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

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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PAYING OUR KARMIC DEBTS

KARMA is the law of action and reaction; cause and effect. The law of Karma adjusts every effect to its cause and restores the disturbed equilibrium in the physical world and broken harmony in the moral world. When the adjustment of the effect to the cause is quick, we are able to relate the effect back to its cause. For instance, overeating or eating of stale food resulting in stomach-ache; chain smoking in youth causing lung cancer in old age, and so on. But there are times when we are unable to see the cause for the effect or the karmic consequences, because those causes might have been generated in one of our prior lives. Our actions in one life are like the arrows shot from the bow, acting upon us in this or the later life, producing our rewards and punishments. Thus, each of our actions, at the level of thought, word and deed, gets recorded either on the credit or on the debit side of the life's ledger. Those accumulated on the debit side come to fruition when an appropriate body and environment is obtained by the soul, and until then remain as karmic debts. How does one settle or repay the debt? The settling of debts or the Karmic adjustment by bringing reaction for our actions is called the *Karmic compensation*.

As we repay our debts, in pain and adversity, we want to know its cause. One of the aphorisms on Karma states that he who knows what is the ultimate division of time in this Universe knows Karma. *For all other men Karma is in its essential nature unknown and*

unknowable. It is also not possible for an ordinary person to know the *manner* in which the law of compensation exacts the due. The general understanding is that if we persecute or ridicule a crippled person in this life, we will be persecuted and ridiculed in turn, in this or in the next life. Mr. Judge's explanation in *The Ocean of Theosophy* is that a child is born humpbacked *probably* because in some prior life he persistently reviled and persecuted a deformed person so as to imprint the picture of that person in his own immortal mind. On coming to birth again, the Ego carries that picture and causes the astral body, being formed in the womb, to assume a deformed shape, by electrical and magnetic osmosis through the mother of the child.

At a very simple level, if we cheat a person we create a debt. In some life we might be born in his company to repay the debt. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, there is the story, "The Turn of the Wheel," which is about prince Rama of Rajpootana, from whom a rival king unjustly demanded all his possessions, and was given the same by Rama. The story goes on that in a subsequent life Karma brings them together again, and makes the unjust king settle the account by paying the karmic debt, quite unknowingly. We create debt when we disturb the harmony by causing harm to another. We create this debt at the level of thought, speech and action. Thoughts are actions on the mental plane. Our unwholesome or evil thoughts of revenge, hatred, jealousy, etc., do not vanish but get impressed on the astral light. Another person having similar thoughts could attract them, and these give him an added impulse in that direction. We, thus have a share in his evil action. When we condemn, oppose or judge a person, even if he seems to deserve it for his actions in this life, his nature will react against us when the time comes. An opposition is set up in the other person, and may set up a tendency in him to harm us in a million different ways in a subsequent life. "A harsh word uttered in past lives is not destroyed, but ever comes again," says *The Voice of the Silence*. The person, who hits back because he is hit, retaliates. As a result, each of them may carry a

seed of hatred that must sooner or later make an effect.

During Karmic adjustment, as we repay the debts, the Law of Karma takes into account many factors. The Law takes into account the motive behind the action, the inner state of the person and the weight of his past Karma. We do not incur very heavy debt, when we act wrongly *but with a good motive*, or because we were disturbed inwardly. But the inner state of a person in a given life is the sum total of all experiences and circumstances of a given life as well as those of earlier lives. A stingy and unkind person often has the background of a difficult childhood or an exposure to severe poverty. So also, our mental, moral and psychic constitution is a result of Karma from previous lives. If we want to avoid incurring karmic debts we must learn to *respond* and not *react* to situations and people. Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher, puts it thus:

When someone speaks to you curtly, disregards what you say, performs what seems to be a thoughtless gesture or even an outright evil act, think to yourself, "If I were that person and had endured the same trials, borne the same heartbreaks, had the same parents, and so on, I probably would have done or said the same thing." We are not privy to the stories behind people's actions, *so we should be patient with others and suspend our judgment of them*, recognizing the limits of our understanding....When people do not act as you would wish them to, exercise the muscle of your good nature by shrugging your shoulders and saying to yourself "Oh Well." Then let the incident go.

We incur heavier karmic debt when we engage in a wrong action *knowingly*. In fact, the more aware we are—of right and wrong—heavier is the debt incurred. On the other hand, crimes committed in *Avidya* (ignorance), as by children, idiots, savages and people who know no better, involve physical but no moral responsibilities or karma. For instance, if a blind and helpless person accidentally hits another in the eye, causing hurt, it is usual for the hurt person to excuse the act and to feel no resentment, and to bear within no seed

for future hate. But the same action done purposely, arouses hatred and resentment in the other person and that person on dying carries with him the seed of hatred and in some other life it will sprout and bring the reaction, pain and also the opportunity to learn the lesson. In the first case there will be consequences on the physical plane but no moral suffering, which is involved in the latter case.

Mr. Judge tries to explain the *rationale* of the operation of the Moral Law of Compensation, in one particular case, of an idiot boy, born of wealthy parents, but with malicious nature. He mutilated flowers and killed insects, in his state of idiocy. The insects and flowers, not knowing his state of idiocy, turned their eyes upon him with pain, as he tortured them. In dying, his spiritual picture, together with that pain and the desire for revenge, were photographed, so to speak, upon their spirits (elementals). These elemental spirits being impressed with his image kept a link with him and when he was born again, these elementals precipitated down his glance, when he directed his glance on any thing or person. They saw what he looked upon and brought about disaster. But gradually the old impressions wore off and he found success in all that he did.

We fulfil our karmic debts when we *accept* the adverse or painful circumstances without grumbling or complaining. We might even go a step further and say, "This is not only what I deserved, but what in fact I desired." This is an attitude of supreme surrender, of unswerving faith in the Law of Karma—an inward stance necessary to cultivate by every true spiritual aspirant. With such an attitude, we will not resort to any prayers or propitiatory ceremonies, or cause to deviate the course of the Law and dodge the karmic consequences. There is total acceptance that "my own has come back to me." H.P.B. writes:

Not even the greatest of Yogis can divert the progress of Karma, or arrest the natural results of actions for more than a short period, and even in that case, these results will only reassert themselves later with even tenfold force, for such is the occult law of Karma and the *Nidanas*. (*H.P.B. Series*

No. 32, p. 34)

We could pay off our karmic debts, and help others to do so, by setting in motion fresh good causes. As Mr. Judge suggests, "The indissoluble unity of the race demands that we should consider every man's troubles as partly due to ourselves, because we have been always units in the race and helped to make the conditions which cause suffering." When we refrain from helping others we create a karmic debt through the act of omission.

In a larger sense, so long as we do not learn to act selflessly, renouncing attachment to the results of actions, we are going to incur karmic debt, i.e., get bound by Karmic chain of cause and effect. Even good actions could be binding, if you feel that *you* have done the good and feel proud about it. To become perfect performer of all actions we need to act with right motive and true aim, and then we become spiritually enlightened, reaching in time the power to see what should be done and what to refrain from. Says Mr. Judge:

It is not ours to say what shall be the result of an action; the Law will bring about a result much better, perhaps, than we had imagined. If the results, if the passing daily circumstances, are not those we expected, then by means of Devotion we accept them as just what the Law intended. But if we fix our desire on accomplishing even a seeming good result, we are bound by that desire, no matter whether our wish is accomplished or not. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 68-69)

We have contributed in making the humanity as we find it today. Our effort should be to improve the situation in the family, race or nation, instead of trying to run away. Alfred Nobel was a Swedish chemist, engineer, innovator, armaments manufacturer and the inventor of dynamite. The erroneous publication in 1888 of a premature obituary of Nobel by a French newspaper, condemning him for his invention of dynamite, is said to have brought about his

decision to leave a better legacy after his death. The obituary stated "The merchant of death is dead" and went on to say, "Dr. Alfred Nobel, who became rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before, died yesterday." To compensate, Nobel signed his last will and testament and set aside the bulk of his estate to establish the Nobel Prizes to be awarded annually without distinction of nationality to those who had conferred the greatest benefit on mankind.

Family, Racial and National Karma are collective Karma, which influence every unit constituting the whole through the Law of distribution. We bear certain consequences by virtue of being part of the whole. We must always remember that we are indebted to many people, even for our morning cup of tea and bread. Since there are plumbers, electricians and servants, we save time and energy. We must contribute in our turn by utilizing the time thus saved for the good of others. Instead of complaining against crime, pollution, and corruption in the country we must do our best to eradicate it. Epictetus has this to say:

Human betterment is a gradual, two-steps-forward, one-step-back effort. Forgive others for their misdeeds over and over again. This gesture fosters inner ease.Regularly ask yourself, "How are my thoughts, words, and deeds affecting my friends, my spouse, my neighbour, my child, my employer, my subordinates, my fellow citizens? Am I doing my part to contribute to the spiritual progress of all with whom I come in contact?" Make it your business to draw out the best in others by being an exemplar yourself.

O GoD! if I worship Thee in fear of Hell, burn me in Hell;
and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from
Paradise: but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold
not Thine Everlasting Beauty!

-RABIA OF BASRA

ON MAGNETISM

H

THE PRANIC currents circulating in the astral body, affect the body and ultimately stream forth as our magnetism in the form of magnetic fluid. H.P.B. gives us correct understanding of this life-fluid or nervous ether or Life-force. It is *animal vitality* diffused in all nature. It is not an "animal product," but the living animal, the living flower or plant are *its* products. The animal tissues absorb it according to their more or less healthy or morbid state and they are regulated, strengthened, and *fed* by it. The visible Sun is the storehouse of Vital Force, which *is* the *Noumenon* of Electricity. From its mysterious, never-to-be-fathomed depths issue those life currents, which thrill through Space, as through the organisms of every living thing on Earth. It penetrates man and animal; accumulates in the nervous centers during sleep, and brings them to their due tone and imparts to muscle renewed life. This is *Liquor Vitae* or *Archaeus* of Paracelsus. In death, it changes its state from activity to passivity. It is magnetic or auric emanations of all beings, which under the strong will of the mesmerizer brings about mesmeric cures.

It is true that currents of magnetism emanate from all physical bodies including human beings. Magnetic emanations of one object can affect another, quite unconsciously. However, since man is endowed with will, he can impart his magnetism to any inanimate object. A needle can be magnetized when held in hand by a strong-willed person. Again, the magnetic influence imparted by a human being could be good or evil, depending upon his motive and magnetic purity or impurity. Just as a piece of iron gets magnetized when a magnet is applied to it, so also, a talisman is often a worthless bit of metal, a scrap of paper or a shred of fabric, imbued by that greatest of all magnets, called human will, with a potency for good or evil.

We impart our magnetism to whatever we touch or wear. 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). The tradition among the Hindus, of not shaking hands with others, reflects 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*)

Wine and spirits are supposed to contain and preserve the bad magnetism of all the persons who helped in their preparation and bottling. Likewise meat of each animal preserves the psychic characteristics of that animal. A story, based on facts, by Arthur Conan Doyle, entitled "The Silver Hatchet," shows that a certain hatchet which had been used to perform a crime, almost irresistibly impelled to crime all those who handled it afterwards. The handle of the hatchet was hollow and contained a written curse. H.P.B. comments that it shows the influence of the evil magnetism impressed on a material object. Similar to the murderous

on the hatchet, suicidal influence lingered in a sentry box in Germany, wherein over a dozen soldiers committed suicide, one after the other. (*The Theosophist*, July 1884)

If a person gives vent to intense feelings of grief, anger, jealousy or hatred, while standing under a tree or near a stone, then thousands of years later, a psychometer would be able to see the image of that person and sense his feelings, by holding in his hand a fragment of that tree or the stone. This fact is of immense importance and use in archeology. For instance, a psychometer can accurately describe the building and its inhabitants by putting to his forehead a fragment of the stone belonging to that building. He could describe the animal by holding the fossil bone in his hand. In such cases, the object acts as a medium, which puts the psychometer *en rapport* with the magnetic aura of its surroundings. He is brought in contact with *akasic* impressions through the object, where images of all the past events are impressed.

It is said that every human being throws off, *unconsciously*, the magnetic fluid that affects the objects and beings around him. A mesmerizer projects the same fluid from himself, *consciously* and under the guidance of his will. When we hold any object in our hand we transfer our magnetism to that object. In a healthy and young person these magnetic emanations are strong while the same are weak in case of diseased or old person. When two such people come in close proximity of each other, there is transfer of magnetic fluid or vitality from the stronger to the weaker person, which may leave the stronger person exhausted. H.P.B. points out that breeders never herd together young animals with old; intelligent physicians forbid parents to have young children occupy their own beds. When David was old and feeble his vital forces were replenished by bringing a young person in close contact with him so that he could absorb her strength. As an extreme example, there is the case of Seeress of Prevest, Madame Hauffe, who repeatedly stated that she supported life merely on the atmosphere of the people surrounding her and their *magnetic emanations*. H.P.B. points out that the seeress

was a *magnetic vampire*, who absorbed vitality of stronger people in the form of *volatilized blood*. (*Isis*, I, 463)

A pure and healthy magnetizer or mesmerizer cures his patients by projecting or imparting his healthy, vital fluid. When a healthy operator mesmerizes his patient with a determined desire to cure him, the exhaustion felt by the former is proportionate to the relief given to the patient. A process of endosmose takes place, and the healer parts with a portion of his vital aura to benefit the sick man. When this vital fluid is imparted in greater degree, the healer himself begins to feel weak and exhausted. Hence, H.P.B. cautions:

The curative magnetism that is forced by their will into the bodies of their patients, *conies out of their own systems*. What they have, they can give; no more. And as the maintenance of one's own health is a prime duty, they should never attempt healing unless they have a surplus of vitality to spare, over and above what may be needed to carry themselves through their round of duties and keep their systems well up to tone. Otherwise they would soon break down and become themselves invalids. (*The Theosophist*, April 1883)

When unconscious exchange of vitality takes place we have no control except to avoid coming in close contact with such a person who, is shown by experience to drain us of our vitality.

Just as mesmeric fluid passed on by the mesmerizer can heal the disease, so also when used on flowers and fruits it was found to promote their growth, colour, flavour and perfume. On the other hand, there are people who magnetically vampirize even fruits and flowers when they come in contact with them. Miss C. L. Hunt mentions in her *Compendium of Mesmeric Information* that "there are persons who are unable to wear or handle flowers, as they begin to wither or droop directly, as though the vitality of the plant were being appropriated by the wearer, instead of being sustained." H.P.B. remarks that if anyone even salutes a Brahmin while he is on his way to offer *puja* (worship), carrying with him flowers, he would

at once throw away those flowers, go back home and bring fresh flowers. "The simple explanation being that the magnetic current projected towards him by the saluter taints the floral aura and makes the blossoms no longer fit for the mystical psychic ceremony of which they are necessary accessories." (*The Theosophist*, February 1883)

We are affected by magnetic currents of the earth, and hence importance has been given to the sleeping position. In *The Theosophist*, May 1883, Seeta Nath Ghosh advocates sleeping with one's head placed southward and feet placed northward. He argues that in this position, the south pole of the earth and one's head which is the north pole of our body; and North pole of the earth and our feet which are two branches of the south pole of our body, would be placed in juxtaposition and hence would attract each other, so that the polarity of the body, natural to it, will be preserved. H.P.B. points out that Baron Reichenbach recommends quite the contrary position, i.e., he strongly recommends sleeping with one's head to the north and feet placed southward. She observes that the initiated adepts generally sleep in this direction. However, since the adept has undergone long years of peculiar physiological training, we cannot compare the physical body of an adept with that of an average mortal. H.P.B. remarks that "it is only in cases of perfect health that we must sleep with our heads southward. There are abnormal temperaments and cases of nervous diseases when the opposite is necessary," i.e., sleeping with the head placed northwards. "Perfect knowledge of the magnetic state of human bodies—a state which varies incessantly, can be acquired only by the supplementary study of occult science in addition to the physical."

(To be concluded)

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

FLOWERS—I

THE CHAPTER is called *Pupphavaggo* or Flowers. Many poets have written about the beauty of flowers and of nature. As one reads William Wordsworth's poem, "Daffodils," one becomes aware that the memory of the daffodils was etched in the poet's mind and soul to be cherished forever. When he is feeling lonely, dull or depressed, he thinks of the daffodils and cheers up. Lord Tennyson, a poet, a mystic and a pantheist, was also a great lover of nature. One of his biographers, Hugh Fausset, tells us that at the age of eight he would fill up his whole slate with blank verse in praise of flowers. As a pantheist he saw the presence of God in everything. Throughout his life he had a constant feeling of a spiritual harmony existing between man and the outer, visible universe, and the immanence of God in the infinitesimal atom as in the vaster system. This is well brought out in his following poem:

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Buddha, too, has used symbols of flower and animals to illustrate his doctrines. "The Canto of Flowers" is of great philosophical importance to the students of Theosophy. Though omitted from some versions of the *Dhanunapada*, this Canto offers impressive evidence of Buddha's "love of life" and appreciation of beauty. The Canto shows the exaltation of the way to Nirvana and compares life of a man who follows the Path to a carefully woven garland of beautiful flowers. Each virtue being a blossom fitted in the exact place where it can show to the best advantage and add to the beauty of the whole. Above all, it shows Buddha's ability to put across most sublime

truths of spiritual life by using simple but graphic images of everyday life.

1. *Who shall overcome this earth? And who the sphere of Mina, the god of death? And who the world of the happy gods? And who shall choose the steps on the Path of Law even as the gardener culls the choicest blooms? (44)*

2. *The disciple will overcome this earth. Also Yamaloka. Also the sphere of the gods. The disciple chooses to take steps on the Path of Law. He is the expert gardener who culls the choicest blooms. (45)*

The first verse is very significant. Buddha speaks of the disciple who may eventually overcome both, "this earth" and "the god of death," and *then* also he must "overcome the world of the happy gods." If the "gods" are "happy," this must indicate that the development toward Buddhahood includes a continual refinement of aesthetic perception, rather than their cessation. As to who the "happy gods" are we find an important clue in the *Mahayana* scriptures, occurring in the *Lankavatara Sutra*. In this sutra, Buddha discusses that stage of *Bodhisattvahood* when the Bodhisattvas become intoxicated with the happiness derived from attainment of perfect tranquillity. This then is a stage—a necessary and expected one. Yet the *Bodhisattva* who has reached it must recognize its limitations. That he *can* do so signifies that the psychological condition described is not completely illusory, but rather the result of improper emphasis. The *Lankavatara Sutra* continues in this way:

Failing to understand fully that there is nothing in the world but what is seen of the Mind itself, they are thus unable to overcome the hindrances and habit-energy growing out of their notions of generality and individuality...they have the discriminating idea and knowledge of Nirvana. Their thoughts are possessed by the notion of Nirvana...like the ignorant, they are desirous of enjoying Nirvana for themselves....Mahamati, when the Bodhisattvas face and perceive the happiness of the

Samadhi of perfect tranquillisation, they are moved with the feeling of love and sympathy owing to their original vows...made for all beings, saying "So long as they do not attain Nirvana I will not attain it myself." Thus, they keep themselves away from Nirvana. But the fact is that they are already in Nirvana because in them there is no rising of discrimination. With them the discrimination of grasped and grasping no more takes place; as they (now) recognize that there is nothing in the world but what is seen of the Mind itself, they have done away with the thought of discrimination concerning all things. Mahamati, they will exercise themselves to make those who have not yet attained the truth attain it. For the Bodhisattvas, Nirvana does not mean extinction.

In India, people speak of earth-life, heaven, hell and *Moksha* or Nirvana. The perfected one rises above them all. He does not crave for the happiness of earth-life or that of the heaven-world—the land of happy gods. His supreme compassion enables him to renounce Nirvana, the state of absolute peace and bliss to remain in the world to be able to help the suffering humanity. He becomes a *Nirmanakaya*—One who has conquered life and death. Says *The Voice of the Silence*:

The Shangna robe 'tis true, can purchase light eternal.
The Shangna robe alone gives the Nirvana of destruction;
it stops rebirth, but, O Lanoo, it also kills—compassion. No
longer can the perfect Buddhas, who don the Dharmakaya
glory, help man's salvation. Alas! shall SELVES be sacrificed
to *Self*; mankind, unto the weal of Units?

Know, O beginner, this is the *Open* PATH, the way to
selfish bliss, shunned by the Bodhisattvas of the "Secret
Heart," the Buddhas of Compassion. (pp. 35-36)

"The Wheel of Life" in Buddhism embraces the whole of conditioned existence. There are concentric circles surrounding the hub of the wheel. One of these circles is divided into six segments.

These six segments represent six worlds, six realms of existence. These are realms of the gods, titans, hungry ghosts, hell beings, animals and humans. Living beings are reborn in a particular realm as a result of their karma and live in that realm until that karma has been exhausted. However, these six realms could also be looked upon as six states of mind, which we experience here and now, in our present human existence. We might then take the world of gods to represent a happy, pleased state of mind, a state of relaxation, content and repose. The world of gods may also be regarded as the world of higher aesthetic enjoyment, explains Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher. Hence, overcoming the sphere of happy gods, at the level of mind, might mean going beyond *sattva* quality, which means overcoming self-identifying attachment to even such things as knowledge, happiness, peace, love, etc. Sangharakshita points out that the Buddhist tradition insists that prolonged happiness can be spiritually dangerous. We need to move on from the heights of aesthetic experience to the experience of the Transcendental. He goes on to explain that the second world is that of the *asuras* or titans, and represents an aggressive, competitive state of mind. The world of *pretas* or hungry ghosts is the state of neurotic desires, where one seeks from the object of desire more than that object can give. This often happens in close personal relationships, when one person demands too much of another. The world of tormented or hell beings, is the state of acute mental suffering, of nervous frustration, mental breakdown. The fifth world of the animals is the state of purely sensual indulgence, where one is only interested in food, sex and simple material comforts. The sixth world is the world of men or human beings, where one leads a truly human life.

In terms of states after death, the sphere of *Yama* is the sphere of death. *Yama* is the god of death, who performs the important duty of terminating life that eventually leads to a rebirth in a new body. He presides over the moment of death. He judges the dead, based on actions of life just ended, and sends them to heaven—the land of gods (*devachan*), or to hell. Those who have done good go to

heaven, to enjoy the fruits of their good deeds, while evil doers are sent to hell or *kamaloka* to suffer for their evil actions. However, both these states are finite and come to an end so that man is reborn to take up the cross. The one who has perfected himself can enter into any of these states at will. It is not easy to reach such a stage. First, one has to recognize the Path of *Law* or *Dhamma* or *Dhanna*. Then one has to make a conscious choice to walk the Path, to resolve to cull choicest blooms of life. Our earthly existence gives us opportunities to learn and grow. At death, what comes with us is *not* our name, fame, bank balance or academic qualification. What accompanies the soul in the after death state and future births is only the aroma of our good deeds, our noble thoughts and actions, compassion and mercy for all the living things, high aspirations, impersonal love for the good, the true and the beautiful for its own sake. These are the choicest blooms of life we cull at the hour of death, which have their roots in one's spiritual nature. Thus, as the garland maker chooses the choicest flowers, so should one choose the Path of *Dhamma* and overcome all the three worlds—the earth, the sphere of death and the world of happy gods.

However, not all become expert gardeners. Buddhism speaks of *Putthujan*, the worldly people, *Srottapati*—the one who has entered the Stream, and the *Sekha* or the disciple, who strives to become an A rhat. The term for disciple is *Sekha*, one who is learning, is under training, and is being taught the Holy Wisdom. He determines not to remain a worldling any more, but to become a Listener, a *Shravaka* with a view to apply to life what he hears and to become a *Shramana* (exerciser). These two appellations answer to the Greek terms, *akoustikoi* and *asketai*. The *Sekha* (Disciple), flowers into perfection of *Asekha*, i.e., one who is no longer a Disciple, when he has nothing more to learn, because he has attained perfection in wisdom. (*The Dhammapada*, p. 102)

(To be continued)

HEALTH AND DISEASE IN HOMOEOPATHY

II

PARACELSUS termed it "*principium vitae*" (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 20*, p. 9). In the same pamphlet, containing H.P.B.'s article on "Kosmic Mind," she quotes a great man of science, Dr. Pirogoff of St. Petersburg, whose views approximate the occult teachings of Theosophy in regard to the Universal Mind and that bugbear of the materialists—the existence in every organism, as also outside, in Kosmos, of a distinct Vital Force independent of any chemical or physical process. Boger, in his *Studies in the Philosophy of Healing*, writes:

In the very year of my graduation Madame Blavatsky laid down the postulate that "the essence of life is consubstantial with electricity." We are only now beginning to realize fully how true this is. This vital force must be of a fluidic nature and at present perhaps still superphysical. It is also interpenetrative in that its effects are practically not only local but general at the same moment.

Health is a state of dynamic stable equilibrium of the human organism within itself—in all its constituents, and between man and his environment of which he forms an integral part. One of the fundamental precepts of biology is stability of environment—external and internal. Nature provides the optimum conditions essential to a state of continued health. A healthy man is in perfect balance or harmony in all departments of his nature; even under stress in the environment, he is able to adjust himself harmoniously, without breaking down. This adequate adjustment is brought about by *reflex responses*—one of the essential attributes of life which enables an organism to maintain constancy of internal environment in face of adverse influences. These reflex responses are effected through the adaptive mechanisms of the human body—the hypothalamus, pituitary-suprarenal axis and the autonomic nervous system—with

resultant physiological reactions. This phenomenon of adaptation is basic to all life. Health means absence of symptoms, the feeling of well-being.

Disease is a state of dynamic unstable equilibrium, imbalance, disharmony, both within man, and between man and his environment. It means "dis-ease," "ill-at-ease." As disease is essentially dynamic, and as the Vital Force is invisible and intangible, disease, too, is invisible and intangible; it is unknown and unknowable, save through its effects, which are signs and symptoms, as experienced by the patient, observed by the attendants, and elicited by the physician through clinical examination with or without accessory aids to diagnosis—the laboratory, X-ray machine, etc. Symptoms, therefore, form the sole perceptible evidence of disease, which lies deeper than its peripheral expressions. Symptoms are the "language of Nature" which the physician has to learn to decipher. Their classification, correct interpretation and evaluation are of paramount importance in remedy-selection and subsequent management.

Disease is the result of failure of adaptation of the human organism to adverse environmental stimuli—external and internal, physical and emotional. As the Vital Force pervades the whole being of man, its derangement affects man as a whole, at all levels. It is not the part, organ or tissue only that is diseased; it is *man as a unit* who is sick. Disease affects both the *soma* and the *psyche*. Our study, therefore, should be Man, the subject of accidents or diseases, and not only diseases. "The individual, not the disease, is the entity," said the celebrated Sir William Oster. Dr. Alexis Carrel, in *Man, the Unknown*, strikes a similar note:

A disease is not an entity. Disease is a personal event. It consists of the individual himself. There are as many different diseases as patients. Immense regions of our inner world are still unknown. The science of man is the most difficult of all sciences, and medicine will have great contributions to make thereto, if, as doctors, we take off our blinkers, and study "man" and not merely his diseases.

It is no platitude that the doctor should treat the patient and not his disease. Rather that is the first principle of medical practice. The disease, that complicated reaction between the psychosomatic constitution of the individual man and the risks to which he has succumbed, is the abstract concept. The patient is the concrete reality. Hence the dictum: "There are no diseases; only sick patients." Homoeopathic therapeutics is aimed at the *individual in his illness*, and not merely at the disease; the remedy is selected on the basis of the *symptom-totality* of the patient, and not merely of the disease-diagnosis. No attempt should be made to cure the part without treating the whole. The body cannot be cured without treating the soul; there is profound sympathy between the two; any defect of either causes the greatest discord and disproportion in the other. Healing occurs from within outwards.

Homoeopathy takes into consideration the constitution of the patient, for diagnosis as well as for treatment. It is constitutional drug therapeutics at its best. Constitution is to be understood as the sum total of the characteristic features of the individual on all planes on which the Vital Force operates. The hereditary plan of organization includes three factors: the structural pattern, the functional pattern and susceptibility. Susceptibility is the inherent capacity in all living organisms to react to environmental stimuli; it is the basic attribute of all life. A man falls ill because he is susceptible to sickness—to disease-pathogen. This susceptibility gets altered in disease, i.e., heightened. Disease, then, is the resultant of adverse environment acting on the abnormal susceptibility of the host, with subsequent failure of adaptation; and it manifests as symptoms on all planes affected by the Vital Force. Man, in homoeopathy, is a composite being, a multidimensional entity, a synthetic unit of life, consciousness and intelligence. "Mind is the key to the man," said James Kent; symptoms pertaining to the mind, intellect and emotions are of greater importance in remedy-selection than the symptoms of the physical body. "Whether we realize it or not, we

guides to the indicated remedy." (Boger in *Studies in the Philosophy of Healing*)

A fundamental precept of biology is the concept of Biological Variation. No two individuals are alike in health. No two individuals are likewise alike in sickness; they differ in their behavioural-patterns, despite identity of disease-stimuli. Two patients suffering from an identical disease will yet vary in their reaction-patterns, in their individual characteristics, based on their peculiar susceptible constitutions. This is the concept of Individualization in homoeopathy; each patient is considered as a unit separate from every other, having a distinct individuality of his own, and therefore requiring a different remedy for the same disease. Individualization is the key-note in homoeopathic prescribing. Standardization in therapeutics has limited application and success. The natural corollary to Individualization is that several remedies may be indicated in one disease, and one remedy may be useful in many diseases.

All phenomena in Nature are purposeful. "There is a concurrent design in the seemingly blindest forces in Nature." This teleological concept is another fundamental precept of biology. The reaction of the host to adverse environment consequent on maladaptation in ill health is purposeful. The march or evolution of the patient's symptoms follows a meaningful pattern—both in disease and in recovery. There is a centrifugal flow of disease from within outwards, first affecting the inner man (mind, intellect, emotions), as denoted by change in his mental disposition, thought structure and feeling nature. These may be termed the "symptoms of the individual" on the inner dynamic plane of the human economy. The inner man is always the first to be sick before the disease filters into the plane of the physical body. The next group of symptoms to emerge on the surface are disturbances in the functions of the physical body ("Altered Physiology"). These are chiefly felt subjectively by the patient. Then follow organic or structural changes in tissues and organs, i.e., pathological formations ("Altered Anatomy"). These

are mainly elicited by the clinician. The last to be affected are the vital organs, such as brain, heart, kidney, liver, lung, etc. Finally, clinical symptoms may be superadded to pathological symptoms, as a result of emotional shock and anxiety-tension generated by the previous attack; e.g., cardiac neurosis consequent on an attack of acute coronary disease. The classical example of such orderly progression of symptoms is peptic ulcer. There are at first the symptoms of the change in the patient's mental nature, followed by symptoms of excess acidity in the stomach, followed later by the formation of an ulcer in the stomach. These are the stages in the evolution of the full-blown disease-picture.

It is at the *individual* and functional levels of the vital derangement in the human economy that homoeopathic therapeutics has the scope of applicability *par excellence*. It has unlimited potentialities for good—limited only by the ability of the prescriber—in the field of neurosis, early psychosis and psycho-somatic disorders, as well as in the so-called "functional problems of medicine," such as the allergies. Clinical diagnosis is dependent on pathology; the latter determines the prescription in allopathy. Homoeopathic prescription is not based on pathology; it is determined by the characteristic constitution of the patient, which in turn determines the symptoms at the first two levels of the vital derangement, prior to the pathological stage. A homoeopath can, in fact, *anticipate* the remedy which, when applied early in the disease, can cut short or abort the course of illness, or prevent complications. Homoeopathic therapeutics, although it is independent of pathological charges, yet takes due note of them in the symptom-totality of the patient, as part of the whole disease-process.

(To be concluded)

WE love God with his own love: awareness of it defies
us.

—ECKHART

OTHELLO

THE TALE OF A HYPNOTISED SOLDIER

II

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PERHAPS some light may be thrown on these questions by regarding this play as a complex picture of militarists, one of them being the hypnotizer. Othello, Cassio and Iago are soldiers of fortune who have pledged their services for a time to the City of Venice. The hypnotism exerted on Othello and Cassio concerned their private lives, but through characteristics common to soldiers, they were easily open to the particular kinds of influence forced upon them by Iago. Cassio was a soldier rather because of the customs of the times. Othello could hardly have been anything else than a warrior.

The mass-belief in the human consciousness of the need of physical war, of the breaking of one will, individual or national, in order that another individual or national will may rule, the belief in the need and inevitableness of destruction and death, in order that there may be an expansion or a defence of national life—these beliefs are primitive, prehistoric, racial. What, then, may be expected in the mentality of professional soldiers but the impulses that create war and the effects of war?

It is important to see that the war impulses—the tendency to iron-handed breaking of other wills, and *the belief in the necessity of destruction, murder and death—do not lift away from a warrior's mind, as mists do from hills, when he leaves war-conditions to pass into private life.* They remain with him, somewhat dulling his reason while putting sharp edges on his emotions. Discipline at one end, slaughter at the other—these nearly make the swing of his mental pendulum. When, therefore, he is angered in the family life, his natural first impulse is to fight. For he expects implicit obedience, and if he does not get it, he often enforces it with

attitudes and effects may be called part of the race-hypnotism by war. Closely intermingled with these are those attitudes already mentioned toward sex and marriage, which too make a kind of race-hypnotism—that of sex.

What is called sex exists only on the lower planes of being. There is no sex in the Upper Triad. Yet it does have its ultimate origin in the very highest planes of manifestation, where appear the active creative principle, Spirit, the Moulder, the Ideation; and with this, its necessary complement, the receptive co-ordinative principle, the Moulded, the ideated Form and Forms. As the Manasic Beings descended into the lower planes of their evolution, carrying along these essential and opposite principles, and as they became more forgetful of the higher duties and purposes of their long manvantaric experience, and more commingled with the ignorant selfishness of animal mind and matter, their active Male principle became clouded with selfish domineering animal lusts; while the recipient Female principle in them grew less able to resist such domination.

Therein is the root of man's claim of woman as his *property*—a conjoined root of self-aggrandizement on the one side, and on the other of self-passivity becoming weakness. Yet according to the law of Spirit it is impossible for one man to be another man's property. And this individual self-ownership is a thing that sex does not touch—cannot give and cannot take away.

But recorded history belies this fact. In earlier history, as the brute type of man seized upon a wife-property with brutal hands, and the higher type of man received her bound with stringent human laws, so either type defended her with a sword, often for no better reason than that she was his. All individuality was claimed by the man, the woman having none recognized as her own. And if she stained that thing called his honour—which was always partly his privilege of escaping ridicule from his fellows—he felt justified in holding her to account with her very life because she—his property !—had dared to break his armour of self-esteem. In more recent centuries, if he did not murder her also, he poured his deadly vengeance on the one

implicated with her. Few indeed among men and women even today have entirely moved above this traditional deeply entrenched falsity. Divorce and separation do not solve the problem. They only bring postponement.

For reasons mentioned the thought of wife as property is very strong in the soldier type of man. In Othello it is intense. His modest doubt at first of his ability to win such a woman as Desdemona leads him, after he has won her, to put her on a pedestal which unconsciously is based and supported by all his own secret, deep, turbulent self-valuations. She is Fus—she is the apotheosis of HIMSELF. Most gentle toward her he is, full of an adoring wonder, as long as she remains all compliance; so that to Desdemona's early observation the broad river of his nature seems placid enough. Iago, having seen him in the passions of war, knows or suspects all the other kinds of violence.

Iago's nature has been somewhat forecast by the preceding remarks on the Renaissance. If Iago is not seen against the background of his particular time and country, he can hardly be understood, for he is one of the characteristic Italianated men of that period. Students of Italian biography can probably match Iago point by point with men historically authenticated. The steely intellectualism of the time, the excessive egregious vices in self-seeking, produced such men; determined to advance themselves over any obstacles, snatching away another's success and happiness without a qualm, tricking a man out of money, position or good name for the sport of doing it, and then stepping into his vacant place as justly won by shrewdness, suavity and lack of sentimentalism—selfism towering to the very heavens! Such is Iago. Such were Italianated persons.

Iago from the beginning of the play is full of hate, skilfully covered—revengeful hate toward Othello for unfairly (as he thinks) raising Cassio to a rank over his, and envious hate toward Cassio for having been so raised. To undo them both is his fierce purpose. To him, as the typical Self-Seeker, the injury is the worst possible;

his revenge must match that inexpressible unforgettable wrong.

Cassio, like many soldiers, is a victim of drink, and despite his better judgment, he is open to temptation. Another flaw in him is the ordinary soldier-type of sex-looseness. To the highly placed woman he is respectful; to the camp-follower, a tyrannical master. Also, when he is displaced for causing disorder through his drunkenness (all of which Iago has skilfully planned), he depends on chance and on intercession by another for his restoration to position. Throughout he is flabby instead of manful.

Of these weaknesses Iago makes instruments—they are the traits and habits on which he centres his evil deceptive influence. Thus, Cassio's function in the drama is that of a convenience, a middleman, at once a screen, a repository and an unconscious motor of the forces working between the two great protagonists, Othello and Iago.

Desdemona has a somewhat similar function. The supposed love affair in which these two are involved is wholly created by Iago as an aid to his revengeful purposes. Both have fineness of nature and good or harmless intentions. But Desdemona foolishly becomes Cassio's intercessor; and since neither is quite honest in the tangled net thrown around them, each unwittingly draws it tighter.

Iago is quite without kindly feeling, but he can beautifully sham fine sentiments; as when in apparently virtuous indignation and loyalty to his superior, he kneels and pledges himself to "wronged Othello's service." Or again when he comforts Desdemona after Othello has openly blamed her for infidelity.

(To be concluded)

SWEET are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

—SHAKESPEARE

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 our days we witness an alarming rise in rate of divorce. Is it right to conclude that those who seek divorce are running away from their karmic obligation?

Answer: The institution of Marriage forms the foundation for the Householder state, and teaches the importance of *Grihastha Ashrama*. The alchemical process of transforming animal man to human and then to divine man takes place to a considerable extent in the crucible called Home; its building begins when two people marry and settle down. Their natures may be compatible or vastly different. But herein is the great opportunity to learn to adjust and cooperate. Great lessons of adaptability could be learnt.

Marriage is also intensely tied in with the traditional Hindu quest for the Four Aims of Life: *Dhanna*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. Marriage is looked upon as karmic obligation. It is not just meeting of two people on earth, but is the celestial concordance between the man and the woman. In those early ages, those alone married, who were in every way qualified for leading a *grihastha* (household) life. In earlier days, before the ancient teachings had become materialized, marriage was considered to be a sacred and religious contract, and not at all a means of gratifying selfish desires and animal passions. Family life was to provide proper environment of spiritual and psychical values to the incoming egos. Also, in those days, people married with the express purpose of assisting each other in their determination to lead a higher life, in fulfilling their family duties, and to give to the world children who would become *gnanis* (learned men) and work for humanity. Are such lofty ideals

present today? It is precisely because of the profound connection between the familial obligations and the sacred element of *dhanna* that divorce in Hindu religious tradition is allowed only under extreme circumstances. It is probably on similar grounds that the Roman Catholic Church considers Marriage as a sacrament that is indissoluble. Jesus restored the prohibition against divorce that had been in place before the Mosaic Law was delivered. The Church Fathers in the early church movement, and various popes to the present time have consistently held that after a valid marriage is consummated, it is indissoluble until the death of one of the spouses. The church can issue an annulment, but the couple must first prove to the church tribunal that the marriage was invalid. There are certain passages in the *New Testament* which show that marriage among the Roman Catholics is considered indissoluble.

From the beginning, of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder....And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them...Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication and marry another, committeth adultery against her. (*Matthew*, 19:4-9)

Marriage is indeed a sacrament where the husband and wife-to-be, take solemn vows to support each other in pain and pleasure, in comfort and adversity. We see that today very young people marry and that too very casually, paying only lip-service to the covenant. At the slightest inconvenience to oneself, both men and women are ready to take divorce. Often divorces occur for not so serious reasons, such as, one of the partners snores loudly in the night. Today people fail to appreciate that "marriage is indissoluble," because the deep and solemn purpose of the institution of marriage is not understood; marriage ties are not looked upon as binding forever, nor do men

and women respect each other's role in family life. However, knowing that karma is not fatalism, we can see that after having tried one's best to make the marriage work, by sinking differences in the outlook, opinion about issues in life, adjusting to each other's idiosyncrasies, etc., it should be perfectly alright to opt for a divorce. Especially when one of the partners is not willing to understand the other and if there is mental, emotional or physical torture. A number of divorces are due to domestic violence, or dowry harassment, infidelity, marital rape when wife is looked upon as a mere means for sexual gratification. The idea is that either party must give a fair chance to the guilty party to improve, and seek divorce only as a last resort. In earlier days, at times, parents would be reluctant to give shelter to the girl, so that it would seem as if the girl, being uneducated and financially dependent on her husband, had no option but to continue in the unpleasant marriage.

Question: A spiritual aspirant is asked to become aware of the permanent and impermanent aspects of himself. How does one achieve this, and what are its practical implications?

Answer: First of all it is important to become aware that man is more than his physical body. Our physical form is so solid and tangible that when we say "I," we generally tend to identify ourselves with the body. *Light on the Path* suggests that the whole universe is animated and lit, down to its most material shapes, by an inner or astral world. The term "astral" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "stir-an," which means to move, to stir, to steer, and it is the inner life, which is the master of and moves the outer. The physical body and its senses are quite useless without the astral, inner senses. The real centres of perception are within the astral body. But beyond even this invisible and energizing, astral, inner man is the spiritual man, *Atma-Buddhi-Maras* or the Reincarnating Ego, which is the permanent aspect in man. We have to become aware of permanent and impermanent aspects of our nature, not only during meditation but also from moment to moment. Mr. Judge advises that

every day

we must devote at least half an hour to silent meditation. "Every day and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake—think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain, or astral man, but that you are *THAT*, and 'THAT' is the supreme soul." Similarly, during our day to day activities, if someone praises us or blames us, for our appearance, speech, skill, ideas, etc., we must be able to dissociate ourselves from that aspect which was praised or blamed. It is self-identifying attachment, with likes and dislikes, which causes misery. When we find fault with another, calling him greedy, proud, stingy, etc., we must keep in mind that we are looking at the changing aspect. These weaknesses pertain to his lower nature and are changeable, so that next time we meet him, he might have overcome these weaknesses. Lord Buddha says: "Fair virtues waste with time, foul sins grow purged thereby." So also, when we are greatly elated or totally depressed let us realize that these mood-swings are not "*rte*," they are but a changing aspect of me. When we look at our child it is good to remember that a day will come when he will lose his innocence and grow into an adult. At every moment we get the opportunity to distinguish between the permanent and evanescent aspects in us and in others.

We say, "I am happy or I am sad," or "I am healthy or I am sick," etc., thus, identifying ourselves with a set of conditions and forms, which continually change, but the Perceiver remains the same through them. It is possible to dissociate ourselves from the body. A person who was having headache went about doing the regular work of the house, saying, "Headache is doing its work and I am doing mine." At times, we are able to dissociate ourselves from bodily wants, such as hunger, or from bodily pain. Thus, gradually we become aware of the changing and the permanent aspects. Suma Varughese suggests that we might look upon anger and other negative emotions such as hatred, resentment, jealousy, resistance and fear as viruses, which enter us when our immunity levels are low because of low self-esteem or persistent unhappiness. When these viruses of negative emotions attack often enough we begin to

identify ourselves as "angry person" or "jealous person" and so on. " Dis-identification with emotions is breaking off huge chunks of ego structures rather like a beehive being broken apart to release the honey." (*Life Positive*, June 2009)

There is the story that when Shri Shankaracharya was going home after his bath, a *Chandala* (an untouchable) came in his way, Shankara distanced himself, lest he should be polluted. The *Chandala* asked him, "What in you was going to be polluted by my touch"? It was an eye-opener for Shankara. The *Chandala* was Lord Siva in disguise.

We find similar indifference to death of the body in case of the Athenian philosopher Socrates who was tried and convicted by the courts of democratic Athens on a charge of corrupting the youth and disbelieving in the ancestral gods. Socrates' followers encouraged him to flee but he refused on principle. He died by drinking the hemlock poison provided to him. He did not fear death because he believed in the deathlessness of the Soul, and accepted that physical death brought about the release of the soul. Socrates had said that his friends may bury his body anyway they liked because the real Socrates would depart to the joys of the blessed heaven and that only his body would remain to be buried. It is true that self-preservation is a natural and dominant instinct, but it is possible to override it by learning to appreciate impermanence of the body. A Master of Wisdom writes that "struggle for life" is intense when body is taken to be the only reality, and then people want to keep body and soul together at any cost. He observes that when there was a famine in China, where the Bonzes (Japanese or Chinese Buddhist priests) had sway and people believed in the existence of immortal soul, the multitude was seen to die with utmost indifference. But where the missionaries had sway, and where people considered the physical body to be the only reality, mothers were seen to be devourin^g their children.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Recently, an eight-year-old girl, born to *Chitpavan Konkanastha Brahmin* family in Bombay (India), went through an hour long thread ceremony, known as *upanayan* or *yagnopavit*, reciting the Gayatri Mantra and other Sanskrit *sholkas* with practised ease. The father of the child explained that *upanayan* is one of the sixteen *samskaras* (rituals) that are part of the *Sanatan Dharma* and the mantras are known to help the child concentrate on her education. The power of Gayatri Mantra is supposed to help the child chart the correct path through life. In the thread ceremony of a girl, instead of wearing a thread, a girl wears necklace of fine tulsi beads. Ordinarily, thread ceremony is considered a male rite of passage. Since the thread ceremony of this girl was a departure from convention the male priests were reluctant to perform the ritual on the girl, and hence, the same was performed by the female priests. The priestesses point out that after decline of the egalitarian period the practice of *upanayan* was restricted to males. From Vedic period we have examples of female sages like Gargi and Maitreyi, who underwent thread ceremony. In the opinion of a chief priest of a certain temple, there is nothing in the scriptures to prevent girls from undergoing the thread ceremony. The *upanayan* signifies that the child is now mature enough to follow a guru and learn the scriptures. In the olden days it was performed when children left home to join *gurukul*. The girl's father is searching for a copy of "Narita Smriti," the scripture that is believed to sanction ceremony for the girls, writes Bella Jaisinghani. (*The Times of India*, May 29, 2009)

There is a close identity between the Brahminical thread ceremony and the Zoroastrian *Naljot ceremony*. Just as during the Vedic period certain female sages underwent thread ceremony, among the Parsees (Zoroastrians) both girls and boys undergo *Navjot ceremony* and wear *Kusti* (sacred thread), which is considered to protect the wearer from evil. The child initiated with the *Nai jot ceremony* is now responsible for all his/her deeds. If we understand the inner

significance of investiture of this thread we will appreciate why it could not be restricted to males or even to Brahmin caste. The article, "The Brahmanical Thread," in *Five Years of Theosophy* points out that the wearer of the thread is called *upanita*, i.e., one who is brought or drawn near to one's *guru*. One of the names of the thread is *Yajna-Sutra*. *Yajna* means Supreme Spirit and *Sutra* means thread or tie. Collectively, the compound word signifies that which ties a man to his spirit or god. It consists of three yarns twisted into one thread. The yarns signify the great principle of "three in one and one in three." The first trinity consists of *Atman*, which comprises the three attributes of *Manas*, *Buddhi* and *Ahankara* (the mind, the intelligence and the egotism). The thread is also called *Tri-danda*. *Tri* means three, and *Danda* means chastisement, correction or conquest. The wearer of the thread is reminded of three great conquests he has to accomplish. These are: *Vakya Sanyama*, *Manas Sanyama* and *Indriya Sanyama*, i.e., control over one's speech, thought and action. This thread is also the reminder to the man of his secular duties. Hence its material varies according to the occupation of the wearer. While the thread of the Brahmins is made of pure cotton, that of the Kshatriyas (the warrior) is composed of flax—the bow-string material, and that of Vaishyas (the traders and cattle-breeders), of wool.

Guru Nanak, like many other spiritual teachers, showed that mechanical performance of rituals and ceremonies without understanding the inner significance is useless. At the time of his thread ceremony he questioned the priest: "What is the meaning of wearing the thread? What purpose does it serve?" The priest answered that wearing of the thread will purify him and entitle him to perform social and religious rites. The little Nanak argued that many wear the thread but are impure, and they would not change their ways. He, then, went on to explain the real significance, by saying: "O Pandit, from the cotton of compassion spin out the thread of love. Make the knots of purity, truth, and self-control. Let the mind remain concentrated on that thread. That thread never breaks,

never need be changed, never can be lost. Revere those who wear such a thread."

Young Americans today are taking longer than previous generations to complete their education, find a job that suits them and settle onto a career path. Not only are they more choosy about the jobs they accept but also they change jobs frequently. To this generation, loyalty between employer and employee is a bygone past, writes Phyllis McIntosh. Many young Americans stumble into a career instead of pursuing their education with a clear-cut goal in mind. Most of them choose their major subject because they enjoy the course work. They do not connect their major with what they will do when they graduate. There seems to be postponed adulthood as these young Americans take longer to marry and settle down. One of the most significant trends in the United States is the disappearance of long-term loyalty to an employer. Young people recognize that changing jobs is the fastest way to advance in both salary and responsibility. "People are seeing their friends and family going through layoffs, terminations and acquisitions, so they are saying if companies are going to do that, I am going to look out for myself," remarks Flato, Vice President of research and consulting at Vault. Since computers perform routine tasks, skills like inventiveness, empathy, ability to think big, are in demand. Young Americans today, are searching for meaning in their jobs, and they want jobs where they can make a difference in the world, writes McIntosh. (SPAN, May-June 2009)

Unfortunately, not only is there a brain-drain, but very few are able to find their calling and say, "I am doing what I always wanted to do." Many experience a lack of job satisfaction. It is not always that one gets a job in line with one's education. By being in a place which matches our inner longing and skills we can give our best contribution to the world. This could be one of the reasons for

frequent changing of jobs. But at times the reason for change is better salary and perks, sometimes irrespective of job satisfaction. Should we not discipline ourselves to love what comes to us under Karma? Doing what you like is freedom, liking what you do is happiness.

Right or Perfect Livelihood is emphasized in Buddhist philosophy because it affects economic, social and spiritual aspects of our collective existence. It is one of the steps in the Noble Eightfold Path. Since we spend greater part of our waking life in earning our livelihood it has an important effect on our whole being. If you do something for seven or eight hours a day, five or six days a week, fifty weeks a year, and if you do it for twenty or forty years, it is not surprising that it leaves a mark on you, writes Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher. Could we imagine the mental state of a person who works in a slaughterhouse, killing twenty or thirty times a day, year after year? We are able to appreciate that without some measure of Right Livelihood we can make very little spiritual progress. It would be a good idea to change one's livelihood, if it is found to be inconsistent with one's spiritual ideals. Buddhism points out that certain professions such as trafficking in living beings or selling drink or drugs are clearly not the right livelihood. But even those occupations, which include working in advertising industry and producing luxury goods that people do not really need but have to be persuaded, they want, must also be classified as wrong livelihood. If a Buddhist person finds himself in a profession, where work involves a lot of mental strain, so that he becomes tense and is unable to meditate, then he should try to find a work of a less stressful nature. Perfect livelihood is following a true vocation where there is no difference between one's work and one's play, writes Sanghrakshita. Contentment is the greatest wealth, teaches Lord Buddha.

Existence of God, Loch Ness, Stonehenge, and so many such

things are still a mystery, and yet why does it feel like the world has been ripped open, all parts exposed? We may have casual curiosity about something, but instantly, there is a sense of satisfying understanding. For instance, if you are looking for instructions for folding paper in origami, you surf the Internet and you have more than 20,000 Google results available on that subject. Surf the net and you are likely to get answer to most questions. We are in the middle of the *Age of Immediacy*, writes J. J. Abrams, the creator of *Alias* and the director of *new* Star Trek movie. True understanding or effort has become unnecessary headache that impedes our ability to get on with life. This is because we are able to know whatever we need to know and whenever we need to know. We may know the ending of a serial, a year in advance, but the process of discovery and the feeling of wonder during the journey is as important and enriching as the end. It is one thing to get on the train, brave the weather, bump into strangers, reach the music store and hear the music we did not choose to, and quite another to browse iTunes and download albums and songs. Technology has made us thankful. It is rare that one would go to a music store, actually purchase a CD, bring home and then not listen to it. But today we download albums and songs and they remain unplayed for months or even years. Abrams narrates his experience of playing a videogame, *Mario Bros. 2*, with a friend, which had to be completed in *one sitting*. After all the hard work they had to consult a 7-year-old kid to finish the game successfully. He points out that taking someone's help, which is always available, lessens the experience, diminishes the joy, and makes the accomplishment that much duller. "Perhaps that is why mystery, now more than ever, has special meaning. Because it is the anomaly, the glaring affirmation that the Age of Immediacy has a meaningful downside. Mystery demands that you stop and consider—or, at the very least, slow down and discover. It is a challenge to get there yourself, on its terms, not yours....The experience of the doing really is everything," writes Abrams. (WIRED, May 2009)

If it feels like this **in** the realm of ordinary knowledge, how much more important is patience and perseverance in the spiritual realm? Today, in spiritual pursuits, too, there is similar impatience and tendency to get ready answers. Like instant coffee, people want instant cures for their maladies, instant remedies for their troubles and even instant *moksha* (liberation). People flock to the *gurus* who promise a short-cut to self-realization. "If one desires to get knowledge, and feels that his desire will be fulfilled, as the little bird in the nest, who has only to open his mouth to be fed; will be truly disappointed," writes Mr. Judge. The devotional books like *The Voice of the Silence*, *The Bhagavad-Gita* and *Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, yield their inner meaning gradually, only to those who persevere for a long time, engaging in many years of thoughtful reflection. Getting a ready answer is like getting a nugget of gold from a miner, and that is all that we get at that time. H.P.B. has this to say:

To the mentally lazy or obtuse, Theosophy must remain a riddle; for in the world mental as in the world spiritual each man must progress by his own efforts. The writer cannot do the reader's thinking for him, nor would the latter be any the better off if such vicarious thought were possible. (*The Key to Theosophy*, Preface)

The right attitude for a true seeker is summed up in the sage advice of Mr. Crosbie:

With reference to the mind's poor grasp of things: what we want cannot be obtained by anxiety, doubt, fear, impatience, expectancy that it is time that something should come to us, and so forth. This latter is looking for reward. Make up your mind to continue as you are for one hundred lives, if necessary, *and continue*. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 96)

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