

## 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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### SPIRITUAL LIFE—ACTIVE AND PASSIVE

SPIRITUAL life is an active life, involving the transformation of animal man into a human man, and human man into a divine man. The process necessitates an intellectual appreciation of spiritual truths or ideas. We cannot practise what we do not understand. We cannot spiritually realize what we are not able to intellectually recognize. We intellectually need to recognize that man is a spiritual entity, essentially and potentially divine, and spiritual perfection involves unfoldment from within, without. In this process, it is absolutely necessary to *realize*, experientially, all the spiritual facts that are apprehended intellectually. Most of us who claim to live the spiritual life seem to be sorely lacking in the application of the truths, which when applied or practised get welded into our being. T. S. Eliot describes the plight of the general run of humanity at the end of their lives, by calling them “The Hollow Men,” in the poem with that title, who sit around and talk without ever trying to put their beliefs or ideas into practice. In the poem “Tomlinson,” Rudyard Kipling tries to convey that we are born into this world, not so that we could spend our days in indifference, wasting both our time and lives, doing no good and almost no ill, like the character Tomlinson in the poem. Tomlinson dies and goes to heaven, but when asked what he had done to earn eternity in heaven, he begins by reporting what he had read, what he had felt and thought about what others had thought or done. Saint Peter says that the ticket through the

gates of Heaven cannot be the mere mouthing of words others have spoken, even if they are of the priestly class, and that what he has read, heard or thought is of little consequence, as compared to what he has *done*. Kipling seems to suggest in the poem that those who feel that they have sinned because they have *read* of it in a book are not fit for Hell, and even those who feel that they have done good because they have *read* of it in a book are not fit for Heaven. Passivity must be avoided because our life is *our* responsibility and even Nature rejects an extremely passive person.

Carlyle says, “The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest.” It is easy to speak of duty and virtues, but without *practice*, it is useless. There is always the danger of deluding others and ourselves, into believing that we have made great progress, just because we *preach* morality. *Through the Gates of Gold* cautions us of another danger. The author says that by the practice of virtue we might fetter ourselves into one groove, one changeless way of living life. For instance, there could be an over-anxious insistence on the virtues of accuracy or punctuality, so that there is rigid adherence to an immutable time-table. Some people feel lost unless they get up at the same time, eat at exactly the same time, and follow the same daily routine. These are *slaves* rather than *masters* of punctuality—slaves to automatic action of the bodily atoms.

It is not the regular performance of *puja* (worship) or reciting of prayers that makes one spiritual. So too, it is not enough to live a virtuous life. The book says, “Spirit is not the gas created by matter.” If we burn or heat the matter, *i.e.*, get rid of our vices and replace them with virtues, it does not make us spiritual. Spirituality is not merely the *absence* of vice or abstaining from evil but calls for the presence of the feeling of self-sacrifice, humility, unity, etc., else there will be great spiritual darkness. It is quite possible to be like Mejnour in *Zanoni*, who is a pure intellect that has won its wisdom through detachment from the life of the senses. He is not touched by human passions, but also his wisdom is of no benefit to humanity,

as he denies his relationship with the world. He says, “I live but in knowledge, I have no life in humanity.” Bulwer Lytton describes him by saying, “He asks no charity and gives none—he does no evil and seems to confer no good.” Therefore, *Light on the Path* says that there is a great gulf between the good man and the sinner, but it is greater between the good man and the one who has attained knowledge, and is immeasurable between the good man and the one on the threshold of divinity.

The passive life consists of abstaining from anger, hatred, jealousy, irritation, greed, etc. It implies filling up the old grooves formed in our mind, by certain habits, by our likes and dislikes for certain kind of people, certain kind of environment, certain kind of sensations. Thus, one can abstain from meat and drinks, one can overcome excessive attachment to one’s loved ones, or attraction for good clothes, money, name and fame, by *suppressing* these desires by a tremendous effort of will. It is a good beginning. In *Raja-Yoga* or *Occultism*, H.P.B. points out that some people suppress their desires and vices by a strong effort of will, instead of eradicating them. But in doing so, they allow the fire to smoulder under a thin layer of ashes—a whiff of wind can cause flames to leap up. When we refrain from complaining or from trying to get even with another or when we do a good turn but not get found out, these are small acts of forbearance and ways of suppressing the personality. When we suppress, we are still fighting to keep down the personal nature, and succeed in temporarily silencing its voice. It can raise its ugly head at any moment. Desires and tendencies that have been suppressed come to the surface irrepressibly, forcing us to fight a hundred times harder than before. But for one who has *killed* or eradicated them from the roots, the Buddha says, for such a person “even occasions to act with like and dislike” will not arise. Spiritual actions will flow spontaneously.

Active life implies not only the ultimate eradication of faults and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, preferences and old habits, by filling up the old grooves, but also being able to form new and better

grooves. It means going beyond ordinary virtues and therefore, ordinary goodness. “It is easy to do well by those we like; it is our duty to make ourselves do and think well by those we do not like,” writes Mr. Judge. To be *spiritual* is to be able to love unconditionally. As one progresses spiritually, he is called upon to cultivate universal, impersonal love.

Whether we understand it or not, we are being pushed to higher levels. As the saying in the Bible goes: “Blow hot or blow cold, the lukewarm I spew out of my mouth.” Life brings us to a point where our eyes may be opened, and instead of drifting along, we may begin to take the evolution into our own hands. A Christian writer, Janina Gomes, narrates the parable of the canyon from a Ralph Connor book. It is said that at first there were no canyons, only the broad, open prairie, with tall grasses. One day, the Master of the prairie noticed that it had no flowers and so he spoke to the birds that carried seeds and soon the prairie bloomed with roses, crowfoot and wild sunflowers. However, it had not the violets, ferns and many other flowers that the Master loved the best. The birds carried the seeds of these flowers and dropped them in the prairie but the flowers did not remain long and withered all too soon. Then the Master spoke to the lightning, which cleft the prairie to the heart. The prairie rocked and groaned many a day in agony, mourning over its gaping wound. But now the river carried water through the cleft and once again when the birds scattered seeds over the canyon, all the beautiful flowers bloomed and remained without withering. “Left to ourselves none of us would like to be cleft and have gaping wounds. But there are sometimes strokes of lightning in our lives.... We are struck by pain, illness, misunderstanding, and ever so often rejection,” writes Janina Gomes. Then virtues, which could not flower under comfortable circumstances of life, begin to develop under adversities—virtues of gentleness and courage, sympathy and endurance, patience and sacrificial love.

Pain is necessary for growth. To grow as a result of pain, we need to learn from the experience. It is said that men are wise not in

proportion to their experience but in proportion to their *capacity for experience*. Some of us suffer intensely and then at the end of it say: “I want to forget the whole thing as a bad dream.” We then carry on with life as before, all the time hoping that we will not be placed in a similar situation again. There is a need to be placed into a similar kind of painful situation again and again, so that we may learn the necessary lesson. That happens when instead of complaining or running away from difficulty, we learn to respond.

Active spiritual life comprises of a series of moral choices. The power to act consciously by making choices is unique to human beings. The Great Beings or Spiritually advanced Beings have become so by exercising the power of choice, by choosing to always live and act in harmony with Laws of Nature. But ordinary humanity proceeds waveringly; sometimes their actions are impulsive, and at other times, they are based on a choice. These choices are either guided by desires, or by herd-instinct, and very rarely by true knowledge. Our actions must be self-motivated. There is no alternative to making choices, for those who want to grow spiritually. It is by exercising the sovereign power of choice that we learn how *not to make mistakes*. We need to consult wise people, good books and above all our own inner nature. We may go wrong in our judgment, but the important thing is to learn self-reliance and self-rule.

Our active life, in a true sense, is that which is based on self-motivation. But then, it is necessary to become aware, if we are motivated and guided by our lower or our higher self; to what extent we are receptive to and in line with the dictates of our higher nature. It is quite all right for the animal to be guided by his instincts, but man, if he allows himself to be guided by his personal desires or instincts then he cannot make progress. When we follow personal will, we appear to be determined. A strong-willed person is the one with strong and intense desires, which move the will into action for bringing about the wished-for ends. Will is the divine power of the Spirit within—illimitable and exhaustless. We have limited that power by entertaining small, mean and selfish desires. Divine Will

or Spiritual Will comes into play when we stop asserting our personal will, and for that to happen, we can begin by denying ourselves small whims and fancies during the day. Spiritual will could be developed only when we have learnt to drink, to the last bitter dregs, what the cup of life holds for us, without a murmur, and realize that the adverse and painful circumstances are for our experience and discipline. When we are ready to sacrifice the personal nature then all the power and force of the divine nature becomes available. The more we pay heed to the “Voice of Conscience” within, the greater will be the development of our will.

This active life also depends upon our receptivity to the pain and suffering of humanity. The extent to which we are willing to embrace and understand others’ suffering, to that extent we are made the better able to cope with our own suffering. The next step is that we search for the cause and cure of human suffering and use our knowledge and our love and compassion to bring about the cure. A Master of Wisdom has said, “It is not enough that you should set the example of a pure, virtuous life and a tolerant spirit; this is but negative goodness—and for chelaship will never do. You should...learn that you may teach, acquire spiritual knowledge and strength that the weak may lean upon you, and the sorrowing victims of ignorance [may] learn from you the cause and remedy of their pain.” The extent to which we are able to engage in such active life, to that extent we receive help and guidance from those who are Elder Brothers, Masters and Saviours of Great Orphan Humanity.

A spiritual seeker should not forget that he is endeavouring to get back the child-state he has lost. Children behave un-self-consciously. The extent to which we are able to overcome the ego, we get closer to the childlike state. In some vernacular languages, the word for “child state” is derived from the root which also means smallness. All saintly people urge us to become childlike. It means extreme humility which desires no greatness. We must strive to achieve greatness and excellence, but must not *feel* great. “That power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.”

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT WITHIN AND WITHOUT

WITHIN AND WITHOUT, is a short story by the German author Hermann Hesse written in 1920. The story is about a man, Frederick, who has devoted his whole life to the pursuit of knowledge—knowledge based on science and rationality. He loves and respects rationality. He is aware that there are other forms of knowledge, but he has little respect for unscientific forms of knowledge. However, like all the other scientists of his time, he too tolerates religion and its speculations on the soul, but without taking them seriously. He believes that in ancient times there might have been mystical or magical thinking, but the same is pointless and outmoded in the scientific age. He despises superstition, especially among the educated people. He is greatly disturbed by the absurd notion, discussed even by men of great culture, namely, that “scientific thinking” was possibly not a supreme, timeless, eternal and unassailable mode of thought, but one of the many transient ways of thinking. Hence, a rising interest in the occult as an alternative to science, disturbs him enormously.

One day he goes to visit a friend, Erwin, who he had not met for some time. He recalls on meeting him, that this friend had not given him much support when he attacked superstition. On meeting him he feels that in place of affection and solidarity, there was a vacuum. In their conversation, they fail to find a common ground. During a pause in the laborious conversation, Frederick gets up to read a paper on the wall, which has the words: “Nothing is without, nothing is within; for what is without is within.” To him this is the worst kind of mystical thinking inspired by “decadent” eastern forces. He asks his friend to explain the meaning of this sentence, and learns that this sentence introduces one to an ancient form of knowledge, “magic.” Frederick is terribly disappointed with his friend. He concludes that if Erwin wants to become a magician, then that means he is abandoning all fellowship with serious science, and therefore



also all fellowship with him. He asks Erwin to choose between this superstitious nonsense and their friendship. He gets a queer answer from his friend, who says, “You speak as if I had a choice, Frederick. That is not the case. I have no choice. It was not that I chose magic: magic chose me.” Frederick gets up to leave.

Erwin begs him not to part in anger but to accept their separation as inevitable, and to pretend that one of them was dying. At that moment, Erwin says that he was dying because one who wishes to be born anew must be prepared to die. Frederick agrees, and asks a final favour, to explain to him those mysterious words on the wall. Erwin explains that those words refer in part to the religious idea of pantheism, which says that God is in all things, and all things are divine. Philosophically it means, “we are used to divorcing the within from the without in our thinking, but this is not necessary. Our spirit is capable of withdrawing behind the limits we have set for it, into the beyond.” Beyond the pairs of opposites of which our world consists, a new and different knowledge begins, wherein every word has tens and hundreds of meanings, and that is where begins magic. To illustrate this experience, Erwin gives Frederick a small clay figure and tells him to observe it from time to time. “When this thing that I am now placing in your hands ceases to be outside you and is within you, come to me again.” But if that figure remained outside of him, forever, then their parting also would be forever.

Frederick takes this object home. It is a small, ugly, figure of a man or a god or an idol, with two faces, like the Roman god Janus, which gradually begins to obsess Frederick. He moves it from place to place in his house. Its presence torments him, and he begins to travel often. Once when he returns from a trip, he feels restless and anxious on entering his house. The maid tells him that while dusting she broke the idol and disposed of its shattered remains. Initially, Frederick feels relieved. He recalls that all the time he had feared this earthen god, who was an emblem and symbol of everything that was intolerable to him, an emblem of all superstitions and darkness. But he soon begins to miss it, and feels that his thoughts

were tied to it. He thinks that perhaps he is going insane. “It occurred to him that perhaps this was magic, that Erwin, with the aid of that figure, had somehow enchanted him, and he should fall as a sacrifice, as the defender of reason and science against these dismal powers. But if this were so, if he could even conceive of that as possible, then there *was* such a thing as magic, then there *was* sorcery.”

He finally wakes in fear one night, and finds himself mumbling the words, “Now you are inside me.” Frederick rushes to Erwin’s house and tells him, “The idol is within me. I cannot bear it any longer.” Frederick asks his friend to tell him more about magic and to tell him how the idol can get out of him again. Erwin tells him that the idol will come out of him as he has learned to believe in it. He has to now learn to love it. It is within him, but as yet dead, so he has to awaken it, speak to it and question it. “For it is yourself!” That idol was himself and in tormenting it he had tormented himself. He is told by his friend that he had taken the most difficult step in magic, of finding by experience that without can become the within. To interchange the without and the within, voluntarily, is magic.

Hermann Hesse was a German novelist and poet. In 1946 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. His best-known works include *Steppenwolf*, *Siddhartha* and *The Glass Bead Game*. The main theme of his work is efforts of the individual to go beyond the established modes of civilization and seek essential spirit and identity. Though Hesse was influenced by different Western philosophers, such as, Plato, Spinoza, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, it was Indian and Chinese religious philosophy that had a greater influence on him.

The underlying theme of the short story, “Within and Without” is the divide between science and rationality versus magic and spirituality. In the story, Frederick and his friend Erwin represent rational and spiritual poles of human nature and their interaction allows Frederick to become aware of the divide he has created within his own consciousness, by his rejection of the spiritual pole. The idol with two faces received as a gift, symbolizes this very divide or

polarities within Frederick's consciousness. The conflicts and torments are the results of his attempt to evaluate things objectively and rationally, to the exclusion of the spiritual and real. To heal himself and to become whole, he must recognize various aspects of the human mind and consciousness, and learn to take into account the spiritual dimension. Thus, in rejecting other views, based on a moral, mystical and spiritual basis, and labelling them as superstitions, he is struggling against reality within and without.

The line "Nothing is outside, nothing is inside, for that which is outside is inside," taken from Goethe's poem *Epirrhema*, implies in one sense, that everything is related to everything else, because all that is outside, in the objective and manifested world, as so many different things, have originated from that which is "within" or "inside," the only eternal, true and spiritual basis of all. There is only *unfolding* of what is locked up within, as potential. Some poets have sensed this. Robert Browning puts it beautifully, saying that there is an Inmost Centre in us all, where "Truth" abides in fullness, but wall upon wall of gross flesh hems it in. And "to know," consists in allowing the divine splendour to escape, and not in trying to make the entry of the light supposed to be outside. The recognition of this relation of many with the One, or the outside with the inside, saves us from having the mistaken idea of isolation, from one another and from nature.

The idol of the double-faced god Janus conveys a message of making a new beginning by overcoming inner conflicts and achieving harmony. God Janus was revered as the "god of beginnings," by the Romans. Janus watched the gate which opened a year. With the key of garnered knowledge, he opens the New Year and with the staff, he moves to higher altitudes. Each human being is a striving and progressing Janus-like being. The good and the bad, the material and the spiritual, in each one of us are wrestling for victory. Till the good and the spiritual in man has the upper hand, the struggle and torment will continue.

Two faces of the figure may well represent rational and spiritual

approaches. Reasoning faculty is the main source of knowledge in modern man. But there is another source of knowledge in us which we call intuition. Something within tells us to "do this" or "do not do that." Some of us have gut feeling or hunch as to the right course of action, even though we are not able to explain why. We just *know*. As against this, reason involves observation, experiments, analysis and use of intellect. The reasoning is like entering into a dark and unfamiliar room where you feel around and figure out what all things are there in the room, little by little. Intuition is like switching on the light, which shows the entire room, exactly as it is, in an instant. Therefore, *Light on the Path* tells us that "to obtain knowledge by experiment is too tedious a method for those who aspire to accomplish real work." H.P.B. writes: "Only those who realise how far Intuition soars above the tardy processes of ratiocinative thought can form the faintest conception of that absolute Wisdom which transcends the ideas of Time and Space." (*S.D.*, Proem, pp. 1-2 fn.)

As we reason from premises to conclusions, we can reason ourselves into a false position from a false basis of thinking. If we start with the wrong premises we are bound to come to false conclusions, however faultless the reasoning. "Reason is the clumsy weapon of the scientists—intuition the unerring guide of the seer. In other words, reason develops at the expense and loss of natural instinct, and it finally shuts out man's spiritual perceptions....If we had to judge of the Deity, and the world of spirits, by its human interpreters...belief in God and the soul's immortality could not withstand the attacks of *reason* for one century more. That which supports the faith of man in God and a spiritual life to come is *intuition*" (*Isis*, I, 435). When knowledge is obtained based on observation, experiment, reasoning, then a person can make a fatal mistake of denying all that can be apprehended only by a still higher faculty of intuitive perception.

It is not the right kind of rationalism that rejects all that it cannot immediately and completely understand. As no surgeon in cutting

up the body has found the soul, therefore, no soul exists; thus reasons the false rationalist. Yet the same mind believes in the existence of mental suffering, of emotional depression and elation, which are as invisible as is the Soul. A true rationalist always remains an inquirer—humble, reverent, confident, looking for an answer or explanation to the phenomena he has not solved. We sin against wisdom when we accept in blind faith without understanding, or turn sceptics because reason, observation or experiments fail to give answers. Wisdom is direct perception. It is an experiential knowledge, and its acquirement requires the sacrifice and devotion of a man's whole life.

Jane Goodall is well known for her work for the protection of wildlife, especially chimpanzees. As she sought consolation in the forest of Gombe, after her husband's death, she experienced ecstatic mystical moments of oneness with Nature. Recounting that experience, she wrote: "There are many windows through which we humans, searching for meaning, can look out into the world around us. There are those carved out by Western science. . . . Yet there are other windows through which we humans can look out into the world around us, windows through which the mystics and holy men of the East, and the founders of the great world religions, have gazed as they searched for the meaning and purpose of our life on earth. . . . That afternoon, it had been as though an unseen hand had drawn back a curtain and, for a briefest moment, I had seen through such a window." (*Reason for Hope*, pp. 174-75)

Magic, as a science, is the knowledge of the hidden aspects of man and nature, by which omniscience and omnipotence of the spirit can be acquired while in the body, and by which one is able to have control over nature's forces. When this knowledge is used for beneficent purposes, it is White Magic, but when misused, it becomes sorcery or Black Magic. The ancients began their search on the plane of homogeneity, coming down to the objective plane; they proceed from the universals to the particulars, which is the right approach to Life and its phenomena on various planes.

## EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS CONTROL OF LOWER NATURE—III

KNOWLEDGE of the Theosophical philosophy is very necessary and I would like you to utilize its doctrines and teachings in making your own decisions as to your future. It is good to know of your feeling that the personality of yours is now beginning to be tamed by you, and the first thing you should take a very careful note of is that there is a tamer within you, a spiritual entity who is able to control and adjust the personality.

We are bound to be egotistic, for the lower nature of Krishna from which we derive our lower nature has as one of its components—*Ahankara*. It is the "I"-making power; it does not remain that, but turns to *Abhiman*. H.P.B. points out that there are three *Ahankaras*—personal, individual, and purely spiritual. The lowest, caught up in gross matter, becomes "separative." The notion of a separated self dies hard; it is the root of the personal-god idea.

Shy people (introverts) are often said to be proud because of their reserve. Of course, personality implies pride; ego-hood implies egotism; and all of us have pride, which according to Buddhist psychology, is the last to go. You have to live your life within yourself and calmly proceed. To stick quietly to one's own convictions is not pride; it annoys people who are so proud that they insist on your abandoning your convictions and adopting theirs. Often mock modesty passes for humility, Mock modesty is vociferous; humility shines in silence. It is often an inferiority complex which indulges in mock modesty. How humble was Uriah Heep! I do not think you need to worry on this point of humility and pride. Just go on with your study and sacrifice silently, without any ado or show.

Pride has numerous aspects. What you say about pride blinding us to our own faults and foibles is correct. Hypocrisy is connected with knowledge—we know and still we say what we know to be untrue. *Shila* is absent; bifurcation in the very consciousness takes place. Attention (Chapter II of the *Dhammapada*) is the antidote.

But there is unself-conscious hypocrisy and that is to be overcome by goodness and humility.

Doubts are of two kinds: the good and worth-while doubt of which Robert Browning speaks in his “Rabbi Ben Ezra”: “I rather prize the doubt low kinds exist without” (do look it up—a fine philosophical poem); the second is “unpardonable.” You know in your consciousness that such-and-such a thing is a fact; having known this, you doubt. Suppose you *see* a Guru; after He has gone away doubt assails you and you dwell in that doubt. It becomes a sin.

We may and often should doubt our beliefs (“seeing is believing” and that is all that superficial seeing is), but that which is our conviction and which comes from knowledge and reason should produce, not doubt, but eager search. Sincere questioning is not doubt. As Judge points out, doubt is always of the lower man, the desire-mind which tends towards the hardness of *tamas* instead of moving towards the rhythm of *sattva*.

What you say about the present cycle is true, but you must not allow doubts to enter your own heart. The fact that you have to remember is that there are certain things which are matters of deep conviction and faith with you. Thus, if through your study and reflection you have come to the conviction that man is an immortal soul in the process of unfoldment, that the evolution of that soul takes place through Reincarnation and Karma, that the Law is just and that Karma works infallibly and always on a higher spiral—if these are convictions, then there naturally follows the other conviction that your own life has a meaning and a purpose and that meaning must be understood and the purpose fulfilled. That being so, the only thing that we can do is to apply the words of Mr. Judge and increase our faith in that which we know to be true, and the rest must be allowed to flow according to its course, trusting the law of Karma to make the necessary adjustments. So it is no use being dejected; it is far more important that you should make clean and clear your own nature, your own mental perceptions in life’s activities.

What you describe as your experience is not the Dweller; it is the

process of formation. You have *separated* yourself from your weaknesses by the aid of your aspirations and the assembling of those weaknesses is taking place. When the process is completed it becomes *Papa-Purusha*, the evil Dweller. But our aspirations and our effort to lead the higher life also begins to take shape—*Punya-Purusha*. Then by the help and strength of the latter we eject the former from within ourselves. Next, it torments us from without; this is the real Dweller. There are some grim mysteries connected with the subject. A clear conscience, purity of magnetism and cleanliness of body are very best protection. You are bound to get over difficulties as you persist in attention-devotion.

There are several types of Dwellers. Soon or late every chela encounters it, in one form or another. This for the simple reason that each one has the personal dire heresy of separateness which is the will to live a separate life apart from Nature-*Prakriti* ensouled by Masters—Perfect *Purushas*.

The inner senses are in two sets. There are the psychic duplicates of our bodily senses; the development of these belongs to the lower *iddhis*, as the very first page of *The Voice of the Silence* explains. Then there is the higher set which is unfolded in the purified and elevated astral by the Manasic Ego, and this development is of the spiritual kind. The link is explained by Judge in his “Culture of Concentration.”

There are two consciences: (1) That pertaining to the lower Manas; the voice of Manas which says to its partner, Kama, “No, this is wrong.” Kama answers and fools Manas and so Manas gets enslaved. That voice is rooted in Manas’s experiences of the past and is mostly connected with the Kamic or emotional life of the personality. Therefore it can say, “No, No!” It cannot teach. This conscience is negative. If we habituate ourselves to listen to and understand that voice, separation of Manas from Kama progresses and a *pucca Antahkarana* is formed. (2) That pertaining to the *Antahkarana*, who is mastering Kama and the five senses and the five organs. This *Antahkarana* stretches out to its parent, the Higher



Manas, which is ever in unison with the Atma-Buddhi duad. This higher conscience is called Divine Conscience; it is Buddhist in nature and character. It can not only warn; it can bring knowledge and make the *Antahkarana*, the Bridge, ready to receive inspiration. This is the Inner Voice of which so many mistaken views exist. For daily living of the Theosophic life the creation of *Antahkarana* is highly important, in fact most necessary. Then *Antahkarana* is to the personality what Buddhi is to the Individuality.

Our love gets coloured and tarnished because of our Kama-Manasic nature. Our consciousness swings from the purely passionate to the purely intuitive, from the grossly personal to the highly individual and impersonal; this is the experience of each of us. We are like the phases of the moon—always changing, and not regularly like the moon but in jerks of irregularity! We have to gain the full-moon position—the personality unobscured and fully shining by the Light of the Spiritual Sun. To get to that we must become *Antahkaranic* beings, more or less permanently. This is our battlefield—our *dharma* as aspirant-devotee-neophytes.

Work never kills; worry does, and our fretting about it and finding fault with it spoils health, psychic as well as bodily. H.P.B. once wrote that Chelaship is an attitude of mind; our attitude to all men and matters, all things and events, implies some self-examination, some calmness and some enthusiasm. The sense of responsibility for one's own life and the study of Theosophy give birth to the spirit of sacrifice. But how to make people, especially the young ones, introspective? Well, we are doing what we can. Money has become the Great God and sense-life the communion with that God! Result? Selfishness. Denouncing it is loss of *Prana*. Bemoaning it is loss of time. We can and must orient ourselves and sustain ourselves on the right path, serving whole-heartedly our fellow men, and rest content with Karma.

(Concluded)

## THOUGHTS ON CURSES AND BLESSINGS

### III

THE two Asuras, Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu, were killed by *Varaha* (or boar) *avatar*, and *Narsimha* (or man-lion) *avatar* of Vishnu, respectively. In a sense, various avatars depict the gradual evolution and transformation of all species, beginning with Azoic times, corresponding to *ilus* in which Brahma implants the creative germ. Then we pass through Palaeozoic and Mesozoic times, covered by the first and second incarnations as the fish and tortoise. Next is the Cenozoic period, covered by the third and fourth incarnations in the animal and semi-human forms of boar and man-lion. Matsya-Avatar symbolizes the period when the earth was covered with water (*Isis*, II, 274). In the Hindu Puranas, two great creations are mentioned, the Padma and the Varaha. During the latter creation the Earth was lifted out of the water by Brahma, in the shape of a boar, or “Varaha Avatara,” writes H.P.B. We are also told that the last Kalpa was the Padma, the present one is Varaha. This has allusion to the period when our globe was covered with water, when physical nature, unaided by the divine intelligences, failed to create man. After this, the “Creators” are displeased and dry the earth, and hence began the period of incrustation (*S.D.*, II, 52-53). If we regard Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu as Daitya kings, then they may be taken to represent spiritually degraded giants of third and fourth race humanity. Daityas and Rakshasas refer to the Atlanteans, “who offered fanatical worship to dark Cosmic, anthropomorphic Powers, with whom they made alliance.” They had become materialistic, sensuous and proud, as expressed in Stanza X, Sloka 40: “The Third and the Fourth (races) became tall with pride. We are the Kings, We are the Gods” (*S.D.*, II, 271). Further, “We are shown one hero... first born as the ‘unrighteous but valiant monarch’ (Purusha) of the Daityas, Hiranyakasipu, slain by the Avatar Nara-Sinha (Man-lion). Then he was born as Ravana, the giant king of Lanka, and killed by Rama; after which he is reborn

as Sisupala, the son of Rajarishi (King Rishi) Damaghosha, when he is again killed by Krishna, the last incarnation of Vishnu. This parallel evolution of Vishnu (spirit) with a *Daitya*, as men, may seem meaningless, yet it gives us a key not only to the respective dates of Rama and Krishna but even to a certain psychological mystery.” (*S.D.*, II, 225 fn.)

Mr. Judge points out that “there is a curse attendant upon money.” That is because although money could be and has been used by some to benefit humanity, very few have the attitude of “trusteeship” towards their wealth. Unless a person has developed sufficient detachment, very strong and peculiar feelings get attached with wealth.

In some cases, very strong desires are fastened to the buried treasure and the person or persons burying the treasure may have wished that the treasure must be restored back to them and none other. In the article, “Can Stones Carry a Curse?” (*The Theosophical Movement*, January 1959), mention is made of the 44½-carat blue Hope diamond, which was taken to France, in 1642, by a French Adventurer, Jean Tavernier, from Krishna river mines in India. Some say that it was dislodged from the forehead of an idol. Whatever may be the truth, tragedy or great misfortune has befallen many of its possessors. These disasters have included being torn to pieces by wild dogs (Tavernier’s fate), murder, suicide, fatal accident, destitution, and, in the case of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, death on the guillotine. One of the explanations is to be found in the power of human will, which is described as the greatest of all magnets. H.P.B. points out that by a determined concentration of the will, an inert object, such as stone or paper or cloth could be imbued with protective or destructive power. A talisman is a piece of cloth or paper or stone that is imbued with pure magnetism and carries potency for good so as to protect the person carrying it, from every evil influence and calamity. On the other hand, a curse laid on the inert object could bring about disasters on the possessor of the object.

One of the explanations for the disaster befalling the possessors of precious stones, gold or money is in terms of the property of inert objects to retain the impressions of the events. Consider the case of the above-mentioned blue Hope diamond. Every time the person who possessed the diamond met with a calamity; the diamond would retain the impressions of those occurrences. Such impressions or vibrations draw in their turn corresponding powers from the invisible atmosphere, a union with which produces bad results. However, the fact, that not all who came to possess the blue Hope diamond met with disaster, shows that karma, as well as the character and motive of the person, play an important role.

We read of blessings and curses in the Bible. Moses had issued Ten Commandments to Israelites. In the fifth book of Old Testament, considered to be a farewell address by Moses to the Israelites, he emphasizes that observance of the Commandments will bring them blessings, but disobedience will bring curses. There are a number of blessings and curses scattered throughout Bible for various reasons such as dishonouring parents, stealing, perjury, bearing false witness, an illicit sexual relationship, practicing witchcraft, idolatry, etc. There are also curses with symbolic meaning attached to them.

Curses in the scriptures often convey historical facts, and must be interpreted allegorically. The dead-letter interpretation could prove disastrous. For instance, in *Genesis*, ix.25, we read of the curse pronounced by Noah on his son Ham: “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” H.P.B. points out that literally interpreting Mosaic Bible, people have ignored the Law of Love taught by Jesus. The above statement from *Genesis* was taken literally and hence was introduced the inhuman practice of slave-trafficking by certain western nations, calling or labelling certain races as *inferior*. In the article, “Have Animals Souls?” H.P.B. observes that this sentence from *Genesis* “generated centuries of misery and undeserved woe for the wretched slaves—the negroes.” If we turn to chapter IX of *Genesis*, we are told that Noah and his sons, Ham, Shem and Japhet came out of the boat and were saved

from the floods. They are considered to be the ancestors of all the people on the earth. Noah was the first man who planted the vineyard and then he became drunk. It goes on that in his drunken state he removed his clothes and was lying naked. His son Ham entered the tent and saw the nakedness of his father and reported it to his other two brothers who then went in with a cloth with their backs facing their father and covered him. When Noah was sober again, he became aware of what his youngest son Ham had done, *i.e.*, he had stolen the garment of his father. So, Noah gives curse that Canaan, son of Ham, will be slave of Shem and Japhet.

Theosophy teaches that our present humanity belongs to the Fifth Root Race or Aryan race. The Third Race being Lemurian and the Fourth being Atlantean Race. Each Root Race consists of seven sub-races. There was a gradual evolution of man, physically and mentally. From being a-sexual, humanity became hermaphrodite or bisexual, like snails and earthworms. In the latter part of Third Root Race, there was separation into sexes, male and female, and man acquired physical or gross form, though not as gross and solid as we have today. At that point in time, since the mind of man was not yet lighted up or activated, the “Sons of Wisdom” or *Manasputras*, who later endowed the human race with the light of mind, had warned humanity to leave alone the fruit forbidden by Nature. In other words, humanity was warned to leave alone physical procreation through the union of the sexes, until its physiological nature had adjusted its instincts in the right direction. But some of humanity disobeyed the warning and beget progeny. Being still mindless at the period of separation it begot, moreover, anomalous offspring, by uniting with huge she-animals. Thus, the warning proved of no value. Men realized the *unfitness—we must not say sin*—of what they had done, only when too late: after the angelic monads from higher spheres had incarnated in, and endowed them with understanding, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 267)

Noah represents Third Race, separated, and his three sons represent the last three sub-races of the Third Race. Ham represents

the race that uncovered the “*nakedness*” of the Parent Race, and of the “Mindless,” *i.e.*, committed sin (*S.D.*, II, 397). In other words, it refers to a relatively gross yet mindless man committing the sin of uniting with the animals.

H.P.B. explains that Adam and Eve were given coats of skin by God and that means a point in evolution or rather involution when matter predominated over spirit and transformed man into a physical man. These garments of skin were passed on to subsequent races (Enoch and Methuselah) and from whom Noah obtained it and took with him on the Ark and it is shown to be stolen by Ham and he gives it to Cush and Cush gives it to Nimrod. “Every one of the antediluvian patriarchs stood as the representative of a race which had its place in a succession of cycles; and each of which races was less spiritual than its predecessor. Thus Noah, though a good man, could not have borne comparison with his ancestor, Enoch, who ‘walked with God and did not die.’” Noah received the coat of skin from Enoch and Adam, but he did not wear it (which shows his purity) and hence his son Ham could steal it. Later, Cush wears it “in secret,” which shows that his spiritual nature began to get tainted by the material, and finally it is passed on to Nimrod, who is the strongest and most powerful of physical men, who is the last remnant of antediluvian giants. writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 149-50)

Thus, it appears that the curse given to Canaan that he will be a servant to his brothers, refers to descendants of Ham, being of greater materiality and hence spiritually inferior, to the races descended from Sham and Japhet. In *The Theosophist* magazine for May 1880, H.P.B. makes clear that “Ham is now shown by anthropology to have had nothing to do with the Egyptian race, the skulls of whose mummies have been proved Indo-Caucasian and whose high civilization antedated the Noachian deluge,” and thus refutes the conjecture of the Scriptural chronologists that after the Noachian deluge, Ham went to Africa, Japhet to Europe and Shem remained in Asia.

We may also understand the meaning of the curse in this case in the light of what is indicated in a footnote on pp. 283-84 (*S.D.*, II), which

refers to the Greek mythology regarding the mutilation of Uranos by his son Kronos, or Uranos being made impotent by Kronos. H.P.B. says that it has an allusion to the theft by the Son of the Earth and the Heavens of the *divine creative fire*. Similar myths are to be found in both Egyptian and Babylonian Cosmogony. The latter refers to god Zu, who strips “the father of the gods” of the ideal creative organ. “A fourth version is in the Bible. Ham is the Chaldean Zu, and both are cursed for the same allegorically described crime.”

There are several interpretations of the mutilation of Uranos by Kronos, etc. All along we find the power of creation being passed on from the higher to the lower levels, and ultimately resting with man. In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 765-66) H.P.B. writes that Uranos (Ouranos) reigned and ruled over the Second Race and their Continent (Hyperborea). Kronos or Saturn governed the Lemurians, or the third Race humanity. It is said that the first astronomical teacher of men was Uranos, because he is one of the seven Dhyan Chohans [comparable to seven sons of Manu in the Hindu mythology] of that second period or Race. Uranos gave birth to the Titans of the Third Race, and it is they who (personified by Saturn-Kronos) mutilated him. It is stated that the Titans *fell into generation*, when “creation *by will* was superseded by physical procreation,” and then they needed Uranos no more. Elsewhere in the *Secret Doctrine*, we read that in the latter part of the third race humanity, personified by Saturn-Kronos, there was the separation of sexes into male and female, and procreation was not by *Kriyasakti* but by the union of the sexes. We are further told that mutilation of Ouranos is followed by casting off his genitals into the ocean, from which Venus-aphrodite, goddess of love and sex, springs. Venus presides over Third Race humanity, which procreated through the union of the sexes. The work of generation which was suspended because Uranos is made impotent, is passed into the hands of Kronos or time, who unites himself with Rhea (representing earth or matter in general) and like the celestial Titans, produced before, produces terrestrial Titans.

(To be concluded)

## PHILOSOPHY OF PREDESTINATION

PREDESTINATION is a belief in the theological dictum of the Abrahamic religions that events of individual human life as well as those of the world at large are predetermined by God. Whether predetermination precludes entirely freedom of will of the human being, or is he allowed a degree of freedom of self-determination in the preordained universal scheme of things, and its bearing on his future happiness, is a matter of debate among theologians of various denominations and sects. The paradox of predestination and human free-will is attempted to be reconciled in various ways by different sects. At one end of the spectrum of belief is the doctrine of the Calvinist that God appointed eternal destiny of some to salvation by grace, while leaving the remainder to receive eternal damnation for their “original sin,” and that individual free-will is discounted as a factor in “God’s unconditional election or reprobation.” On the other hand, the Eastern Orthodox Church affirms that individuals possess the free-will which counts as a factor in the scheme of divine determinism. Catholicism teaches that “God’s eternal plan of predestination” includes in it each person’s personal free response to His grace. Islamic theology admits of free will of man and that he will be judged on Judgment Day by his actions of omission and commission on earth which are recorded in the “Book of Life.” Eastern religions teach that there is no predestination in the life of men and nations, which is not the direct and just outcome of human action in the past by the law of cause and effect; that, in other words, there is no destiny, which is not created by oneself by one’s own actions.

While most of the followers of a religion or a sect accept unquestioningly the belief system it advocates as a matter of faith, a few however given to independent thinking and, having an inspiration of their own, would not accept any doctrine on blind faith but inquire into the validity of the foundational assumptions of the beliefs in a quest to find the truth. The belief systems of different



religions more or less differ from one another in conception. But the fact that some few features run through all of them like a common denominator shows that they all have grown out of a foundation of truth and, that over time, become coloured with different notions. Thus, one truth becomes split in the prism of the human mind into a spectrum of various sects. Independent thinker in quest of truth strives to discover the truth, the light of which, when found, cleanses religions of the dross of the ages and reconciles them all to be aspects of one truth like one many-faceted diamond. Reason, logical consistency, commonsense, justice, intuitive confirmation and universal applicability should be the criteria by which the soundness and validity of a doctrine or a proposition is to be judged.

The extra-cosmic God idea implicit in the various theological constructions on the question of predestination, briefly alluded to in the foregoing, is philosophically inadmissible. A God who preordains by his supposedly inscrutable arbitrary will, some to salvation and others to eternal punishment, is devoid of even ordinary human reason, sense of justice and fair play. The latter dogma of double predestination is modified by some theologies, which admit the existence of free-will in man, but proclaim God's foreknowledge of who of his creatures would exercise his free choice to earn divine grace and who would not, and accordingly dispenses his judgment. Also, the assumption, which is subsumed in these monotheistic religions, is the idea of a new soul created for every baby born on earth but doomed to everlasting hell or heaven based on probation of just one short life on earth, allowing no extension in time, another opportunity, to the poor creature, who is condemned to hell, to learn from mistakes, make amends, to improve and grow more perfect. Such an unjust dispensation of the theological God does not fit well with omniscience and mercy attributed to him. The absurdity of the doctrine, which teaches beginning to a soul when created by God, but subject to endless post-mortem life by the will of God, is evident. One short life on earth followed, after death, by the heavenly joy of the chosen ones for endless eternity by God's grace in the company

of saints means crystallization of the soul in heaven forever, which precludes any progress whatsoever.

We have to search in the original source from which these theologies have sprung in order to apprehend the truth. This we find in Theosophy, which is the basis of all religions. It teaches, man is a Soul—the eternal Thinker—essentially one with Universal Soul, in quest of perfection by garnering and assimilating experiences from each one of a long series of Reincarnations propelled by Cyclic and Karmic Law. As man, in his three aspects of Spirit, Soul and Body, is a perfect copy of the Universe in its corresponding three aspects, man himself is potentially Deity manifested and unmanifested, and the Karmic and Cyclic Law inheres in man himself, the law of his being. Thus, there is no God or Law apart from man or outside of the universe. The ultimate purpose of the ever-active progressive universe is the evolution of man and the perfection of man. There are beings below man in lower kingdoms evolving to reach the stage of man, and beings who have evolved beyond the human stage and become one of a vast hierarchy of planetary spirits as agents of Karmic and evolutionary law in the evolution of the universe, a progressive order which has neither conceivable beginning nor an imaginable end. Therefore, each man's life is the just outcome of his deeds in prior incarnations. He reaps the fruits of his good deeds in happiness and those of his past evil deeds in pain and sorrow. "But verily there is not an accident in our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or in another life" (*S.D.*, I, 643-44). Nor are there any heaven and hell as envisaged in orthodox theologies. The latter are a merely fantastical outgrowth of the truism about the post-mortem states of human consciousness of the Thinker, the Soul. In the one, called hell or hades, he relinquishes the principle of passion and desires—the psychic dregs of gross, material life of the personality—in a state called *Kama-Loka*, hence, also called as purgatory; which is followed by a spiritual state of consciousness, called *Devachan*, in which the undying nobler qualities, thoughts,

and aspirations of the person, which constitute the aroma, or quintessence of the experiences of the person's life.

Both the states are temporary, of more or less duration, which is proportional to the energy and intensity of the finer or the gross quality of the thoughts and actions of the person. Devachan is a state of rest, a felicity of unmixed bliss the Ego enjoys as Karmic compensation for the suffering endured during life on earth, at the end of which it is magnetically drawn back to another incarnation, the conditions and circumstances of which are the absolutely just outcome of the Karma of the Ego in the past life and lives earlier to it. Thus, the Ego progresses through innumerable cycles of reincarnation, learning lessons and assimilating experiences to at last bloom into conscious divinity. Man's life and destiny, therefore, are determined by no god or devil. Man is the maker of his own destiny. It is the fundamental axiom of the Esoteric philosophy that there are no special gifts or favours conferred upon man except such as are earned by the Ego by self-effort and merit through a long series of reincarnations and metempsychosis.

As we are not separate from humanity as a whole, and as our individual being is inextricably intertwined with all beings, and as all beings are incessantly evincing a progressive movement to a higher life, the law of Universal Harmony requires of us to so think and live as to be constantly aiding the harmonious universal progression of Nature. If one breaks the law of Harmony, consciously or unconsciously, one has to inescapably experience the ill-effects of discordant actions in pain, sorrow and suffering, till the causes one generated are fully worked out in the incarnate life. Laws of life are their own avengers, and the avenging angel is just a metaphor representing the law of Karmic Retribution. Thus, we are the artificers of our own destiny.

No nation can escape the visitation of the Karmic Nemesis which is roused into action by its evil deeds. Natural disasters, national calamities, moral and physical epidemics, wars and revolutions, which periodically sweep over more or less large tracts of a country

afflicting people *en masse* are the bitter fruits of the collective inharmonious actions of the people so affected; those who have had no hand in creating the adverse causes remaining unaffected.

If this Law of all laws is well known, individuals will by a conscientious compulsion from within, think and act responsibly, and nations will work together in mutual cooperation for the good of all, instead of being riven with disunion and strife as at present. An impartial consideration of this ancient teaching, which is at once reasonable and just, and which has been ascertained and proven by countless generations of perfected men of faultless spiritual perception, of prior great periods of planetary evolutions, will show that in a general diffusion of this knowledge alone lies the key to true human happiness and higher progress, and the only true basis for true social and religious reform and world peace.

It is selfishness, whether of individuals or of nations, which is the chief originator of evil in human life, the source of all pain and misery. The one and the only remedy is Altruism in action which comes as a spontaneous impulse in our lives once we grasp the truth of our oneness with, and our duty towards, all life.

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It is true that when we are relying on other things, we are not relying on the law. Yes, it looks a good deal darker than it really is. We have to grow accustomed to another kind of light, and we shall then see as plainly, or more so, than before. The very sacrifices made to relieve the trials of others are also tests for ourselves, and means of growth, growth coming from the sacrifice of the lower to the higher in every way, as well as on every plane of being. It is spiritual fire that burns out all the dross. At no time is the way easier, but it is *sure*, and the refining goes on.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

## ON INSPIRATION

THE SPIRIT of man works through three vehicles—the animal soul, the human soul and the spiritual soul. Through the first it expresses itself as instinct; through the second, as the reasoning faculty; and through the spiritual soul, as intuition. But what is inspiration? Let us turn to the poets and the mystics for the elucidation of this power which so greatly transcends the ordinary working of our consciousness and even the power of intuition.

Shelley said that poets were “the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present.” “Inspiration” means literally “breathing in.” It so greatly transcends the ordinary working of consciousness that poets have sometimes had recourse to objectionable artificial means to breathe in the sweet air of inspiration. De Quincey, Coleridge, Poe and others wrote under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Shall we reject the magnificent things some of them wrote on that account?

There are those who apprehend something of what they get as inspiration—the mystics. The first things they apprehend is that the Universe is purposeful, ordered, harmonious, a cosmos, not a chaos. Most stop there, but some go on to see that man is the miniature copy of the universe. What in man is analogous to the “great ring of pure and endless light,” which for Vaughan symbolized Eternity? The retina of the eye. A poet or a dramatist going down a street gets a very different picture on his retina from what the ordinary man, absorbed in his own affairs, will see; for the dramatist, the streets begin to masquerade; he sees men’s thoughts, emotions, failings, limitations, and puts them in his plays.

The eye has two uses. We may pour ourselves out through it, empty ourselves into the universe, go out and out and out until we lose ourselves. That is the Path of Liberation. Theosophy recommends drawing the universe into ourselves, the ocean into the drop, while retaining individual consciousness. Those who have done this are the great Teachers of mankind, the great Theosophists. The power by which it can be done is not the power of instinct or

that of intelligence or of intuition, but a power that belongs to That which has no material vehicle but is everywhere throughout the body.

No ritual practices will bring us inspiration. It is not a gift, from God or from the universe. There are no gifts but those won by a man through his own efforts.

Many even of those who have attained to inspiration cannot summon it at will or exercise it as a constant power; they may have but a touch of it now and again, a few times in an incarnation. How can it be seized and held? By developing the intuition more and more; and that cannot be done till we can see harmony where others see disharmony; till we see pleasure as well as pain in suffering, for pain has its great role to play in human life. “Woe to those who live without suffering,” H.P.B. wrote. Not until the pairs of opposites are transcended and we are unaffected even by war or peace, not till then can real peace flow into us. Not till then can inspiration reflect itself in us as in a deep calm and tranquil lake.

Devotion is the way to the unfoldment of the intuition and the experiencing of inspiration, but devotion is not emotionalism. When inspiration becomes a permanent condition, we shall then recognize our full unity with the universe and hence with all beings and things.

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THERE are persons who never think with the higher faculties of their mind at all; those who do so are the minority and are thus, in a way, *beyond*, if not above, the average of human kind. These will think even upon ordinary matters on that *higher* plane....Why is it that one person sees poetry in a cabbage or a pig with her little ones, while another will perceive in the loftiest things only their lowest and most material aspect, will laugh at the “music of the spheres,” and ridicule the most sublime conceptions and philosophies? This difference depends simply on the innate power of the mind to think on the higher or on the lower plane, with the *astral* (in the sense given to the word by de Saint-Martin), or with the physical brain.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Past research has demonstrated that optimism has a positive influence on happiness, health, relationships and pain management. The question arises, is there *nothing* good about being a pessimist? Psychologist Julie Norem, who has been studying the phenomenon of *defensive pessimism*, suggests that there is something positive about pessimism. It appears that defensive pessimism, which involves setting low expectations and considering worst-case scenarios, can help reduce anxiety. In the context of Covid-19 Pandemic, defensive pessimism would imply taking more precautions, such as, observing social distancing, wearing a mask, etc. According to Doctor Norem, though defensive pessimists are more *anxious* than optimists, they also make more active effort to manage their risk.

There are certain myths about optimism and pessimism. For instance, it is not true that a person is either an optimist or a pessimist. It is possible for a person to be optimistic in certain areas and pessimistic in some other areas of life. We are perfectly capable of changing our tendencies, and therefore, it is not true that optimists are born, not made. To say that being an optimist is always better than being a pessimist is a fallacy. In some cultures, positive emotions are encouraged, while some other cultures take a balanced view, recognizing that there are negatives and positives in most things in life, and one must experience both. It is true that pessimists are more likely to be depressed than optimists, but we must distinguish between defensive pessimists, who are oriented towards making things better in their lives, and fatalistic pessimists, who are assailed by the feeling of hopelessness and tend to assume that they are fated to be the way they are. Defensive pessimists have their moments of happiness, but they are focused more on giving their best and attaining their goal, than acquiring happiness. They know how to manage their anxiety, and do not allow that to interfere with their goal. Though optimism is strongly correlated with happiness,

optimists are often taken aback by setbacks. When one always thinks positively and expects wonderful things to happen, it may lead “you to ignore potential risks and problems that you need to take seriously.” Defensive pessimism is very helpful when negative outcomes are likely, and there is a possibility of doing something to prevent these outcomes, writes Marianna Pogosyan, a lecturer in Cultural Psychology, in *Psychology Today*, Top Posts, April 2021.

Optimism is a mental attitude reflecting a belief or hope that the outcome of some specific endeavour, or outcomes in general, will be positive, favourable and desirable. The opposite view is termed pessimism. A common idiom used to illustrate optimism versus pessimism is a glass filled with water to the halfway point: an optimist is said to see the glass as half full, while a pessimist sees the glass as half empty. Optimism may be described as the attitude of seeing the brighter side of life or seeing opportunities in challenges. Optimism or hope is misinterpreted to mean wishful thinking. True hope is never a fool’s blind optimism, but as Christopher Lasch expresses it, “Hope implies a deep-seated trust in life...[which] would not be worth much if it had not survived disappointments in the past, while knowledge that the future holds further disappointments demonstrates the continuing need for hope.” Thus, it appears that true optimism is inseparable from healthy pessimism, and *vice versa*, and it is best expressed by the idiom, “to hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.” It means to be optimistic, and yet, be ready for adversity; to expect the best result but being prepared with options in case it is the worst.

Healthy pessimism can take the form of deliberately *imagining* the very worst that could happen, and thus preparing oneself. It involves *living out* future anxieties and fears, as was done by Mr. Crosbie. He writes: “I used to look calmly and dispassionately at the very worst picture I could conjure up as happening to myself, and found it helpful in getting rid of ‘fear of consequences.’ I mentally took account of the very worst, saw myself in it with all that it entailed, went through it in all its parts leaving myself alone,



dishonoured, stripped of everything. Those very things have happened to me, but I knew them, and went on undismayed. Had I not done it, I would not be where I am to-day.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 85)

Noell Nelson, a clinical psychologist, seems to suggest that optimism, in one sense, consists of positive beliefs, about one’s self, one’s potential and about the future. “Winners’ beliefs imply a future full of positive possibilities and support their ability to go into the unknown with confidence and hope....No matter how grim your present seems, be willing to accept the belief that the future holds positive possibilities. The wonderful thing about possibilities is that they can be turned into probabilities and from there into actuality,” writes Nelson. Positive thoughts and feelings call forth, best efforts; so that the thing that seemed impossible moves into the area of the possible. When we make a positive formulation, *it is a direct affirmation of the will*.

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In an edited extract from *The Heartbeat of Trees: Embracing Our Ancient Bond with Forests and Nature*, by Peter Wohlleben, that appeared in *The Guardian* (May 28, 2021), we read that it is a well-known fact that trees have a positive effect on our emotions. They communicate with each other through their interconnected root systems, and store memories. But how do we affect them? Is communication possible between trees and people? We experience a soothing feeling when we touch trees, and respond with changes in blood pressure to the chemical compounds transpired by the trees. The trees are not aware of our response and also do not react to our signals. Professor Frantisek Baluska at the University of Bonn is of the opinion that plants are intelligent. But no one can be sure if plants have consciousness. In an experiment, when Baluska and his colleagues used anaesthetics to deactivate electrical activity in a plant with moving parts, such as, peas, they found that after being sedated, their tendrils, which usually moved in all directions, began

to spiral on the spot. But once the plants broke down the narcotics, they resumed their normal behaviour. If it means that the plants woke up from the effect of anaesthesia, like human beings, then does it mean that they have consciousness? If one strokes a tomato plant every day, then one notices that it will begin to grow thicker stem, and its upward growth slows down.

The roots of a tree possess great sensitivity. The root tips feel, taste, test and decide how far the roots will travel, using the brain-like structures within them. Thus, the sensitivity to touch is more in the roots than in the trunk. But the roots of a tree are tender and if exposed to the sun for even ten minutes, their tissues would die.

Could there possibly be heartbeats of trees? It appears that how the water is transported from the roots to the top of the tree is a mystery. When Doctor Andras Zlinszky at the Balaton Limnological Institute in Tihany, Hungary, and his colleagues used lasers to measure birch trees on calm nights, they noticed that the branches drooped lower by nearly four inches in the night, and returned to their normal position at sunrise. That may be because the trees are resting at night. However, when they measured some twenty-two trees of different species, documenting the rise and fall of the branches, they noticed that the branches changed position not only morning and night, but every three to four hours. Could this be an indicator of the heartbeat of the tree whereby the water was pumped gradually upward at the contraction? If so, then that would take the trees a step closer to the animal kingdom.

Lastly, it is possible to connect with the trees through our voices. It appears that the plants can hear. “Scientists discovered that the roots of *Arabidopsis* oriented themselves toward clicks in the frequency of 200 Hz (Hertz) and then grew in that direction.” This plant also reacts to the nibbling of caterpillars. But they did not react to other sounds with the same frequency. Till we have proof of active, positive response from the trees, to our presence or our touch, we should be content to allow them to live their own wild lives, writes Peter Wohlleben.

“Everything in the Universe, throughout all its kingdoms, is CONSCIOUS, *i.e.*, endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 274). This consciousness expresses itself differently through different forms, and its expression differs in accordance with the degree of progress. A stone or a crystal has psychic intelligence. Crystals have their own sympathies and antipathies, their own attractions. In plants this consciousness expresses itself as power of sensation; in animals as instinct, and in man as reasoning and intuition. Psychic intelligence is non-self-conscious use of the mind principle. But there is instinct working in the vegetable kingdom also. For instance, the Sunflower turns its face towards Sun; flowers assume beautiful colours and fragrance to attract insects and birds for pollination to ensure propagation. As for the communication, Sir J. C. Bose demonstrated that the plants, too, have emotions. It has been found that music aids plants to grow better and faster.

Swami Shri Savitanand mentions, in one of his books, an incident that shows an amazing impact of human communication on plants. An American couple would sit, twice every day, near a cactus plant, planted in a pot, and pray for a while, and after that talk to the plant. They would lovingly tell the plant that it was safe in their house. It will not be eaten by birds or animals, nor be destroyed by any human being. So, then, what was the need for it to bear thorns? They persuaded the plant not to bear thorns. After many months, the existing thorns began to grow blunt, and after a year, they noticed that new cactus branches did not bear thorns!

In the book, *Flowers: Their Spiritual Significance*, published by Sri Aurobindo Society, we read that according to the Mother, every flower has its special significance. Every flower carries with it a very special vibration, and that through those vibrations she has been able to perceive the quality that the flower represents, and which enables her to say something about the significance of a particular flower. “I give you flowers,” the Mother once told a *sadhak* (aspirant), “so that you may develop the Divine qualities they

symbolize.” For the devotees in the Ashram, the flowers are the language of their inner communication with the Mother. If the flowers given are supposed to symbolize silence, they would help the receiver in realizing silence, in proportion to his receptivity. The book contains an excerpt from Gerald Durrell’s book, *My Family and Other Animals*, which suggests that flowers speak and communicate but we can hear it only if we are attuned to them.

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If we wish to enhance our relationship with others, we should try to improve our relationship with ourselves. After studying human relationships in general, the author, Megha Bajaj, comes to the conclusion that while minor ego tussles and disagreements are natural in every relationship, the bigger ones occur when we miss out on finding out with whom we hold our most important relationship. When our most important relationship is with the God within, the Spiritual Self, then we begin to view other relationships in a different light. We begin to look upon these people as those who have come our way to help us fulfil our destiny. When we succeed in acquiring such a perspective, we are enabled to see in a nagging in-law, a person who is there to help us grow in love and patience, and to look upon our perfectionist boss, as someone who gives us an opportunity to grow as a professional.

We find ourselves becoming powerless when the most important person in our lives is not God but someone else, because now our happiness, sadness and peace are all in that person’s hands, over whom we have no control. However, we can change ourselves, with the help of the Self within, and therefore, the more rooted we are in that Spiritual Self, the less affected we are by the people around us. Amazingly, the moment we are in the right relationship with the Self within, that moment we are in the right relationship with others. We have then learnt to be powerful, purposeful and peaceful without any external support, and radiate the same from within us, to positively affect other relationships. We are now “givers” and not

all the time waiting to receive. “You find yourself enjoying a much greater flow with people around—because you are in a flow with yourself,” writes Megha Bajaj (*Life Positive*, May 2021)

Good human relations have the power to alter the world. Today we increasingly suffer from strained relationships. A perfect relationship is based on deep love and understanding, and in it there is a blending of opposing and complementary characteristics of two people involved. The less we are identified with our personality, with our likes and dislikes, ideas, desires, the better we are able to impersonally appreciate people and situations. We are able to see that our parents, brothers, sisters, colleagues, friends and enemies, all come to us under karma. If we observe life impartially, we are able to see that all the time, we become agents for good or evil. Our single word may produce a deep impact on another and change his life forever. We could be the cause of someone’s being late for an appointment and thus save him from a calamity. We may kindle the fire of passion and put another on the downward path, or the reverse.

An unruly and adamant child can bring about a great transformation in the parents, because in handling such a child parents may learn the lesson in patience. Similarly, the parents can influence the children for good. Sometimes an Ego can choose to take birth to drunken and poor parents, not only to learn fortitude and sympathy, but also to set an example in virtue and patience to the people around. *Light on the Path* suggests: “No man is your enemy: no man is your friend. All alike are your teachers.”

No man becomes our friend in the present life by reason of our behaviour in the present life alone. If he was our enemy in the previous life, he will be now, even if we do him service and are good to him, because these tendencies always last for more than three lives. So, towards those who are hostile to us, if we practise charity and love, then this tendency of enmity will be one-third lessened in every life. On the other hand, if we continue to be hostile, we put off the day of reconciliation by three more lives.