

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE WHEEL OF SACRIFICE

HISTORY of religions shows that in the beginning man sought to secure favours of invisible powers, either through prayer or through sacrifice. Sacrifice is the most common feature of all religions. Sacrifice could be performed with various motives—for adoration, thanksgiving, bargaining, propitiation or expiation. When people have personal god idea they are tempted to make all sorts of animal and human sacrifices to appease that God. Such a God is normally worshipped by material means with a view to acquiring earthly good. In *Perennial Philosophy*, Aldous Huxley points out that God is Spirit and can only be worshipped in Spirit.

The word “sacrifice” is derived from Latin *sacrificius*, meaning, “to make holy.” In a sacrifice, the essence of what is being sacrificed is considered to be consumed in the Divine World. Thus, sacrifice is an attempt to maintain a link with the intangible, unseen world. The Indo-Iranians of the old believed that the world was created and sustained by various gods and goddesses and these divinities must be pleased through offerings. Sacrifice is inseparable from the ancient Indian tradition. The *Puranas*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* mention various *Yajnas* (sacrifices,) such as, *Ashwamedha*, *Rajasuya*, etc., *Ashwamedha yajna* (horse-sacrifice) used to be performed for the fulfilment of desires, for obtaining victory over enemies and for all kinds of prosperity. King Dasaratha, Lord Rama’s

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father, is said to have performed *Putrakameshti yajna* for obtaining a son. *Rajasuya yajna* was performed at the time of coronation.

Did *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* advocate animal sacrifices? Sometimes the teachings in the great texts are only symbolic but are interpreted literally. In the Vedic period itself, there were attempts in the *Upanishads* to give metaphysical meaning of some of these sacrifices. The *Aranyakas* are forest-treatises, which were probably composed for old people retiring into forests. As in the forest they would be unable to perform elaborate sacrifices, the actual sacrifices were replaced by various symbols. The *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads* emphasized the value of meditation. Thus in the *Brahadarnyaka Upanishad* we find that instead of actual performance of horse-sacrifice there are directions for meditating upon the *Usas* (Dawn) as the head of the horse, the *air* as the life of the horse, the *sun* as the eye of the horse and so on.

Some of these sacrifices are merely exoteric rituals having no sanction of the esoteric. It is not as if these elaborate rituals would produce no effects. In fact, if performed properly and with occult knowledge, some of them would not fail to produce desired results. But they must be performed perfectly. Even if a word was mispronounced, dreadful results would follow. For instance, Tvastr performed a sacrifice for the production of a demon, who would be able to kill Indra, his enemy. However, owing to the mistaken accent of a single word the result was reversed and the demon produced by the sacrifice instead of killing Indra, was himself killed by Indra.

The verse in the *Gita*, “Being are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice, and sacrificed is performed by action,” shows that right kind of food that produces good health and allows one to pursue spiritual life and enables one to live up to his highest possibilities, will be produced only in the age where sacrifices are performed according to the Vedic ritual. Mr. Judge points out that if such sacrifices, which nourish the gods, are omitted, then these “gods” must die out and go to other spheres. This shows that sacrifices work as a channel of communication with

these gods, who are supposed to be in the planes close to our earth. Haug states in his *Introduction to the Aitareya Brâhmana* that the *Yajna* exists as an invisible presence at all times, extending from the *Âhavanîya* or sacrificial fire to the heavens, forming a bridge or ladder by means of which the sacrificer fire to the heavens, forming a bridge or ladder by means of which the sacrificer can communicate with the world of *devas*, and even ascend when alive to their abodes.

When the *Gita* says that you nourish the Gods, so that the Gods may nourish you, it simply points out that this universe is kept going because beings from the higher planes have come down to our plane to perform certain functions. These “Gods” are powers and intelligences in nature. A sacrifice is only a symbol that acknowledges the role of various powers and forces in nature in maintaining the universe. At a deeper level, the verse quoted from the *Gita* advises to follow the principle of reciprocity or Brotherhood. First and foremost we must perform our duties. *The Voice of the Silence* suggests, “A man who doth not go through his appointed work in life hath lived in vain.” But the *Gita*, also advises that besides performing one’s own duty one must never abandon the works of *Dana*, *Tapas* and *Yajna*, i.e., works of Charity, Mortification and Sacrifice. Even those who are trying to live the higher life, or those who are seeking for liberation or those who are seeking the union with the divine, perform the acts of charity, mortification and sacrifice.

What happens when we try to practice charity? We are willing to share, for instance, the material things out of the *surplus* that we have. We are willing to lend a sympathetic ear to another as long as we have spare time, or are in a happy and comfortable state of mind. So also, we are willing to share our knowledge, temporal or spiritual, provided we have enough time and energy. But very often we find that circumstances are not so smooth. Our own needs come in conflict with the needs of other people. That is where sacrifice comes into the picture. When the Enquirer asks in *The Key to Theosophy*: “Is equal justice to all and love to every creature, the highest standard of Theosophy?” H.P.B. answers that there is an even far higher

standard—”giving to others, *more* than to oneself,” *i.e.*, self-sacrifice. This sacrifice, or giving more to others, implies being able to deny something to one’s own self. Thus, sacrifice involves practice of mortification.

In *Mahabharata* there is the story that King Yudhisthira, after performing *Rajasuya Yajna*, ascended the throne. People praised his *yajna* as unparalleled. A mongoose, one side of whose body had turned golden, entered the sacrificial hall and told the people that he had seen greater sacrifice than the one performed by king Yudhisthira. He narrated the story of a brahmin family in a city hit by famine. This Brahmin family had little wheat flour from which they baked four breads. As they were about to sit down to eat, a stranger appeared at the door. They welcomed him as a guest and considered themselves blessed that he had come at a time when they could still give him food. The guest ate the food and went away pleased, while the family perished in hunger. The mongoose said that he entered the house and rolled himself on the floor where some of the wheat flour was scattered. He found that the portion of his body that came in contact with the flour turned golden, because there was an intense spirit of self-sacrifice in the act of serving the guest. Since then he has been looking for a *yajna* (sacrifice) of similar kind that could turn remaining half of his body golden. The story goes to show to what heights the real sacrifice could go.

The above story only tries to show that *sacrificial actions* are far more important than *Yajnas* (Sacrifices) involving elaborate ritualistic ceremonies. But one should not, indiscriminately and impulsively, give up his life in order to save another life. “A man has not right to starve himself *to death* that another man may have food, unless the life of that man is obviously more useful to the many than in his own life,” says H.P.B. She gives the example of Saint Labro who sacrificed his body for forty years only to benefit the vermin, which it bred. Similar is the case of the Christian missionaries who sacrificed their lives in South Sea Islands to spread Christianity, trying to give philosophy to people (irresponsible cannibals and savages) who were

not yet ripe for any truth and were killed in their turn. On the other hand she praises the sacrifice of Father Damien who worked for lepers and in the process contracted leprosy and died. H.P.B. observes that a scientist who dies of fatigue in trying to discover a medicine or a law which might benefit humanity, or a captain of the ship who chooses to remain on board of a sinking ship in order to save others, sacrifices his life to philanthropy or to his duty. It is a noble impulse, which makes a person override his natural instinct for self-preservation.

The *Gita* speaks of the wheel of sacrifice, which was set in motion by Krishna himself. “He who, sinfully delighting in the gratification of his passions, doth not cause this wheel thus already set in motion to continue revolving, liveth in vain.” So also in the universe, we are able to survive due to sacrifice of many people. In return, we must also contribute our mite. “Those who dress their meat but for themselves eat the bread of sin, being themselves sin incarnate.” Students of Theosophy must realize that much is given to them by way of opportunity and knowledge—and under Karma much is required of them. Each must study, promulgate and set an example. This requires sacrifice of time, energy, devotees, agents, even martyrs perhaps.” Spiritual growth involves sacrificing of the lower desires, as also the sacrificing the interest in the *fruits* of our actions. “All actions performed other than as sacrifice unto God make the actor bound by action.” (*Gita*, III)

We may not be able to do what Siddhartha did, but each of us could keep the idea of sacrifice in our minds and do what we can. Prof. C. S. Lewis points out that if you find that your standard of recreation is at par with general standard, then be sure that you can spare something out of what you have, in terms of time, money and energy because the general standard of people today is pleasure-loving. There must be devotion to the interests of others. We are so self-centred that we are hardly ever aware of the needs of others around us. Happily now, this realization is coming about. Daniel Goleman, the author of *Emotional Intelligence*, says in that book

that unselfishness, empathy and consideration for another's viewpoint characterize an emotionally intelligent person.

The whole universe has come into existence because of sacrifice. The descent of Spirit into matter is an act of sacrifice. It is said that Prometheus stole the "fire" from heaven and brought it to earth for the use of mortals. It is the "fire of mind" which endowed man with the power to think and choose and which made it possible for him to become a god. For this act of his, Zeus chained Prometheus to a rock and every day a vulture consumed his liver, which grew again in the night. Prometheus is the Hellenic type of a *Manasaputras*, through whose self-sacrifice humanity was endowed with *Manas* or intelligence.

The Secret Doctrine (I, 208) speaks of the *Maha Guru*, the Initiator, called the "GREAT SACRIFICE," who remains throughout this life-cycle in the invisible atmosphere, at his self-chosen post, although he has nothing more to learn. He remains in the earth's atmosphere to guide humanity safely "to the region of freedom and light." Nearer home, we have the concept of those Great Souls who renounce the bliss of *Nirvana* and remain in constant touch with suffering humanity, forming the Guardian Wall, which protects us "from further and far greater misery and sorrow." What is the state of each of these *Nirmanakayas*? Is there recognition, fame, reward of some kind? As *The Voice of the Silence* says, they remain "unthanked and unperceived by men; wedged as a stone with countless other stones which form the 'Guardian Wall.'"

ON PHILANTHROPY

THE word "philanthropy" is of Greek derivation (from *phileo*, "love," and *anthropos*, "man") and means "love of mankind." The principle implicit in it is that brotherhood of humanity.

But what is brotherhood? What is humanity essentially? Bodies? These die and are discarded. Feelings and emotions? These change and fade. Minds, thoughts, imagination? These, too, alter and pass out of our consciousness. What, then, is man? What is humanity, which we are called upon to know, to understand and to love?

Our object is to unfold the higher will and intuition, to build a centre of perception, a focus for the Perceiver—aware, conscious; alive and wise—for whom mind, feeling and body are "environment," are "tools." This is the invisible and undefinable core-centre, the *Real*, the Superior Man. We sense its continuity, its eternity; we seek to know it and to become one with it.

What are its marks, its qualities? Equanimity and calmness, understanding and tolerance, patience and perseverance, wisdom and discrimination, steadfastness and purposive action, generosity and self-control, sincerity and truthfulness, humility and fearlessness—these are some of the characteristics, the garments of the Wisdom-Self within.

But what are they based on? How are they acquired? Generosity, piety and almsgiving; study, mortification and rectitude; freedom from anger, resignation and not speaking of the faults of others; universal compassion, modesty and mildness; discretion, dignity, unrevengefulness and freedom from conceit—these are some of the means of control-purification to be applied to the ebullitions of the psychic nature, the felling-self.

"In a few years this incident will probably be forgotten"—this is a clear, simple idea that may restore a perspective, a balance, a sense of time and purpose to our consciousness involved in situations—that which we loosely call "myself," "my personality" (meaning, in truth, the "mask" that hides the Real Self, the "name-and-form" that

lives in the world of men).

The more we turn outside of ourselves, the more the differences that we see between ourselves and others. The deeper we penetrate the core of our own being, the more we sense that others are unto us, that there is the real Brotherhood of all men, of universal life working through all “masks,” all forms.

What, then, drives us to hurt others by our thoughtless or deliberate acts, when we are, in fact, hurting ourselves? What logic seeks justification for vice? Our personality, the mind-feeling self, senses the disadvantages of karmic conditions and situations. We may agree intellectually that these are fair—since “rigid Justice rules the World” and none can escape the “mighty sweep of never-erring action.” But, the personality argues, can we not swing, influence or twist these circumstances to suit *our* purpose, turn them to *our* advantage? Here states the rot of vice, the concealment of our true motive, the selfish planning that relies on craftiness, injustice, and the unsuspecting nature of others. It aims to *appear* virtuous while taking advantage of the faith that others have in us. Hypocrisy is its disguise, and “authority” is its tool.

What, then, is the defence? It is exposure to the true, to the universal sense of fairness that all possess equally. Whenever we fail to do this, we fail to do this, we encourage or connive at the perpetuation of vice and iniquity.

Look at it another way. What do we own? Nothing! All we have is borrowed with Nature. All we can call our own is power-energy—an inner focal point for doing anything we wish, for going anywhere we want to. What binds and limits us? Our self-imposed responsibilities—to family, to friends, to those who depend on us. But is our perception and execution of these responsibilities accurate, balanced, constructive, compassionate and self-sacrificing?

It is for us to answer. None can lead us by the hand. The path of philanthropy is open equally to all, but it is for us to find it and tread it. It is the path of the true heart, of the compassionate, tolerant understanding—an understanding of ourselves first of all as

embodying the same potentials as others have. We need to strengthen the decision to work on *our* nature so that our *persona*-mask may reflect more truly the ray of the Divine Self within.

Let us carry with us for ready use a few seed ideas:

He does good, who *knows* how to do good.

The unproduced mind is well motivated and justly actuated.

All beings are the same in kind and differ only in degree.

“To dare, to will, to achieve and keep silent? is the motto of the true Occultist.

IDEAL OF HUMAN PERFECTION

LIFE'S experiences, full of paradoxes, puzzles, pain and suffering, make us wonder if there is any purpose and meaning in this marvelous, complex life. We naturally turn to religion for an answer. But sectarian dogmatism that characterizes religions at the present time, give little help to the earnest inquiring minds; while it seems to be beyond the scope of modern science. It is a very important question because it has a direct bearing on human happiness and progress.

Ideas rule the world, said Plato, echoing Upanishadic wisdom: "Man verily is formed of desire. As his desire is, so is his will; as his will is, so he works; whatever works he does, in the likeness of it he grows. Through his past works he shall return once more to birth, entering whatever form his heart is set on" (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*). Conditions of life, individual, social, or international, good or bad as they may be, are our own creations according to our thought and actions based on the ideas we hold with regard to life. Thinking and acting from a higher basis of thought, arising from a truer understanding of life and life's purpose will enable us to create better and happier conditions of life. This is the key to all true reform.

Is there a purpose in life? From Cosmos down to the atom and the molecule we see unvarying, never erring order, rhythm and purpose in every department of nature. Orderly progression of beings from primitive state to highly organized, complex, conscious higher forms of life—from mineral atom to man—is evident everywhere. It unmistakably points to evolution of beings. It is inconceivable that this orderly progression of life into higher and greater intelligence and consciousness should stop at the human level. It must proceed further into supra-human states. This was with the ancients a certain, scientifically ascertained truth. Mr. Judge wrote in his article, "The Synthesis of Occult Science":

Man is a perfected animal, but before he could have reached perfection even on the animal plane, there must

have dawned upon him the light of a higher plane. Only the perfected animal can cross the threshold of the next higher, or the human plane, and as he does so there shines upon him the ray from the supra-human plane. Therefore, as the dawn of humanity illumines the animal plane, and as a guiding star lures the Monad to higher consciousness, so the dawn of humanity illumines the animal plane, and as a guiding star lures the Monad to higher consciousness, so the dawn of divinity illumines the human plane [of consciousness].

This explains how throughout history there have always been genuines, great characters embodying highest ideals of human perfection, such as the Buddha, Christ, Krishna and so on, who have made significant contribution towards human progress. Man is essentially a spiritual being, integral portion of the Supreme Soul of the World. Therefore, man, in his essential spiritual nature, is inherently perfect. The inherent perfection, however, is eclipsed by the lower material principles, when the Ego is incarnated. The whole purpose of human life is to bring the inherent perfection into full manifestation here, on earth, while still living in the earthly body. It must be accomplished through a conscious realization of the true nature of self, purifying and obtaining self-mastery over our lower nature and subjugating it to serve the Divine Ruler within.

We must never lose sight of the truth that we are *essentially* spiritual beings, though we have lost the perception of it through illusion of matter in which we are embodied. Of the nature of the Real Immortal Man—the Spiritual Ego—his fall into matter, and his emancipation through spiritual evolution, it is taught in *The Key to Theosophy* thus:

In its very essence it is THOUGHT, and is, therefore, called in its plurality *Manasa putra*, "the sons of the (Universal) mind." This *individualized* "Thought" is what we Theosophists call the *real* human EGO, the thinking Entity

imprisoned in a case of flesh and bones. This is surely a Spiritual Entity, not *Matter*, and such Entities are the incarnating EGOS that inform the bundle of animal matter called *mankind*, and whose names are *Manasa* or “Minds.” (pp. 181-2)

Why did the “Sons of the Universal Mind,” essentially one with the latter partaking of its omniscience, have to descend into matter? Writes H.P.B.:

Try to imagine a “Spirit,” a celestial Being, whether we call it by one name or another, divine in its essential nature, yet not pure enough to be *one with the ALL*, and having, in order to achieve this, to so purify its nature as to finally gain that goal. It can do so only by passing *individually and personally, i.e.*, spiritually and physically, through every experience and feeling that exist in the manifold or differentiated Universe. It has, therefore, after having gained such experience in the lower kingdoms, and having ascended higher and still higher with every rung of the ladder of being, to pass through every experience on the human planes.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 181)

On incarnation, the *Manas* becomes dual, assuming two-fold attribute: (a) heaven-aspiring mind (higher *Manas*), and (b) the human quality of thinking, or animal cogitation, rationalized owing to the superiority of the human brain, the *Kama*-tending or lower *Manas*. One gravitates towards *Buddhi*, the other, tending downward, to the seat of passions and animal desires. (*Ibid*, p. 182).

Hence the paradoxes of human life, the moral dilemmas arising out of the mighty struggle between the two poles of man’s being that rages in the heart of every man and woman. The mysterious problem of good and evil; of despotism and freedom; selfishness and altruism; virtue and vice; which engage the attention of thinkers and writers, poets and philosophers, sociologists and psychologists, who grapple with this riddle of the complexity and mystery of human character, has the solution only in this ancient doctrine of the dual

nature of *Manas* (or Mind) of man, and in its origin, evolution and destiny.

The Ego is forced to play during the cycle of necessity, up to the very threshold of *Paramirvana*, many parts such as may be unpleasant to it. But as the bee collects its honey from every flower, leaving the rest as the food for the earthly worms, so does our spiritual individuality, whether we call it *Sutratma* or Ego. Collecting from every terrestrial personality, into which Karma forces it to incarnate, the nectar alone of the spiritual qualities and self-consciousness, it unites all these into one whole and emerges from its chrysalis as the glorified Dhyān Chohan. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 166)

That is the destiny of Man, to which countless weary cycles of reincarnations propelled by his own Karma, through many trials and experiences, finally leads. But it cannot be *conferred* upon him. It is up to every human being, endowed as he is with all the potentialities of his “Father in Heaven” with reason, will, power to think, and power to discriminate between right and wrong, between true and false, and the “Voice of Conscience” that speaks within him—to follow the dictates of his Higher Self, humanize his animal nature, purify and spiritualize the human to make of it a perfect instrument of the Divine within him, merging his consciousness with the Higher Self, and reach the *siddhis* of perfection.

Nothing of man’s life in each incarnation survives except such thoughts, aspirations, and actions that are in harmony with his higher self and nature, which become assimilated to his Higher Consciousness. If in the life of a person there has been nothing that is worthy of assimilation with his divine prototype, nothing of that person survives physical death. He is a failure in the eyes of his God within, even though he might be rated by the worldly standards to be success in life. “The selfish devotee lives to no purpose. The man who does not go through his appointed work in life—has lived

in vain.” (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 38)

Yes, we have an appointed work in life—to do the duties by our fellowmen and fellow-creatures, and to learn the lessons of life. The whole object of human life is to be so live, think and act from a knowledge and understanding of these truths as to bring about the great purpose of Soul, strive towards the Ideal of human perfection. We retard our progress, when we neglect to do so and prefer the easier way of living for mere gratification of personal desires and passions. We are free to choose, and as we choose and live, so we make our destiny. “Higher than Indra’s ye may lift your lot, and sink it lower than the worm or gnat,” said the Buddha.

Deity and Law are one. The truth is that whole of humanity and all beings are essentially one and indivisible. Hence every action for a selfish end produces a severe infraction of the Law of Harmony, and reacts on the person as retributive justice, which he experiences as pain and sorrow. Every unselfish act, kindness and benevolence shown to others reaches the person as happiness and help in life. “Every mean and selfish action sends us backward and not forward, while every noble thought and every unselfish deed are stepping-stones to the higher and more glorious planes of being.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 234-5)

Therefore, it is of the greatest importance that we learn these great truths of our true nature as spiritual beings, and our grand destiny, and mould and shape our lives in accordance with that higher and loftier vision of the Ideal of Human Perfection. We are never without help. Masters of Wisdom, Mahatmas, the *Jivanmuktas*, who, having crossed over the ocean of conditioned existence, ages ago, aid and assist every aspiring Soul, though unseen by us, just as much as we deserve, and according to our Soul’s need. They are the living Ideals of human perfection.

The first step in right endeavour is to study and comprehend the right philosophy of life—*Samyak Darshana*. Impurities of body, mind and heart, consequent defects of character, brought over by us as our Karmic inheritance from past lives on earth, have to be worked

out, eliminated, and right seeds of mental action have to be gradually sown through study and application of the right philosophy of life. We have to learn to reason and think correctly from the basis of Eternal Verities. It makes for right speech—*Samyak Vacha*, and right character—*Samyak charitra*. Thus slowly, gradually, we may progress towards the great Ideal of Universal Brotherhood, in order that we may be the better able to help and aid all of our fellow-men to rise to higher plane of Being, towards the highest Ideal of Perfection. Mr. Judge writes:

The most profound thinker and the most correct may well afford to devote a life-time to the apprehension of *the philosophy of Occultism*, and the other lifetime to mastering the scientific details, while at the same time his ethics and his religious life are made consistent with the *principles of altruism and the Brotherhood of man*. If this be regarded as too hard a task, it is, nevertheless, *the line of higher evolution of man*, and soon or late, every soul must follow it, or retrograde and cease to be.

THOUGHTS ON “THROUGH THE GATES OF GOLD”

V

THE FOURTH chapter of the book is entitled, “The Meaning of Pain.” Pain and distress are part of the heritage of men. Pain and despair seem to be always standing on the threshold of man’s life, ready to enter his life. Why are these two constant followers of man? The fact is that it is man himself who creates pain in his search for pleasure. Man is his own creator, his own judge, and within him lies all life in potentiality. Many people believe that man is a creature of chance or that he is at the mercy of some outside God, who is the arbiter of his destiny. But just like a child, when it grows up, ceases to believe his parents to be the arbiters of his destiny, so too, the human race must realize that it is the king of its world and arbiter of its own destiny. “Destiny, the inevitable, does indeed exist for the race and for the individual; but who can ordain this save the man himself? There is no clue in heaven or earth to the existence of any ordainer other than the man who suffers or enjoys that which is ordained,” says the author.

The author cautions us, again and again, to guard against the belief in personal God, from depending too much on our own narrow concept of God or idol-worship. “It is because man is so idle, so indisposed to assume or accept responsibility, that he falls back upon this temporary makeshift creator.” Human beings like to thrust on this creator, not only the responsibility of their sins and misdeeds, but also the possibility of their salvation. The arbitrary and cruel Creator who inflicts pain and pleasure at will, must disappear, “for he is indeed unnecessary character, and, worse still, is a mere creature of straw, who cannot even strut upon the boards without being upheld on all sides by dogmatists.” Not only do most people prefer worshipping their own idols and carry the image of their idol in their heart, but they desperately cling to certain dogmas, moral laws and principles, and have made of them household gods or personal idols. In the process they forget that these household gods are finite

and transitory, and that the Infinite, which dwells within every creature, is the only true Resting Place, the Friend and the Guide. In identifying himself with the personality, man obscures the presence of the real “I,” the divine within. In considering his personality to be permanent he makes the biggest mistake. So long as he identifies himself with the personality and fails to see the impermanence of the conditioned existence, he oscillates between pain and pleasure.

Buddha taught that all considered existence is impermanent and that it is full of suffering. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, points out that there are three kinds of suffering: (1) *Actual suffering*, as when we have a toothache, bruised hand or cut finger. (2) *Potential suffering*, something or someone that is a source of enjoyment to us now, is *potentially* a cause of suffering because one day we will have to give it up. (3) *Metaphysical suffering*, because nothing mundane, earthly or conditioned can give full or final satisfaction.

Sooner or later, each one has to become aware of that central point of existence or the permanent aspect of himself. Unless one recognizes this permanent spot and learns to take refuge in the divine within, one finds that all other efforts at overcoming pain are useless, because at best we only *alleviate* pain but are unable to eradicate it—throw it out completely from our lives. If we drive away pain from physical plane then it reappears on the mental and emotional planes, and it is even more difficult to deal with it on those planes.

Is pain something to be shunned? Pleasure and pain, both these aspects are realities of life with which all human beings are quite familiar. However, in our own perception, there seems to be more than fair share of pain in our lives than the quota of pleasure. We forget that pain serves several purposes. Thus:

Pain arouses, softens, breaks, and destroys. Regarded from a sufficiently removed standpoint, it appears as medicine, as a knife, as a weapon, as a poison, in turn. It is an implement, a thing which is used, evidently. What we desire to discover is, who is the user; what part of ourselves is it that demands that presence of that thing so hateful to

the rest? (*Through the Gates of Gold*, pp. 46-47)

For most of us, pleasures are for enjoyment and we get lost in their enjoyment. We do not pause to ask what good have we done to deserve it or whether there is any purpose to life besides happy time. When pain strikes, we are awakened or even shaken up and ask deeper question of life. This pain can be bodily pain—fracture or some disease that does not allow life to go on as before. It could be loss of a near and dear one or wealth or position or power. It may be creative pain of an artist who struggles intensely to clothe or give form to his abstract ideas. It may be pain due to broken relationship, broken trust, lost faith and loss of confidence. Pain may be due to the wound inflicted by an enemy or by a surgeon removing the bullet from the body of a soldier, or that experienced by a mother during childbirth. Unrealized goals give extreme pain to an ambitious person. To another, it may be in the form of envy; never-ending comparison always bringing to the forefront the want, deficiency in one form or the other. When pain comes, man is aroused from his former mode of life; be it humdrum existence or life full of excitement and fine pleasures. He may ask questions: Why me? How could it happen? Prince Siddhartha, whose life was like some kind of heavenly dream was moved to extreme sorrow when his tender heart encountered for the first time the painful realities of life: sickness, old age and death. He left all the comforts of his life and set out in quest of solution, the ultimate cure of all pain. The robber Valya Koli who used to rob wayfarers, to support his family, was rudely awakened, when his family refused to have any share in his sins. Thus pain *arouses*.

Pain also softens. Pain can achieve most astonishing results even with the most obstinate, headstrong and recalcitrant persons. Proud and individualistic persons, self-centered persons or people who pride themselves as being truly independent are all known to have been broken by this tough teacher called pain. Disability of body due to sudden onslaught of incurable disease, slow loss of one’s health and vitality, loss of all that man held near and dear—be it a

person, wealth and status—humbles a person. He begins to understand the important of what he has lost as also the importance of the role that other beings play to simply keep him going. Having experienced it, he can now empathize with others who are likewise undergoing pain—whatever may be its nature. To someone who never had a toothache, the toothache of another is not understood. When he experiences it himself, he understands it better.

Pain also break—when it is beyond one’s capacity to bear. Man himself sets limit to his capacity to bear. Something that one man takes into his stride, another finds is most devastating. Man of broken spirit is the most pathetic sight.

Pain Destroys. It could be destruction before regeneration. Destruction of old form to give birth to the new ones. But there is negative and undesirable aspect to destruction. When man’s spirit is broken, his will to live deserts him. Suicidal thoughts torment his heart. If the pain is too sharp, too sudden—man loses mental balance. He is ready to take his own life or life of another person. Extreme pain not only arouses, but also destroys all fear of consequences. Before healing can take place, one may have to subject oneself to surgeon’s knife, and bleed to remove the impurities. Thus, pain serves multiple purposes. It is like a medicine that cures us of malady. It is like surgeon’s knife that inflicts wound to heal. It is also a weapon that breaks or destroys. It also works like poison that finally kills him. It all depends on us to learn necessary lessons from pain. Some of us would be like the cat, which when it feels very cold outside scratches on the door to be taken inside the house, but once inside and comfortable it goes out easily without any memory of the previous discomfort. Unless it is a very deep-reaching pain, we do not learn the lesson. Sometimes we find ourselves getting *used to it*, without much reflection.

Pain and pleasure stand apart and separate, as do the two sexes; and it is in the merging, the making the two into one, that joy and deep sensation and profound peace are obtained. Where there is neither male nor female, neither

pain nor pleasure, there is the god in man dominant, and then is life real. (*Through the Gates of Gold*, p. 58)

The art of overcoming pain is to rise also above pleasure. Attain equanimity—equal-mindedness to both pleasure and pain. It is in merging the two that highest pleasure is to be derived—where boundaries blur, so that pain is indistinguishable from pleasure and *vice versa*. This blurring of the boundaries between pain and pleasure is experienced, for instance, in the extreme pain experienced by the radical thinkers when burnt at stake, worst tortures without revealing country’s secrets, or a mother’s smile even in the midst of intense pain of childbirth. One does not know where pain ends and pleasure begins. Intense pain becomes intense pleasure.

Merging pain and pleasure does not mean regarding them as separate and preferring one to the other. Both are means, affording experience. There is pain inherent in pleasure, and pleasure inherent in pain. Even as we enjoy something we must be aware that the same thing that causes pleasure will ultimately lead to pain. Similarly, we can see pleasure in pain, *i.e.*, seeing pain as a means to learn. When we can go to the core of every experience and are able to see the hidden good, hidden meaning and the hidden beauty, we can feel *Ananda* or unconditioned bliss, that is beyond pain and pleasure. We learn to regard a troublesome person as our teacher; a bodily handicap when triumphed over brings new kind of joy; when life makes us face series of deaths or separations from loved ones, there is gradual learning of detached-attachment. It comes slowly, but when we learn to live with equal ease in pain and pleasure.

Within us there are two definite directions in which we grow, one good and other evil; but this growth is not a straight line. To sink to the lowest depths is as difficult as to reach the greatest heights. The divine spark always comes to our aid if we turn to it, and prevents us from bringing great harm on ourselves. Man’s duality is so deep-rooted that he neither gives himself wholly to pleasure, nor does he give himself wholly to pain. He lives on a zigzag line—oscillating between the two. Hence it is said that it is not so easy to go to

heaven, but it is also not easy to go to hell. Dostoevsky said: “I want to take *whole* of myself to heaven.” Only when there is cessation of inner conflict, can you take *whole* of yourself or whole of yourself to hell. When you are divided between the two equally desirable things, you end up making only intermittent and half-hearted efforts in either direction.

Hence, *Light on the Path* speaks of reaching that point where oscillation between pain and pleasure ceases—when it ceases even for an instant, it is enough to disconnect a person from the world of sensations.

(*To be concluded*)

SHAKESPEARE AND THE ADEPT INFLUENCE

I

The Adepts assert that Shakespeare was, unconsciously to himself, inspired by one of their own number.

—Echoes from the Orient

THE QUOTED statement may naturally raise questions of why such Aid was given to Shakespeare, and what evidences of it appear in his work. Theosophical teaching declares that every activity humanizing enough to shed a little brightness is brought by its own light under the direct observation of Higher Minds. No surprise, therefore, need be aroused by the remark that Shakespeare received help from the Adepts who were guiding the Theosophical Movement in the West. For certainly such a literary and dramatic efflorescence as that of the Elizabethan period in England would attract some special attention to the individuals creating it. Those Adepts would see in the dramatic growths of the time a means, free from sermonizing, of clarifying many men's judgment on their own life-problems, by viewing similar ones and the outcomes of them as presented in the theatres.

Shakespeare's pre-eminence was indeed not fully known by his contemporaries; but Vaster Souls would clearly perceive that though he handled the same mixture of good and evil material as other writers, and by no means minced the evil, yet by putting less emphasis on that, he reached a more humane breadth in his plays than was to be found in others. Even his Sonnets, more than those of other sonneteers, showed flashes of the divine discontent that draws men to the Beyond; while here and there throughout his early works were drops "of the milk of human kindness" which gave their own proof of the generosity of the soul that scattered them. Thus from the first Shakespeare unconsciously exhibited such largeness of mind as is necessary to receive, and to work under, Adept Influence.

Evidences of this Inspiration as found in the works are of an

internal kind, since the field of higher dramatic action is fundamentally in the mind and soul. Indeed, the inwardness of Shakespeare's plays has always compelled study from this standpoint—which of itself is one of the evidences sought. *Hence a student of Theosophy does not presumptuously expect to reach conclusions greatly different from those usually held, but only occasionally to perceive for them deeper reasons and foundations.* Nor is Shakespeare to be regarded as one of the rare beings who are under special Adept observation from childhood. Like other and more ordinary men, Shakespeare had to win his help; and when it began, he did not fully know its nature or its origin, but felt it to be, as in fact it was a broader, keener alertness of his own higher mind. The superior possibilities embedded within himself were what Adept Inspiration spurred into stronger activity.

Greater influxes of perception then came, truer visions in mind and soul revealing springs of character hitherto half-hidden from him. Remoter causes, results, and unexpected complications became clearer. Secret relationships were felt, or subtle impulsions between being and being. Ignorances or intuitions were detected that betray or deliver. These perceptions he strove intensely to embody in his personages. Hence this man's creative character-work began to embody in his personages. Hence this man's creative character-work began to be much deepened and broadened by his glimpses unawares into the Eastern Psychology—Soul-Knowledge—which must in truth have constituted the very essence of the Higher Influence sent upon him, and which led to those manifestations of the Life—Verities recognized by man as operative in that world known as Shakespeare's greater plays.

The Inculcators of the Ancient Wisdom could not in that age appear openly as Adepts. They worked as philosophers, and also through other individuals or groups whose nature or activities permitted. Their continuous purpose was precisely to spread through all possible channels Their Wisdom or Psycho-Spiritual Knowledge; which in the parts concerning men may most fittingly be called

Psychology, and which was later to be known as Theosophy. Hence for Adepts to shed a particular aid to a noble-minded dramatist who had obtained a large following, were only natural expressions of Their purpose.

A great creator of fictional characters is great because he is able to embody with truth in persons called imaginary the experience actual people have had, either in their present or in their past lives. More especially, he is great because within the soul-memory of his own egoic past are the qualities and effects of a very wide range of Life-Stuff, and because this mental wealth lies near enough to his present consciousness to permit him to draw from it in order to re-incarnate, or *in semblance* put into flesh once more, phases of his very own former lives and personalities. Moreover, that wealth of his past, like similar wealth of his present, resulted from a fusion of his actual individual experiences with keen observation and understanding of the lives of other men. Thus, knowingly or not, such a character-portrayer possesses and constantly uses a large intuitive power which he has gained through ages of varied experience and contemplation.

These statements may give a hint of why Shakespeare, Sophocles, and others of the finest portrayers of character have not used as a basis for their pictures the supposedly ideal, the notional, or the desired. They have not been satisfied to present the necessarily slighter images offered by their fancy, or the plot-structure formed by the logic of their intellect. Instead, they have chosen veritable personages and actual incidents—a cross-section of life as it has been lived. By a genuine visual apprehension they have entered into the real gist, colour and stability of Life-Fact. Of the vast Life-Record, they have literally relived that portion considered by them, have bound it into their very selves, and have thus experienced quite naturally a larger encompassing of life and a surer guidance of their artistic embodying or expressing power. For the Life-Record when thus again revived mentally into present actuality, inevitably carries into fictional portrayals an undeniable convincingness.

The reason is that the Image-making Power possessed by man—his “King-faculty,” Theosophy teaches—is working with living Substance even when producing fictional portrayals. The same great Power—Imagination—is active, whether it brings forth a live human being or a vivified picture of one though of course it operates on different planes of Nature and by different laws. At some time, Imagination co-operating with Desire and Will produced the living being. Later, Imagination, still co-operating with its two necessary aides, brings into another phase of Life a mentalized copy or version of that same being. In each case genuine Akasic substance is the basis of the Imaginative operation. Both the living being and the fictional portrayal are the offspring of a desire to create, a desire to energize life-atoms through Will and in accordance with the Image before Thought or Mind.

The Image-making Power manifests in two great degrees, ordinarily known as imagination and fancy. The discrimination between them, as commonly stated, is not so fundamental and sharp as is the distinction made by Theosophy. In the Adept Psychology the difference is deeply inherent in man’s inner constitution, and corresponds to the difference between his upper principles and the lower aspects or reflections of these. Of the two, Imagination is the Originative Power. Fancy is technically the imitative or reflected power—a smaller, weaker, or even vitiated reflection of the higher. Both make Images, both mould Life-Stuff into other forms of Life. But Fancy is less “Kingly” in its modes and results. Fancy works with grosser material, denser matter, lower in evolution, matter less plastic; and therefore its results are often more distorted into unreality. Again, Fancy works frequently with less noble purposes, and always it works with much less of the dynamic Fire of Life.

Therefore fictional art that mainly embodies Fancy (technically regarded) really does possess less of Life. It is thinner-blooded, remoter, and cannot touch so intimately the life in its observers. This is the true reason why great character portrayers choose for their pictures actual beings and real stories. In the activity, however,

and outward production of minds like Shakespeare's, the results of the lower Imaging power are shot through like shimmering silk with the lights of the higher. For the breadth of Soul-Life in such minds causes the offspring of their Fancy to share richly in the vital Fire that burns in the higher Power.

Readers or observers of fictional art have felt, far within, this basic Theosophical distinction, and hence have praised the character-portrayals derived from Imagination as "living"; while, however pleasing or otherwise the Fancy-portraits, they have recognized these as slighter or merely temporary. For example, *A midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* are both surpassing instances of charming Fancy. But *The Tempest* is something more—it is also a broader, deeper embodiment of qualities drawn from the higher planes of man's being in which Imagination rules.

Now it must be remembered that Mahatmic Influence is directed not to the physical but to the inner and especially the upper planes of man's nature. Thus a man "inspired by an Adept" would certainly experience added Imaging power, particularly the higher phases of it. This explains the appearance in Shakespeare's work of the transcendent dramatic imagination critics ascribe to him by general agreement, though they have been puzzled to account for it. They have noted too, with wonder, the great expansion in creative power, in intuitive perceptivity, and in dramatic skill shown by the productions of his middle period as compared with his efforts earlier. Many critics have regarded the expansion as sudden, and as especially connected with the tragedies, declaring in explanation that Shakespeare must have been enlightened by some tragic experience of his own.

To these propositions a Theosophist may reply that the expansion was the effect—as well as the "evidence"—of the Adept Inspiration, and may suggest that it was proceeding for some years before the time of the tragedies. In most cases such inspiration does not come suddenly. It is like a dawn; and its progress or increase depends on how worthy the recipient continues to prove. These replies do not

at all negative the statement that Shakespeare must have had himself some far-reaching unhappy experience. Most likely he had, and his Adept Helpers made use of it. For Adepts work by natural means and turn to a man's advantage the greater receptivity of Soul that may come with suffering.

(To be concluded)

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: What is the difference between illusion and delusion?

Answer: In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* illusion is defined as deception; wrong understanding of the true state of affairs; faulty perception of external object or figment of imagination and hence something which has no real existence. Delusion is defined as false belief or impression, and in Psychology it is regarded as a form of mental disorder. For instance, “delusion of grandeur” refers to false idea of oneself as being important, noble, famous, or even of one’s being a reptile creature, as in Franz Kafka’s novel, *Matamorphosis*. Delusion, in psychological sense, seems to be the inability to be a part of normal world. Thus, “illusion” seems to be the problem of perception, while “delusion” seems to pertain to conception. We speak of optical illusion, wherein we see the sun rising in the East and setting in the West. If some body perceives a rope, not as a rope, but as a serpent, then that is an illusion. Mirage is an optical illusion caused by atmospheric conditions, especially in the desert, which makes one see water due to reflection of light. When our eyes (optic nerve) are tired, we see things that do not really exist. Psychologically, false perception could arise due to our biases. Each one of us carries himself the background of his culture, education, religion, and tends to look at the world and people through bits of these coloured glasses. Our judgments, more often than not, are biased. H.P.B. stresses the need for acquiring unbiased and clear judgment. Thus, our faulty perception or illusion could be because of the limitations of our senses or it could be the result of false

conceptions, inherent in our build up, carried from the past.

Philosophically, we may say that illusion is what is called “Maya,” and it is part of the cosmic order. Illusion is an incorrect picture of Reality. H.P.B. writes in the *Secret Doctrine* that we are able to perceive only the *phenomena* that have in them the element of illusion or *Maya*. Absolute One Reality or God is the noumenon of all the noumena which must underlie all phenomena and give to them whatever shadow of reality they possess, but which we are not able to cognize at our level. An example is given to understand this. The atoms of gold scattered throughout the substance of auriferous quartz may be imperceptible to the naked eye of the miner, yet he knows that they are not only present there but that they alone give his quartz any appreciable value. The relation between noumenon and phenomenon is similar to that between gold and quartz. But whereas the miner knows what gold will look like when extracted from quartz, we at our level cannot form any conception of the reality of things as separated from the veil of *Maya* which hides them, *i.e.*, we are able to grasp only its manifested aspect. Only an initiate using his inner, spiritual eye is able to see the essence of things uninfluenced by *Maya* or illusion (*S.D.*, I, 45).

Maya or illusion is defined as the “perceptive faculty of every Ego, which considers itself a Unit separate from, and independent of, the One infinite and eternal SAT, or ‘be-ness’.” In this sense, we might say that the absence of spiritual discernment is delusion. Delusion is *Moha*, so that the person is convinced that his illusion is right. Delusion seems to be the result of egoism. It seems to be a moral problem. Some people are self-assertive. In a discussion, when a person finds that his opinion was against the opinion of every other person in the group, then one should be at least ready to analyze whether one was being logical or just plain egoistic. It is possible to avoid delusion. In the Ninth Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, “The *deluded* despise me in the human form, being unacquainted with my real nature as Lord of all things.” Being encased in different bodies and personalities, the true light is obscured and we are led to

believe that each one of us is separate from others. Arjuna, too, was under the same delusion. It is only when he is made to realize that in the heart of every creature there is Master *Iswara*, that he says that his *moha* or delusion was destroyed and that he had regained his (*Smriti*) memory.

Question: If Moon is a dead plane, then how does she affect our Earth?

Answer: Moon, which is described as our earth's satellite did not separate from the Earth but is, in fact, the mother of our Earth. Occult philosophy asserts that Moon has played the most important part in the formation of the Earth and in peopling Earth with human beings. It is stated that in a remote period, when there was no Earth, the Moon existed as an inhabited globe. When evolution on Moon was completed, she died, throwing all her energies into space and leaving behind the corpse or physical vehicle. Thus, Moon is looked upon as former body of our Earth. These energies worked on the cosmic matter, bringing about gradual condensation of matter in space and produced our Earth. After that the Moon, its parent began to disintegrate, but continued to revolve around her child, the Earth. All her living powers, energy and "principles" are transferred to the Earth chain of globes. Having transferred her powers and energies to the Earth, Moon is now soulless and lifeless, and yet she is described as "a *dead yet living* body." She is a decaying corpse and yet the particles forming that dead body are full of active and destructive life. Her emanations are both beneficent and maleficent, H.P.B. explains this by means of an analogy. She points out that grass and plants are nowhere more juicy and thriving than on the graves. But it is also true that it is graveyard or corpse-emanations that kill. Moon influences us physically, astrally and psychically. Even the phases of the Moon have their particular influence, as noted in the case of "lunatics," who are rendered more insane at certain phases of the Moon. *The Secret Doctrine* points out that Moon is the satellite of the Earth only in one respect, *viz.*, that physically Moon revolves around the Earth. But in every other

respect it is the Earth, which is the satellite of the Moon. It is evidenced by the tides, by the cyclic changes in many forms of diseases that coincide with the lunar phases, it can be traced in the growth of the plants and also in the phenomenon of gestation and conception. Moon is like a mother who walks round and round her child's cradle keeping watch over her infant. She is older and more fully developed than the child, our Earth, and hence, the influence of Moon on our Earth.

We know Moon only from the astronomical, geological and physical standpoint. Her psychic and metaphysical nature remains an occult secret. Her real nature and properties have been known to the every occultist, as also to the witches of Thessaly and in our present day, to the *tantrikas* of Bengal. In *Transactions* we are told that Sun and Moon are substitutes for secret planets. Moon is a substitute for a secret planet with retrograde motion, very near to her, and sometimes visible at a certain hour of the night. The occult influence of this planet is transmitted *by* the moon. We are told that six mysterious doctrines or facts relating to the Moon remain yet untold. "One of the unrevealed mysteries has to do with the uses and purposes of...the whole mass of matter now constituting the Moon's bulk," writes Mr. Judge

Question: What is the Law of Consubstantiality?

Answer: "Consubstantial" means "of the same substance or nature." The Law of Consobstantiality states that consubstantial things attract each other. When we say that unlike poles of a magnet attract, *i.e.*, south pole of a magnet attracts the north pole, there is pole of one *magnet* attracting the pole of another *magnet*. A magnet does not attract wood or glass. Thus, magnet, which is essentially iron, attracts only that which contains ferrous or iron. The Law of Consobstantiality is also applicable in the realm of thought. As soon as a thought leaves the brain, it combines with a unit of life energy called an elemental and forms an entity. This "entity" gets its character from us, depending upon the elemental and forms an entity. This "entity" gets its character from us, depending upon the quality of the

thought—good or bad. We create with every thought, a demon or an angel. These thoughts are impressed on an invisible register called astral light, forming a common pool of thoughts. Each one of us attracts from this pool, thoughts that are consubstantial with our nature. If there is even traces of jealousy, anger or hatred in us, we would attract elementals carrying similar faults. On the other hand, a pure person, who is without blemish, would remain unhurt by other person's bad thoughts. Hence, the Buddha said that poison harms not a man whose hands have no wound.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Since the dinosaurs were wiped out 65 million years ago, United Nations Studies point out worst spate of extinction, in our day, caused by increasing population, pollution and climate change. Paradoxically, estimates of the number of species on earth are ever increasing, running into millions, say the biologists. The Encyclopedia of Life has catalogued 1.8 million *identified* species, so far, and there are expectations of 8 to 50 million more species that remain to be identified. Some estimate it up to 100 million. However, the newly found species do not compensate for extinction. Extinction of recent decades includes Australia's southern gastric brooding frog. The female frogs of this species could stop the secretion of their stomach juices to raise the young in their stomachs, a trick that could have held clues for curing human ulcers. If there is such a wide variety of species, how did Noah's Ark manage to stay afloat? How did Noah squeeze all the animals aboard the Ark? "It is of course physically impossible," says James Edwards, executive director of the Encyclopedia of Life.

Believers in the Bible note that the Ark described in the *Book of Genesis* was a giant ship, about 140 metres long. Biblical account states that upset by the wickedness and violence of mankind, God sent devastating flood, and he also asked Noah to build a ship (Ark) and take in it every kind of animal and bird (no plants or fish). It is believed that Noah probably only had to take aboard about 16,000 creatures. (*The Times of India*, May 16, 2008, courtesy Reuters)

In the Bible, God asks Noah to take *seven pairs* of each kind of animal and bird. But this must be understood *allegorically*. Noah represents later part of the Third Race when the earlier hermaphrodite humanity was separated into two sexes—male and female. His three sons represent, last three sub-races of the Third Race. Noah in his Cosmic character is identical with the Hindu *Sishta* or seed Manu, the human seed left for peopling of the Earth, from a previous

Manvantara or a period of manifestation (*S.D.*, II, 596). *Manvantaras* are always followed by flood or *pralaya* or period of dissolution. The seed represents the fruition or progress in the previous *Manvantara*. Thus, one of the meanings of Noah taking with him in the ship, every kind of animal and bird could be taking the seed or fruition of the Race or period of manifestation that is coming to an end, in order to begin another Race or period of manifestation.

However, similar story also occurs in *Mahabharata*, with some variation. H.P.B. points out that Noah's flood is a purely mythical rendering of old traditions. Noah corresponds to Vaivasvata Manu of the Hindus, and is thus a progenitor. According to the story in the "Mahabharata," while Vaivasvata Manu was engaged in devotion on the riverbank, a fish appears and pleads to be saved from a bigger fish. He saves and places it in a jar, where growing larger and larger, he tells him of the forthcoming deluge. H.P.B. points out that it is the well-known "Matsya Avatar," the first Avatar of Vishnu and many other things besides. Vishnu orders a ship to be built, in which Manu is said to be saved along with the seven Rishis. H.P.B. explains that the seven Rishis stand for *seven Races*, the seven principles and various other things. In one sense it refers to the Atlantean flood and Vaivasvata, the great sage on Earth, who saved our Fifth Root-race from being destroyed along with the remnants of the Fourth or Atlantean Race (*S.D.*, I, 139-40). But Vaivasvata Manu is also shown as saving mankind or the portion of it (that would constitute the Fourth Race), when the Third Continent, Lemuria, perished 700,000 years before the commencement of Tertiary (Eocene) age, by Deluge (*S.D.*, II, 313).

As for the innumerable variety of species and their origin, the *Secret Doctrine* states that to begin with, when earth and everything on it was in the astral stage, there was differentiation of species from the seven primal, astral Root Types, with the intelligent aid of Dhyani Chohan's intelligences.

Can we do anything to change the world? Debbie Tenzer listened and argued with her girlfriends over the state of the world. Her friends felt that they were helpless to change anything. Debbie began to think how she as an individual could make some difference. She decided to find a way to do one nice thing for someone every week. She began with small gestures of kindness on every Monday, which was her own most difficult day. On suggestions from friends, she started a website and began posting her activities on that website, called "DoOneNiceThing.com." Now she communicates with "Nice-oholics" in 53 countries. These are the people inspired by her website and they help by sending plenty of school materials to Afghanistan, sweaters to help people endure bitter winter in Iraq, meet the needs of students fleeing hurricane Katrina in Mississippi and so on. "I do not believe there is any small nice thing. Some things are less labour intensive than others, but you never know the impact you can have," says Debbie. The site was set up in the year 2005 but has grown gradually by word of mouth. Many a times, Debbie and her website, have brought a ray of subshine in the storm, writes Jane Lampman. (*The Times of India*, March 26, 2008, courtesy *Christian Science Monitor*)

Do not curse darkness but light a candle, says a Chinese Proverb. If we have the negative attitude and say that nothing can be done, then of course, nothing is done. We must be willing to do the little good that we are at any time capable of. "A little heaven leaveneth the whole lump." The Great Ones, who remain in the invisible atmosphere of our earth, are charging the atmosphere with beneficent influences and thus alleviate the collective suffering of humanity to a certain extent. To be good and to do small acts of kindness in this world is not easy. But we must begin, and as an act of faith, pour some goodness, "to sweeten make the ocean's bitter waves." Not a single good example is lost. Even a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops of water, so the world can become full of goodness and happiness, little by little.

According to a study, the once-green Sahara would have turned to desert only gradually, over thousands of years, rather than in an abrupt shift, as previously believed. The lead author of the report about Sahara desert's history, published in the journal *Science*, believes that because of global warming there is backward shift towards greener conditions in parts of Sahara. This may help us understand future climate changes. The study of ancient pollen, spores and aquatic organisms in sediments in Lake Yoa in northern Chad, showed that 6000 years ago the region of Sahara desert must have been like Savannah forest and it must have taken some 2700 years to bring it to arid conditions. The scientists, studying the remote 3.5 square kilometre Lake Yoa, found that the region once had grasses and scattered acacia trees, ferns and herbs. The salty lake receives water from groundwater that wells up from beneath the desert. The gradual drying is attributed to shifts in monsoon rains linked to shifts in the power of the sun, and settling of the large amount of dust in the region, about 4300 years ago. (*The Times of India*, May 10, 2008, courtesy Reuters)

The Secret Doctrine tells us that “there was a time when the whole of Sahara desert was a sea, then a continent as fertile as the Delta, and then, only after another temporary submersion, it became a desert.” So too, the present desert of Shamo or Gobi, was previously a sea (*S.D.*, II, 404). There are shells found upon the surface of Sahara desert, which proves that a sea rolled over what is now a desert, and this was not long before the Miocene period (*S.D.*, II, 781-82). Thus, the transformation did not take place only a few thousand years ago. The Fourth or Atlantean Race perished during the Miocene period, when the Fifth (our Aryan Race) had independent existence of one million years. (*S.D.*, II, 714)

One one of the walls of the Birla temple in New Delhi there is an unusual inscription. It is an account of the alchemical experiment

carried out on May 27, 1942 by Shri Pandit Krishnapal Sharma, in the presence of many witnesses, of making 1 *tola* [11.66 grammes] of gold from 1 *tola* of mercury. The experiment comprised of mixing 1 *tola* of mercury with some white and yellow powder, put inside a *reetha* shell, which in turn was put into the hollow of an earthen lamp that was put on fire for about 45 minutes. The lamp was then put into water and the lump of gold weighing nearly 1 *tola* was removed from the hollow of the earthen lamp. A similar inscription exists in Varanasi's Birla temple, which mentions an experiment performed by Pandit Krishnapal Rasavaidya, of making 18 kilogram of gold from Mercury. The reason for keeping the inscription on the walls of Birla temple is to make people aware of the vast alchemical knowledge possessed by ancient Indian rishis, who knew the secret of converting mercury into gold. There are plenty of references in ancient Indian texts to this kind of alchemy. Researchers explain such conversions on the basis of low energy nuclear reaction, popularly known as cold fusion, *i.e.*, a nuclear reaction taking place at room temperature. But modern science has consistently refused to believe in cold fusion. Mahadeva Srinivasan, former associate director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), who was among the first to conduct research in the field of cold fusion, believes in this kind of alchemical conversion. However, he admits that the physics of these cold fusion reactions still remains a mystery. Among other benefits, cold fusion could help to produce electricity from water without producing any radioactive or hazardous waste, writes Atul Sethi. (*Sunday Times of India*, June 1, 2008)

The word *Alchemy* is a combination of *Al* and *Chemi*. *Chemi* means Fire. *Khem* was also the name of ancient Egypt. Hence, it was believed that science of alchemy originated in Egypt. In the article “Alchemy in the Nineteenth Century,” H.P.B. mentions that Alchemy was cultivated in China, in the 16th century B.C. It was only towards the end of the fourth century A.D. that it penetrated into Europe.

Alchemy is studied under three aspects—cosmic, human and

terrestrial. Terrestrial alchemy is concerned with transmutation of gross metals like lead into pure gold. There is alchemy going on in the bowels of the earth, bringing about transmutation of base metals into gold. H.P.B. points out that once science agrees that the elements known to science existed in the beginning in the igneous mass, it is possible to posit that there must exist a solvent which can once again reduce them back to that original form.

The alchemists postulate the existence of a certain Universal Solvent [Alkahest] by which all composite bodies are resolved into the homogeneous substance from which they are evolved. If this homogeneous substance which is called pure gold, or *summa materia*. Alchemy goes on in the body of man. Whatever we eat gets transmuted into blood, bones, mucous, tissues, etc., Shri Krishna says: “Becoming the internal fire of the living, I associate with the upward and downward breathing, and cause the four kinds of food to digest.” (*Gita*, XV)

“The occultist-chemist, spurning the gold of the mines, gives all his attention and directs his efforts only towards the transmutation of the baser quaternary into the divine upper trinity of man, which finally blended are one” *i.e.*, towards transmutation of lower, animal nature into divine nature. (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

ABSENCE of philosophical principles always leads people to wrong action. Mental confusion results in deeds which produce pain, sooner or later. Philosophical principles cleanse our minds of confusion and enable us to decide on a course of action which, however unpleasant in the beginning, produces bliss in the end. In times of stress, the absence of such philosophical principles precipitates wrong action.

Men and women live so much in their passing moods of feelings and emotions that most of them evaluate events in the light of the pleasure or pain they experience hour by hour. We do not need a philosopher to tell us that emotional moods of pleasure and repose or of pain and confusion are in themselves a great symbol of restlessness. A person in glee at high noon is down in the depths of despair at sunset, for men and masses of men ever move between light and darkness which are the world’s eternal ways. But we certainly *do* need a philosopher to stress for us the fact that feelings of enthusiasm and depression provide a false gauge, and a dangerous one because utterly unreliable.

Sometimes the same action brings joy to one and despair to another. The victor and the vanquished react differently to the same event. Changing moods are fancied by people to be misery and happiness. Enveloped by emotional glamour, they shed tears or shout cheers. The action which produces these opposite moods is one and the same action; and had it been true in the scientific sense or righteous in the philosophic, then there would have been *Ananda-Bliss* everywhere; bliss born of mental equanimity and of heart satisfaction would have been followed by a spirit of thankfulness everywhere.

Let us seek for the philosophical principles which would enable us to evaluate actions and their effects on us as pleasure and pain. In the Eighteenth Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita* Krishna describes three kinds of happiness. All people who are seeking happiness

have a direct and a valuable piece of instruction in this classification.

The first type of pleasure, the lowest, is rooted in mental laziness which makes a person inattentive and heedless. No one should allow his mind to remain for ever in the torpor of sleep. But there *are* people who enjoy their mental torpor, enjoy not doing anything. That pleasure is negative in quality; it is a feeling of dullness, arising from the neglect of duties, which the *Gita* describes as improper.

The second kind of happiness is that which is rooted in actions impelled by the senses and by the appetites and the desires. The *Gita* describes it as sweet in the beginning, but bitter in the long run. The beguiling sweetness tastes like *Amrita*, heavenly nectar, while the senses and the organs are enjoying it; but it proves to be poison in the process of time. Shankara in his commentary on this *Gita* verse uses strong language; this kind of happiness brings “deterioration in strength, vigour, wisdom, intellect, wealth and energy; it leads to *adharma*, unrighteousness, and ultimately to *naraka*, hell.” Human actions which are related to this type of happiness fall into two divisions: (a) avoidance of actions which look painful or troublesome though they are duties to be attended to; and (b) indulgence in actions which look pleasurable, which are easy to perform, but which, not being duties, are not necessary to undertake. For temporary and sensuous satisfaction in the present, men and women act, thoughtless of the future.

The third kind of pleasure is defined as arising from a purified understanding and from clear knowledge belonging to the Soul. When our mind is cleansed and the knowledge of *Atma-Buddhi* flows into and through it, we enjoy the supreme satisfaction of the third type of happiness. The cleaning of the mind is a painful process and therefore this type of pleasure is described in the *Gita* as poison-like in the beginning; but when, as a result of that cleansing, the Wisdom of the Higher Self—*Atma-Buddhi*—flows into the mind, we enjoy the happiness of Nectar—the beverage of the immortal Gods. The cleansing of the mind destroys whatever conflict of duties we may have been troubled about, for the inflowing wisdom reveals

to us what our duties really are, and more—that wisdom brings the strength to perform those duties without self-interest and without a desire for reward. Self-interest implies desire for a particular kind of result; if it comes about, we are happy; if not, we become unhappy; but in that feeling we lose sight of the truth and the righteousness of our actions. Therefore, real happiness follows when self-interest is put away and desire for the fruits of our deeds is eradicated.

An action does not become right or righteous because it is pleasurable and profitable to us; nor must it be rejected as wrong as unrighteous because its effects on us are painful. Such profit and loss, pain and pleasure, are ephemeral and in the whirligig of time the enduring aspect of any action has to be faced by each one of us. Virtue brings its own reward, and guilt its punishment—tomorrow or after many days.

Each one of us has to learn to seek the principles to be applied in performing actions. The *Bhagavad-Gita* has been called the Book of *Karma-Yoga*; but *Karma-Yoga* is not the performance of ordinary actions. W. Q. Judge explains that *Karma-Yoga* means “concentration and contemplation while engaged in action.” He writes:

We must therefore seek for concentration in order that we may be able to do those actions which the All-Wise presents to us to be done, remaining the while unaffected.

But the All-Wise cannot and does not present any plan to the lower desire-self, with its wandering mind. Only to the purified mind which is concentrated does the true vision come, which vision enables one to act rightly and righteously.

Each one of us, then, has the solemn duty of finding out the truths and principles ere we act; nay more, of determining what our duties are in verity. The responsibility of political leaders whose acts involve nations is a thousand times greater. Pure actions result only from pure thinking.