachan*.

In case of unnatural deaths, for instance, suicides, accidents, violent deaths, what remains in the earth’s atmosphere is not the “shell” but “spirit,” because it is the entity made up of all the principles, *minus* the physical body. This entity remains in the earth’s atmosphere till the normal life term is over. Thus, suicides and victims of accidents, sometimes though *rarely*, can communicate with us through mediums, and that which communicates is the real entity of the once living man. During this period of waiting, before going to *Devachan*, *the less they are disturbed the better it is for them*. Every attempt to communicate with the dead drags them back into the world of the living and tempts them to assuage their thirst for life. Those who met with accidental death, but were good and pure during life, are not likely to get disturbed, as they remain outside the regions of this earth-life and its attractions. Such entities remain in a dreamless sleep or plunged in a slumber full of golden visions. Though normally such shells are not drawn to the *séance* rooms, the *possibility* is always there. Tired of waiting and thirsting for life, amusements, and vanity, they may be drawn to the *séance* room—like an idle young man, tempted to visit the pub—and may come out untainted.

In case of the suicides, although the lower principles are not wholly *cut off* from the higher principles (sixth and seventh), they are, nevertheless, separated from their higher principles by a gulf. The higher principles remain passive and negative in case of suicides, whereas in the case of accidental deaths the higher and the lower principles actually attract each other.

However, such communications are disastrous for both the departed entity as well as those on earth. It is said that further disaster may overtake the shells of suicides and victims of accidental death when their Karma is such that they are attracted to mediums. Assisted by the medium, they develop a fierce thirst for life, which in turn produces a new set of *skandhas*—tendencies and passions far worse than those belonging to the body they last lost at death. When they thus live an artificial life, they *overload their Karma* and in case of the suicides it is said that they lose

their *monad* forever.

At the séance rooms, much vampirizing goes on. During spirit materializations, the astral form is made of the astral matter sucked out of the sitters who may be present. Also, a temporary, dense and objective form is made by drawing the loose physical atoms from the bodies of those present (*W.Q.J. Series No. 21*, p. 37). The séance room atmosphere is described as diffused with moral poison which affects the minds of all those who are present.

There is a solace in the fact that every night we communicate with our dear departed ones, in deep sleep state, but we are not always able to bring back the memory. "There is hardly a human being whose Ego does not hold free intercourse, during the sleep of his body, with those whom it loved and lost," writes H.P.B. Many a time we fall asleep full of anguish but rise refreshed in the morning, full of conviction that the loved one still lives, although in another world. Due to materiality and non-receptivity of the physical brain, we are able to bring back only dim, dream-like remembrance of such experiences.

Question: Are the *Yugas* fixed in their length and sequence? Can they be changed by the actions of human beings?

Answer: The Sanskrit equivalent of "cycle" are *Kalpa*, *Yuga* and *Manvantara*, of which *Yuga* is the nearest, as it is of lesser duration than the others. *The Bhagavad-Gita* refers to Brahma's Day and Night. At the approach of Brahma's Day all manifested objects come forth from the non-developed principle and at the approach of Brahma's night they are absorbed in the original principle. This refers to the great cycle, which includes all cycles of every kind. What determines different cycles? It is said that at the first moment of the solidification of our earth, "the mass of matter involved attained a certain and definite rate of vibration, which will hold through all variations in any part of it until its hour for dissolution comes." We are also told that "cycles are the clock of Karma." Cycles are not different from Law and Karma, but only the way of marking the time of cause and effect, of action

and reaction. Karma is like the mainspring that makes all the wheels go round. There are many little and big wheels inside the clock. Cycles are like the hands that point the hour on the face, as they travel round it. Thus, we may say that the sequence and the length of the *Yugas* are determined by the Karma of the people experiencing them. The four *yugas* are: *Krita* or *Satya* (golden); *Treta* (silver); *Dvapara* (Bronze); and *Kali* (Iron). *Kali Yuga* is 432,000 years in length, according to old Indian calculation, and its first five thousand years have come to an end. However, the course of evolution for every race is divided into four *yugas*, in its own way. These *yugas* do not affect the entire mankind at one and the same time. In *The Secret Doctrine*, we are told that the fourth subrace was in *Kali Yuga* when destroyed. Each race, as well as subrace, goes through all the four *yugas* from the Golden to the Black. Thus, at one and the same time races may be in one of the four *yugas*. Some might be in the Golden Age and others in the Black. *Kali Yuga* is marked by darkness—darkness of ignorance. Mr. Judge observes that there is great thirst for riches and material betterment, while the spiritual life is ignored. If spiritual light were prevalent, the rich and the poor would still be there, but the poor would know how to accept their lot and the rich would find out ways and means to improve the conditions of the poor.

Goethe said that the Golden Age is passed and only the good have the power to bring it back. We may not be able to bring back the Golden Age for the entire race, but we can do so for ourselves. Mr. Judge describes the difficulty of overcoming the influence of the age, thus:

It takes a very strong soul to hold back the age's heavy hand, and it is all the more difficult because that influence, being a part of the student's larger life, is not so well understood by him. It operates in the same way as the structural defect in a vessel. All the inner as well as the outer fibre of the man is the result of the long centuries of earthly lives lived here by his ancestors. These sow seeds of thought and physical tendencies in a way that you cannot comprehend. All those tendencies affect him. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 131)

The astral light, which keeps the record of the thoughts, feelings and actions of the ages past, acts as a hypnotizing agent so that we find ourselves acting blindly under the suggestion cast upon us by these past impressions. However, we are told that we cannot do much *against Kali Yuga*, but we can do much *in* it, as *Kali Yuga* is the shortest of the four Yugas with the rate of vibrations (cause and effect) being four times faster than in other *yugas*. Thus:

There is one thing peculiar to the present *Kali Yuga* that may be used by the Student. All causes now bring about their effects much more rapidly than in any other or better age. A sincere lover of the race can accomplish more in three incarnations under *Kali-Yuga's* reign than he could in a much greater number in any other age. Thus by bearing all the manifold troubles of this Age and steadily triumphing, the object of his efforts will be more quickly realized, for, while the obstacles seem great, the powers to be invoked can be reached more quickly....

As each student *lives* a better life and by his example imprints upon the astral light the picture of a higher aspiration acted in the world, he *thus aids souls of advanced development to descend from other spheres*. (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 132 and 134)

Our knowledge will not pass away from the sight of man. It is the “gift of the Gods” and the most precious relic of all. The keepers of the sacred Light did not safely cross so many ages but to find themselves wrecked on the rocks of modern skepticism. Our pilots are too experienced sailors to allow us to fear any such disaster. We will always find volunteers to replace the tired sentries, and the world, bad as it is in its present state of transitory period, can yet furnish us with a few men now and then.

—MAHATMA K.H.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In India, traditions have played a vital role in bringing about conservation of natural resources and in keeping alive in the minds of the people reverence for nature. “Vedic ecology believes the Earth is not inanimate but a force of consciousness that helps all creatures evolve....Bhoomi pooja [earth-worship] before laying the foundation of a building is performed to ask Mother Earth’s forgiveness for disturbing her,” writes Sangeeta Venkatesh (*Life Positive*, May 2005). All creatures draw their sustenance from Mother Earth. Venkatesh writes:

It has taken millions of years for the Earth to evolve into her present state. She has perfected the web of life during this time. This web of life exists not as a haphazard assembly of competing species but as an interwoven and interdependent, mutually supporting tapestry of life. Thus, to pull one string would mean affecting the whole web; pulling at a dozen strings simultaneously would upset the overall ecological balance. Yet, Mother Earth remains tenacious....

The *Purushasookta* states that humans, gods and nature were integral parts of one “organic whole.”

For centuries, ancients in India have considered forest resources as precious, and they conserved and protected them through the tradition of sacred groves—what the ecologists describe as “social fencing.” Sacred groves were “tracts of virgin forest ranging from a few trees to dense forests spanning several hundred acres,” which the tribes and communities dedicated to and considered to be the residence of their local deities. Yet another tradition seeks to give protection to trees of the genus *Ficus*, prominent among them being *Ficus religiosa* or the *Ashvattha* tree, mentioned in the *Gita*. Women in India created art in the form of *rangoli* [designs] with paddy, near their doors, so that birds and ants could feed on them. Tribal traditions in India encourage mixing of harvest seeds amongst families, which affirms that biodiversity belongs to everyone. Today, we have forgotten these valuable traditions. Venkatesh

writes:

As humans our view of the environment has turned completely anthropocentric. We assume that it is our divine right to milk its resources to fill our needs and decide upon the fate of a piece of land and the species it supports. Hence, it is not surprising that the quality of life for all species is deteriorating in direct correlation to the degree with which we exploit our natural resources.

The need of the hour is to approach the preservation of the planet spiritually. Spiritual ecology is an insightful and empowering answer to the alienation and destruction wreaked by a worldview that sees humans as separate from the whole.

“Earth is an entity and not a mere lump of gross matter,” writes Mr. Judge. Mr. Crosbie explains: “There is no such thing as gross matter existing of itself. All forms of matter are the productions of different degrees of intelligence. The earth is an entity because it is a *combination* of many degrees of intelligence in their evolved forms.” (*Answers to Questions on The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 51)

Traditions, though some of them appear meaningless, preserve historical facts and spiritual truths. Mr. Judge observes that people are spurred by the personal, selfish idea of each one becoming better, greater, richer than his neighbour, losing sight of Shri Krishna’s advice in the *Gita*, which speaks of interdependence among all the creatures on this earth. The “wheel of sacrifice and brotherly love,” set in motion by Krishna, must be kept going. It refers to the “principle of reciprocity.” We are advised to nourish the Gods by sacrifices, so that “the Gods may nourish you; thus mutually nourishing ye shall obtain the highest felicity” (*Gita*, III). Man is responsible for the evolution of the lower kingdoms. He has to raise every particle of matter to the nature, stature and dignity of self-conscious godhood.

Berkeley physicist Charles Townes, a Nobel laureate and also

the winner of the John Templeton Prize for Progress toward Research about spiritual realities says: “Advancing our understanding of spirituality is more important...” Faith need not be associated only with religion and spirituality. He believes that a scientist would flounder without faith, which he needs to start the work and then to carry it on. In his opinion science and religion should not be viewed as opposed to each other. He has deep faith that science and religion will gradually converge in the future, writes Philip Clayton (*The Economic Times*, April 25, 2005). Science is concerned with finding out how the universe works and what it is made of, which leads to understanding the meaning and purpose of the universe—something religion is attempting to understand. “Thus, science sheds more light on spirituality,” observes Townes.

Only *true* science can shed more light on spirituality. Science—in the true sense of the word—must cover all forms of knowledge. “Science does not therefore deal only with matter, no, not even with its subtlest and obscurest forms. Such an idea is born merely of the idle spirit of the age” (*Light on the Path*, p. 32). Modern science restricts itself to acquiring knowledge by experiment. “The field of scientific investigation is bounded by physical nature on every side,” observes H.P.B. Not only is there a need for scientific religion and religious science, but there is a need for the *synthesis* of science, religion and philosophy. Modern science deals only with phenomenal nature, not taking into account the *noumena*. For real synthesis, knowledge and power must go hand in hand with beneficence to man.

The custodians of the higher knowledge are equally by both motive and development almoners of the divine....The discoveries of the age are already whole centuries in advance of its ethical culture, and the knowledge that should place still further power in the hands of a few individuals whose ethical code is below, rather than above that of the ignorant, toiling, suffering masses, could only minister to anarchy and increase oppression....If consensus of religion, philosophy and science is possible, and if it has ever been reached in human thought, that must long since have passed the boundaries of all creeds

and ceased to dogmatize....No proposition stands apart or can be taken separately without limiting and often distorting its meaning. Every proposition has to be considered subservient to the synthetic whole....The time must presently come when the really advanced thinkers of the age will be compelled to lay their indifference, and their scorn and conceit, and follow the lines of philosophical investigation laid down in the *Secret Doctrine*. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 3*, pp. 12, 17-18 and 25)

As for faith, *Light on the Path* says:

The sceptical laugh at faith and pride themselves on its absence from their own minds. The truth is that faith is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. For it is the covenant or engagement between man's divine part and his lesser self....The use of this engine is quite necessary in order to obtain intuitive knowledge; for unless a man believes such knowledge exists within himself how can he claim and use it? (pp. 49-50)

“We search for happiness in eager anticipation and joyful memories, but we are better off paying attention to each moment as it passes,” writes Carlin Flora (*Psychology Today*, January/February 2005). We are seldom able to anticipate the impact of major life experiences. We expect a future event to give us lasting happiness. But it has been observed that after experiencing happiness for brief moments, we settle back into being as happy or unhappy as we started out. “Most of us have a happiness ‘set point,’ fixed by temperament and early life experience, which is very difficult to shift.” Linda Carstensen, a professor of psychology at Stanford, believes that meditation can cultivate a mind-set that helps to ward off thoughts of past and future, and helps to focus on the present. Daniel Gilbert, professor of psychology at Harvard, observes:

In the quest for happiness, most of us try to guess what the future might bring, then project our current selves—with all of

our hopes, quirks and predilections—into that unknown. We use a fuzzy image of the future to make all kinds of decisions....

The good things are never as good as we imagine they'll be; the bad things are never as bad. We think of ourselves as both more fragile and more easily satisfied than we really are. We overestimate the impact of the good turn of events: We think that a fresh career or a new relationship will permanently change us, when all it does is provide a short-term mood boost. On the other hand, we are also much more resilient than we give ourselves credit for. Most of us do recover emotionally from life's traumas, whether it's the death of a close friend or a bitter divorce.

Gilbert explains that instead of ever wanting new things to make us happy we must learn to differentiate between lasting pleasure and short-term pleasure. Psychologist Daniel Kahneman observes that there is something sad about people who live their lives wanting to be elsewhere. “Enjoy the little things: Being pleased frequently has more influence on well-being than being intensely happy once in a while,” observes Kathleen McGowan.

Happiness, which depends upon outside things and conditions, at last turns to dust and ashes in the mouth. Dust is the form of soil in which nothing is growing or can be expected to grow. Ashes remain after a useful thing is burnt out. In *Light on the Path*, we are asked to be happy, “as those are who live for happiness.” There is a great difference between those who *seek* happiness and those who live for happiness. In the first case happiness is the goal, and when happiness has been made a goal, then, it forever eludes the person. Whereas, *being happy* is like holiness and wisdom, which does not come to people who are conscious of it. Happiness and holiness are built-in, but we need to give them a chance to express. We need to fulfil certain conditions to experience happiness. The three aspects of the One Reality are *Sat* (Being), *Chit* (Consciousness or mind) and *Ananda* (Bliss). “The appearing together in full harmony of Being and Consciousness is Bliss or *Ananda*,” writes Mr. Judge (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 99). *Ananda* is unconditioned happiness and does not, therefore, depend upon

happening of this or that thing. Happiness that arises out of ordinary consciousness is conditioned. We have to learn to differentiate between *Preyas* and *Shreyas*. Lord Buddha advises:

If by surrendering a pleasure of little worth one sees a joy worth having, the wise man will give up the pleasure of little worth and look to securing the deep joy. (*The Dhammapada*, verse 290)

THE true monitor is within...Ten thousand Adepts can do us no great good unless we ourselves are ready, and They act only as suggestors to us of what possibilities there are in every human heart. If we dwell within ourselves, and must live and die by ourselves, it must follow that running here and there to see any thing or person does not in itself give progress. Mind, I do not oppose consorting with those who read holy books and are engaged in dwelling on high themes. I am only trying to illustrate my idea that this should not be dwelt on as an end; it is only a means, and one of many. There is no help like association with those who think as we do, or like the reading of good books. The best advice I ever saw was to read holy books, or whatever books tend to elevate yourself, as you have found by experience. There must be some. Once I found some abstruse theological writings of Plotinus to have that effect on me—very ennobling, and also an explanation of the wanderings of Ulysses. Then there is the *Gita*. *All these are instinct with a life of their own* which changes the vibrations. Vibration is the key to it all. The different states are only differences of vibration, and we do not recognize the astral or other planes because we are out of tune with their vibrations....The important thing is to develop the Self in the self, and then the possessions of wisdom belonging to all wise men at once belong to us.

—W. Q. JUDGE