

Vol. 17

July 2025

Rs. 3/-

No. 3

**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

Vol. 17, No. 3

July 17, 2025

“ONCE A MAN, ALWAYS A MAN”

METEMPSYCHOSIS means the progress of the soul from one stage of existence to another. The Third Fundamental Proposition of Theosophy speaks of the Ego progressing through a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations. In the lower kingdoms there is *metempsychosis*, or transformation from one form to another, or from one species to another, as happens in animals. The term “reincarnation” applies to man after the lighting up of *Manas*. According to *The Theosophical Glossary*, “*Metempsychosis* should apply to animals alone.” The Kabalistic axiom: “A stone becomes a plant, a plant an animal, an animal a man, a man a spirit, and a spirit a god,” refers to the physical and spiritual evolution of man on this Earth.

The foetus passes through all these stages before assuming a human shape. The analysis of ovum, shows that it is composed of the same elements as a stone; thus, it may be said that man first appears as a stone. At the end of three or four weeks, the ovum assumes a plant-like appearance, having become spheroidal at one end and tapering like a carrot at the other, and the embryo hangs from the root of the umbilicus, like the fruit from the branch. There is a metempsychosis, or transformation of the stone into a plant. Next, as the foetus develops its limbs, eyes, ears, nose, etc., it resembles a tadpole and, like the amphibious reptile, lives in water and develops from it. Later, it gradually assumes a human shape. (*S.D.*, II, 188)

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Theosophy teaches that there was a point in the course of evolution when man in form was devoid of mind. However, when man had developed a brain that was of much *better* and *deeper* capacity than that of any other animal, he was given the light of mind by Divine Beings—*Manasaputras*—in a manner comparable to one candle lighting many. As a result, man was endowed with self-consciousness and the power to think and choose, which distinguishes man from animals.

When *metempsychosis* is understood as the transmigration of the human soul into animals, it is philosophically absurd. In the article, “Thoughts on Karma and Reincarnation,” H.P.B. writes: “Nature, propelled by Karma, never recedes, but strives ever forward in her work on the physical plane; that she may lodge a human soul in the body of a man, morally ten times lower than any animal, but she will not reverse the order of her kingdoms; and while leading the irrational monad of a beast of a higher order into the human form at the first hour of a Manvantara, she will not guide that Ego, once it has become a man, even of the lowest kind, back into the animal species...” (*Lucifer*, April 1889)

Mr. Judge tells us that careful reading of Vedas and Upanishads will show that the ancient Hindus did not believe in the transmigration of the human Soul into an animal form but held that “once a man, always a man.” Mainly, theosophy rejects reincarnation in animal bodies because man is the crown piece of evolution, endowed with *Manas*, while the animal has no *Manas*. Just as the blood in the body is prevented by the valves from rushing back into the heart by the way it came, so in the system of evolution the door is shut behind the Thinker and prevents him from being born into lower kingdoms, writes Mr. Judge.

Then how did such a misconception arise that a man can be born as an animal? One explanation is that the later Brahmins, for the purpose of having priestly hold on the people, or for some other purpose taught them the doctrine that “they or their parents might go after death into the bodies of animals.” As a result, some

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missionaries and travellers have come to the conclusion that such must be the belief among the Hindu and Jain who carefully avoid stepping on the insects because “they think that in these forms their dead friends or relatives may be living,” writes Mr. Judge. (*The Heart Doctrine*, p. 129)

In the article, “Egyptian Magic,” H.P.B. mentions a papyrus concerning judgment of the soul, which shows the Soul found guilty of gluttony sentenced to be reborn on earth as a hog, and this has been taken by the orientlists as an indisputable proof of belief in transmigration into animals. De Mirville, in his work on the Satanic character of the Gods of Egypt, writes: “Tortures to begin with, then metempsychosis *during 3,000 years* as a hawk, an angel, a lotus flower, a heron, a stork, a swallow, a serpent, and a crocodile...” H.P.B. observes that correct understanding emerges when interpreted in the light of the doctrine of Karma and when the metaphorical language of the priests has been understood. The hawk, the heron, the serpent or the lotus flower, each had their meaning in the symbology of ancient religions. When the Ego is reincarnated, it is punished for its past misdeeds. For instance, “The man who all his life acted hypocritically and passed for a good man, but had been in sober reality watching like a bird of prey his chance to pounce upon his fellow-creatures, and had deprived them of their property, will be sentenced by Karma to bear the punishment for hypocrisy and covetousness in a future life.” In some life he may be born as a good, sincere, well-meaning man, but his punishment would be that he will be regarded by others as a “hawk,” so that notwithstanding his good nature, he will be suspected of greed and hypocrisy and of secret exactions, which will make him suffer.

Another explanation for such a false idea arising out of the true doctrine could be understood in terms of the fate of the astral body after the death of a person. The death of the physical body marks the “first death,” but the process of death continues in the *Kama Loka*, wherein there is separation of the astral body, desire nature, and lower mind from the higher trinity of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas*, or

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the Real Man, which goes to *devachan*, *swarga*, or paradise, after the separation. If life lived was of good thoughts and virtuous, the transition through *Kama Loka* is rapid, but it would be slow if the content of life thoughts was of material, sensuous, and selfish. The Ego then relinquishes the Astral Body and *Kama*, which both coalesce to form what is called *Kama-rupa*, an astral corpse devoid of mind or conscience, the psychic dregs of the personality that was, to dissipate over time in that realm. This is termed “second death.” The more gross the life lived, the more coherent and longer lasting the *Kama-rupa*. If the man was wicked and material, then the *Kama-rupa* shell being too gross would flit about in *Kama Loka* and manifest itself in spiritualistic séance rooms. Mr. Judge observes that clairvoyants of modern times say that such astral shells assume the appearance of beasts or reptiles according to their dominant characteristic. Thus, for instance, we say, “cunning like a fox,” “ferocious like a tiger,” “venomous like a snake,” etc. Thus, in the case of a person with an extremely cunning nature, their astral body or *Kama-rupa* shell could assume the form of a fox.

The astral body is made up of the astral matter, which mortal man shares in common with the animal world. The gross astral forms of the wicked have a natural affinity to the animal kingdom. The astral remains of such persons gradually gravitate towards and are absorbed in the astral plane of animals. But this does not mean that the man himself goes into an animal form.

However, a slightly different case is that of an ascetic Jada Bharata, given in *Vishnu Purana*. He is said to have died and been reborn as a deer because of his deep attachment to a deer for several years that lasted till his dying moment. We can understand this in terms of the dynamic power of human thought. We read in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: “Whosoever in consequence of constant meditation on any particular form thinketh upon it when quitting his mortal frame, even to that doth he go” (VIII, verse 6). Consequently, his astral body would necessarily have assumed the shape of the deer even during his life because of his strong emotional attachment to

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the animal; and, after his death, it would have lingered on in *Kama Loka*, to be finally re-absorbed on the astral plane of animals. It was thus he is said to have been reborn as a deer.

The Ego itself chooses and takes birth to such parents and family where it has strong karmic affinity through past karma. We know almost nothing about the process of the descent of the Ego from the invisible *devachanic* realm to the visible realm; from the unembodied state to rebirth in a physical body. But there are one or two hints thrown out by Mr. Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. He writes: “As we know that no human body is formed without the union of the sexes, and that the germs of such production are locked up in the sexes and must come from food which is taken into the body, it is obvious that foods have something to do with the reincarnating of the Ego. Now if the road to reincarnation leads through certain food and none other, it may be possible that the Ego gets entangled in food which will not lead to the germ of physical reproduction, a punishment is indicated where Manu says that such and such practices will lead to transmigration, which is then a ‘hindrance.’” (p. 73)

The Ego is said to become entangled in plants and food grains; thence it may pass on into various animal bodies, which may eat them. The Upanishad teaches, and Sri Shankaracharya affirms in his commentary, that it is very difficult for the Ego, so caught up in various vegetable and animal bodies, to enter the human body of a male capable of fathering a child. It is indicated that, in the case of those who are given to evil thoughts, crooked ways, and vicious indulgences, the Ego may be caught up in various animal and plant bodies during the transition from the unembodied to embodied state for a considerable time, proportionate to its demerit, before finding a human body appropriate to its past karma.

Manu also mentions that “the Ego gets entangled in food, which will not lead to the germ of physical reproduction.” If we think about the physiological processes, we find that “before anything can be taken into our system, that particle has to get into the blood and become blood.” Also, before it can get into the blood, the

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multitudinous food elements have to be reduced to what we know as chyle. Hence, “if the Ego gets entangled in the kind of food that cannot be reduced to the synthetic basis which makes it possible for it to enter the blood, then that Ego is debarred for the time being from getting into incarnation. More and more, the food of humanity lacks the reproductive element, because we do not put it in. We can only take out of food what we put into it... Also, we never use nature with a thought that nature is in evolution. Consequently, little by little, the spiritual element which has to be present in all food becomes absent; the psychic element—the higher psychic element which has to be present in all food if it is to have the reproductive germ—becomes absent; and the time comes when, although there is an Earth here, no Ego can reincarnate on it...” (“Questions Answered at an Informal ‘Ocean’ Class,” *The Theosophical Movement*, Vol. 23, p. 31)

Man is continuously using matter and giving it good or bad impressions. In the course of evolution, man has before him the task of raising up the matter that he uses to higher and higher states. The atoms and “lives” forming the human body are continuously receiving good or bad impression and flying to lower kingdoms. In the article, “Transmigration of Life Atoms,” H.P.B. shows that the *Laws of Manu*, literally interpreted, have been misunderstood. She says that the statement, “A Brahman-killer enters the body of a dog, bear, ass, camel, goat, sheep, bird, etc.,” does not mean that the human Ego is born into these brute bodies but refers to atoms of the human body, the lower triad, and the fluidic emanations. The “Brahman-killer” is “he who kills or extinguishes in himself the light of *Parabrahm*.” We continuously impress the atoms that we use with either lower, psychic, or higher, spiritual impressions—depending upon our thoughts. When these atoms are impressed by evil thoughts and actions, they get attracted to lower kingdoms, by magnetic affinity, and go into the formation of lower animals or brutes. This is the real meaning of the doctrine of Metempsychosis (*H.P.B. Series No. 25*). It is in this sense that man is said to be reborn as an animal.

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Man is responsible for the evolution of lower kingdoms, as he has to raise “the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature, nature, and dignity of conscious god-hood.” Mr. Judge points out that if today tigers are more vicious or if serpents are more poisonous, it is because they are influenced by the thoughts of men. Man’s soul is not born into an animal body again, but the atoms of his body do find lodgment in the animal bodies.

Buddha remarked to his Bhikkhus, pointing to a broom, that it was formerly a novice who had neglected to sweep out the council room and hence was in this birth born as a broom. H.P.B. points out that it is a figurative statement. The man throws off the magnetic fluid, or life-atoms, from his body, either unconsciously or consciously, and affects the objects in his vicinity. She writes:

“Let any man give way to an intense feeling, such as anger, grief, etc., under or near a tree or in direct contact with a stone; and many thousands of years after that any tolerable Psychometer will see the man and sense his feelings from one single fragment of that tree or stone that he had touched. Hold any object in your hand, and it will become impregnated with your life atoms....It requires no adept knowledge, but simply the natural gift of a good clairvoyant subject to see them passing to and fro, from man to objects and *vice versa* like a bluish lambent flame.” (*H.P.B. Series No. 25*, pp. 34-35)

In light of the above, H.P.B. argues that if there was a shrub that grew in the vicinity of the building where the lazy novice lived, and if the shrub was repeatedly touched by him while in a state of anger arising out of his laziness and distaste for duty, then it is quite possible for him to pass on a quantity of his life atoms to the shrub. The same would then be passed on to the broom that was made from that shrub. Then it is possible for Buddha to recognize the same owing to his superhuman powers.

THERE is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self.

—ERNEST HEMINGWAY

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE STORY OF SAGE VISHWAMITRA—I

VISHWAMITRA is one of the most venerated rishis, or sages, of ancient India. The name “Vishwamitra” literally means “friend of the world.” According to Hindu tradition, he is stated to have written most of *Mandala 3* of the *Rigveda*, including the *Gayatri Mantra*. His story is narrated in the *Balakanda* of *Valmiki Ramayana*, as also in the Puranas. It is one of the most interesting stories in Hindu mythology, an elaborate tale of the struggle and transformation of a “king of kings” to one of the prominent ascetics. Vishwamitra was a king in ancient India, also called Kaushika, “the descendant of Kusha,” as he was a great-grandson of a great king named Kusha. He was born to King Gadhi and belonged to the Lunar dynasty. Kaushika, a prince, was brave, competent, and a just warrior, and after ascending the throne, he became a powerful and well-esteemed king. It is said that he never left home without adding another kingdom to his empire, after battering down an independent ruler to the status of a vassal.

One day, while returning from an expedition with his army, comprising warriors, chariots, horses and elephants, Vishwamitra came upon a hermitage and was impressed by the atmosphere, which combined physical beauty and the aura of spiritual essences. His minister told him that it was the *ashram* (hermitage) of sage Vasishtha. He halted his journey and decided to visit the *ashram*. Sage Vasishtha himself approached to welcome him, and they exchanged courtesies. As the afternoon approached, Vishwamitra expressed his intent to leave, stating that his soldiers were waiting outside the *ashram*. Vasishtha said that it was his duty to ensure that no guest left his home without receiving complete hospitality. Therefore, “I will provide food not only for you but also for your soldiers, attendants, and animals, including horses, and elephants. Please accept my offering.” When the king relented, a great variety of food was offered to the king and his army.

The king wondered how it was possible for this simple sage to feed an entire army. He expressed his surprise to Sage Vasishtha: How was it possible for this simple *ashram* to take care of all the arrangements to feed an entire army? The sage replied that the feast that the king had partaken with his soldiers had been provided by “Kamdhenu,” the divine wish-fulfilling cow. “I have only to ask, and she provides it, whatever it may be.” Vishwamitra said, “This cow ought to belong to me,” and insisted that a treasure like this ought to be housed in a king’s palace. The sage tells him that he has succumbed to greed. Just as he would fight for a thing that aroused his ill will, he was now fighting, driven by acquisitiveness, for something that had pleased him. This is the way the wars start, and mankind is troubled. The king persisted and offered gold, money, and many other things in exchange for Kamdhenu.

Vasishtha was polite but steadfast in his refusal. He would not be tempted by the offer of untold wealth that was made by the king, for after all, who can set a price on a cow, which can readily yield all the riches in the world! While the dialogue between the king and the sage was going on, the soldiers dragged the cow away. The cow began to cry out in distress and, to Vishwamitra’s astonishment, started producing soldiers who battled and defeated his entire army. Vishwamitra left in humiliation.

But before leaving, he asked Vasishtha: “What exactly gives you this strength?” The sage answered that his strength came from his “inner being.” Within every one of us is the spark of godhood. When one is able to rouse it and employ it, one can acquire matchless strength. To acquire it, one has to undertake meditation and the practice of austerities. Vishwamitra acquired the knowledge of celestial weaponry through *tapasya* or asceticism and went to Vasishtha’s *ashram* to destroy him and his hermitage. All that Vasishtha had to do was plant his staff (a long wooden stick) in the middle of the entrance to his gate, which repelled every kind of attack. Thus, once again Vishwamitra suffered defeat and humiliation.

This time again, Vishwamitra asked Vasishtha, “What power have

you in that staff?" Vasishtha answered, "We live in two different worlds." Although Vishwamitra meditated, performed sacrifices, and went through austerities, it was all done to acquire powers to defeat Vasishtha. He was still a *Kshatriya*, a warrior, in his innermost nature. Vishwamitra challenges Vasishtha, saying, "You will see me endowed with the same rank as you and addressed as Brahma Rishi. I will not rest until you acknowledge me as Brahma Rishi." A Brahma Rishi is one who has realized the God within and is higher in rank than a Raja Rishi. Vasishtha was a Brahma Rishi, and he tells Vishwamitra that he would be happy when Vishwamitra attains that status. The staff carried by Vasishtha that repelled the entire army was Brahma Danda, the staff empowered by knowledge.

Vishwamitra meditated for a thousand years. Brahma, the Creator, appeared before the king and said that he approved of his efforts and declared that henceforth Vishwamitra would be called Raja Rishi. It was very difficult for Vishwamitra to accept that he had still not attained the status of a Brahma Rishi, despite possessing extraordinary powers. He was determined to show the world that he had attained the summit of sagehood.

At that time, a man named Trisanku, a member of the Ikshwaku race of kings, was seized with the ambition to reach heaven in his physical body. Trisanku was originally known as King Satyavrata in the Solar dynasty. Satyavrata committed three sins, and hence he got the name Trisanku. First, while a prince, he misbehaved in the kingdom and was temporarily exiled. Next, he killed the milch cow of his preceptor Vasishtha. His third sin was that he ate meat from a hunt that had not been sanctified, thus further violating *dharma*. Thus, Trisanku means one who is stuck between three states or sins. He approached Sage Vasishtha to perform a *yajna* to enable him to go to heaven in his mortal body. Vasishtha refused because it was against the law of nature for someone with a mortal body to enter heaven. Likewise, Vasishtha's sons also refused to assist King Satyavrata in fulfilling his wish, and in fact, cursed him to become a *Chandala*, an outcaste, for requesting despite their father's refusal.

The king was forced to leave his country and wander the lands.

During his wanderings, he met Vishwamitra, who was a rival of sage Vasishtha. He accepted the king's request and agreed to perform the rites required to send him to heaven in his mortal body. Vishwamitra sent invitations to all the sages and kings to witness the great sacrifice. After ten days of intense concentration and single-minded performance, Vishwamitra was able to neutralize the pull of the earth on Trisanku, who began to levitate till he disappeared from view. Those who witnessed this were full of praise for Vishwamitra, who wished to know whether now he would be called Brahma Rishi, since he had accomplished what sage Vasishtha failed to perform.

Just then people saw Trisanku descending, with his head down and feet up. Vishwamitra, by a magic utterance, was able to arrest the fall and asked Trisanku to explain what exactly had happened. Trisanku said that he did reach heaven but was pushed out by Indra, who said, "No place here for *Chandala*." Vishwamitra made preparations for a sacrifice to overpower Indra himself and send Trisanku into heaven and keep him there. But again, as soon as he reached heaven, Indra, using his powers, caused him to fall back to earth. Sage Vishwamitra used his powers to arrest the fall. Thus, Trisanku was suspended mid-air in a state of unstable equilibrium. The struggle went on for a long time, and when the gods pacified the sage and made him understand that he was trying to help in performing an unnatural action of sending someone to heaven in a mortal body, Vishwamitra reached a compromise with the Devas to let King Satyavrata inhabit the new heaven that was created for him. The new heaven would be called "Trisanku's heaven," and the king shall reside upside down in his heaven.

The story, at a simple level, depicts the dangers of ambition and limitations of even the great spiritual power. It draws our attention to the consequences of defying natural order. The story emphasizes the importance of *dharma* or righteous conduct and adherence to natural laws. The concept of "Trisanku's Heaven" indicates the state

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of being suspended between two realms. It may be taken as a metaphor for being caught between conflicting desires or spiritual paths. It may be taken to represent a state of uncertainty or spiritual confusion.

Gods, Rishis, and Sages are described as agents of Karmic and Cosmic laws, who would never contravene the law. Henry W. Longfellow compares Trisanku with the human heart, which is tossed between aspirations and misgivings, thus:

Thus, by aspirations lifted, By misgivings downward driven,
Human hearts are tossed and drifted, Midway between earth
and Heaven.

In trying to live the spiritual life we try to leave behind the lower, worldly life and move towards the higher life. When we are trying to leave off the lower and are not yet accustomed to the “Higher,” we are in the mid-air, like Trisanku. We have not quite left behind the old state or condition, and we are *only beginning to get the grasp* of the new state. Such a “transition period” is faced by every spiritual aspirant in his individual life as he struggles to leave behind ordinary life—centred in personal care and worldly affairs—and live a spiritual life, where the focus shifts from one’s personal self to Spiritual Self. It is a transition from dealing with tangible and palpable things to invisible, immaterial, and impalpable things, beyond the domain of the five senses. This “transition period” is the most delicate and crucial period in an aspirant’s life, because it is difficult to leave the familiar in order to grasp the unknown and the unfamiliar. It is during this state that one experiences loneliness, with the feeling of “neither here,” “nor there.” Mr. Crosbie puts it thus: “There may, and there often does come a time when one feels...like ‘standing on nothing, in nothing and about to topple over.’ The centre of consciousness has been changed; old landmarks are slipping away, and sometimes black doubt ensues.”

(To be concluded)

LOUIS PASTEUR—FATHER OF MICROBIOLOGY

II

MANY well-known scientists in Pasteur's time believed that life does not arise in the microbial world by spontaneous generation, while many others maintained that microbes do arise spontaneously. It was a known fact that boiling water, soups, and other fluids killed microbes, but when such fluids were exposed to the air, they became alive with micro-organisms. The question was, did life arise in these solutions because some essential factor in the air combined with materials in the fluid or because air contained pre-existing microbes?

Pasteur filtered the air through cotton and found that it turned black and contained many kinds of different microbes. Therefore, it was proved that the dust in the air did carry microbes. He wished to demonstrate the same experimentally. Pasteur used the "swan-neck flask," or a glass flask with a long, slender, S-shaped neck. He boiled the liquid in this flask and then allowed it to cool. The end of the long neck was left open, but the flask did not show the growth of microbes. The experiment was repeated with many swan-neck flasks. The reason why these flasks did not show the growth of the living micro-organisms, was that the dust particles in the air that entered the flask could not reach the fluids and were trapped in the curves of the S-shaped neck. In other words, when air entered the long neck, tiny particles or "bacteria" were trapped in the long tube and could not reach the fluids. After five years of careful experiments, Pasteur announced, "Under no condition known today can we affirm that microscopic beings came into the world without germs, without parents of their own nature." In other words, germs and microbes could only arise from a preceding generation of germs and microbes.

We read on p. 542 (*S.D.*, I) about various speculations as to what could be regarded as the perfectly homogeneous Substance from which life originates. Haeckel put forward the theory of moneron (which Huxley describes as a speck of protoplasm) as the origin of life. *Archebiosis* simply means primeval beginnings of life and is

equated with “spontaneous generation.” Science rejects this theory of “spontaneous generation,” according to which fully formed living organisms sometimes arise from not-living matter. H.P.B. argues that if Science rejects both the Biblical teachings and “spontaneous generation” then how she could ever account for the appearance of life on earth and especially of *Man* (*S.D.*, II, 151). She points out the absurdity of Heckel’s theory of “moneron,” which is described as a simple speck of *protoplasm*, that is neither animal nor plant but both and does not have ancestors among either of these. We are finally told that the *monera are their own ancestors* (*ibid.*). Later on, it was found that these monera are not organic but a simple precipitate of sulphate of lime. In order to explain the prototypes of Monera, Sir W. Thompson suggested that they fell in the meteorites from other planets. H.P.B. argues that if the supply of life-germs is from other planets, then where did they come from on those planets? Thus, science has no clue as to the origin of life on earth.

Until recently, modern science had been a supporter of *biogenesis*, which means life can only be produced as a result of pre-existing organisms. The doctrine of spontaneous generation refers to the spontaneous evolution of the simplest and earliest forms of biological life from complex chemical, but *non-biological*, molecules of matter. Some 2,000 years ago, Aristotle suggested that “nature makes so gradual a transition from the animate or living to the inanimate or non-living that the boundary line between the two is doubtful and perhaps non-existent.” H.P.B. writes: Even if “spontaneous generation be indeed proven impossible in our present world-period and actual conditions—which the Occultists deny—still it would be no demonstration that it could not have taken place under different cosmic conditions, not only in the seas of the Laurentian period, but even on the then convulsed Earth....If spontaneous generation has changed its methods now, owing perhaps to accumulated material on hand, so as to almost escape detection, it was in full swing in the genesis of terrestrial life.” (*S.D.*, II, 150-51).

She quotes in support the opinion of a scientist of her day,

L. Buchner, whom she calls “that Emperor of Materialists,” who wrote (*Force and Matter*, 1855): “Produced in the way of spontaneous generation...it is by the aid of intense natural forces and *endless periods of time* (that) there has progressively arisen that rich and infinitely modified organic world by which we are at present surrounded.”...And “Spontaneous generation played, no doubt, *a more important part in the primeval epoch than at present; nor can it be denied that in this way beings of a higher organization* were produced than now.” This, she says, is also the claim of occultism. However, even opponents of spontaneous generation such as Tyndall and Huxley, during her time, were forced to admit that spontaneous generation *must have occurred once*, under “special thermal conditions,” while Virchow said that “it must have taken place sometime in the history of our planet.” (*S.D.*, II, 718-19)

Thus, the opponents of spontaneous generation refused to accept the emergence of living forms from so-called “inert” matter. In this connection it is useful to turn to *Theosophy* magazine (May 1941), which refers to the article by John O’Neill in *New York Herald Tribune*, which mentions that Dr. Stanley of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research has been studying the tiny virus that causes the plant disease tobacco mosaic. When he isolated a substantial quantity of this virus, he found that the material would exhibit “living” characteristics under appropriate conditions, but when it was kept away from the plant host, it seemed to be nothing but inert chemical matter. “When the mass of material was analysed and tested in a thousand different ways, it was found to be nothing but a protein molecule that could be taken apart into small units and reassembled. But applied to a tobacco plant, it starts to reproduce itself rapidly. Stanley’s proof that tobacco mosaic virus is a chemical agent instead of a micro-organism is certainly very impressive.” This has caused great confusion because reproduction is usually considered an attribute of life.

Dr. Stanley said that the theory of spontaneous generation is most challenging and would explain the origin of viruses. “I believe that

the work on viruses has provided us with reasons for considering that life as we know it owes its existence to a specific state of matter and that the principle of vital phenomena does not come into existence suddenly but is inherent in all matter.”

Mr. O'Neill summarises the latest developments in biology and chemistry, respecting the problem of “life,” thus: “The traditional distinction in science between living and dead matter has disappeared with the recognition by scientists that life is a function of the atoms and molecules that compose the living body. This new conception has resulted from research in which biologists sought to find life in its simplest form and chemists attempted to determine at which point the properties of life appeared.” The biologists and the chemists eventually found that they were studying the same substance, one calling it living and the other calling it dead, and so agreed that there is no dividing line between so-called dead and living matter.

This has been expressed more philosophically by H.P.B., thus: “A division is made between what you call animate and inanimate objects, as if there could be such a thing as a perfectly inanimate object on earth!...In reality, as Occult philosophy teaches us, everything that changes is organic; it has the life principle in it, and it has all the potentiality of the higher lives. If, as we say, all in nature is an aspect of the one element, and life is universal, how can there be such a thing as an inorganic atom!” (*Transactions*, pp. 123-24)

Pasteur's research extended beyond fermentation to include the cause of diseases. He proposed that diseases are caused by micro-organisms invading the body, a concept now known as the germ theory of disease. Pasteur's work on micro-organisms also led to the development of vaccines for diseases like rabies and anthrax. He demonstrated the method of introducing weakened or dead bacteria causing a particular disease into a healthy body so as to increase “body-resistance” against that very disease.

Just like the religious dogmas of old, the scientific theories, like vaccination and inoculation, have been blindly accepted by the

public. If we take the example of the anti-tuberculosis vaccine (BCG), we find that millions of people around the world have been vaccinated with it in the belief that they would be protected to some extent against that disease. In the year 1979, a 90-month study conducted in Tamil Nadu, India, by the Indian Council of Medical Research, aided by WHO (World Health Organization) and the United States Public Health Service, had conclusively proved that BCG does not immunize people against tuberculosis of the lung. As a matter of fact, the incidence of tuberculosis was higher among those who had been vaccinated. It appears that vaccination is not the solution to the problem of the very high incidence of tuberculosis in India. Until social conditions in India improve, there is not much likelihood of a decline in tuberculosis morbidity and mortality. There is a need to remedy poverty, deprivation, undernourishment, and overwork, the potent causes of the spread of tuberculosis. (*The Theosophical Movement*, November 1979)

In the recent past, when the President of America announced in December 2002 that a million Americans would be vaccinated against smallpox by early this year and 10 million more a little later, an article in *New Scientist* (December 21/28, 2002) cautioned that “the contagious vaccine will sicken and almost certainly kill a few people.” Further, “the vaccine consists of live vaccinia virus. In some people it can cause inflammation of the brain, death of the skin around the vaccination site, or a severe form of eczema. And vaccinated people can infect others for up to three weeks afterwards.” This just shows that the benefits of vaccination against smallpox are suspect, and its adverse effects are far too many to be overlooked. (*The Theosophical Movement*, April 2003)

Theosophy is against vaccination for cogent reasons. The production of vaccines involves inflicting suffering upon the animal kingdom. It recognizes also that the violent mixing of alien strains of life is against nature and can result only in evil. Furthermore, ultra-microscopic organisms, now found to be generally prevalent, may exist unsuspected in serums and vaccines. Such bacteria, even

when harmless in relatively low animal forms, sometimes become virulent when transferred to higher forms.

“There are a tremendous number of occurrences of serious disease and disabilities, with a special reference to circulatory troubles, paralysis, heart disease, etc., following upon the injection of vaccines and serums, and in regard to which attending physicians are unwilling or unable to see a connection. . . . The presence of foreign matter in the body has been established as a predisposing cause of cancer. There is a most serious need for the medical profession as a whole to re-examine the entire foundation of treatments based upon the introduction of animal substances into the human blood and for a serious statistical investigation of the connection between cancer, heart disease, tuberculosis, and the said substances.” (*Theosophy*, November 1926)

Additionally, we can take into account the universal law of periodicity or cycles, which applies to diseases, which gradually increase to their culminating point and then become less virulent, decline, and disappear. The latter process is often hastened by proper sanitation. To think that a state of health can be won for the race by physical means, however scientific, is a fallacy. Physical sanitation and individual obedience to the laws of physical health are more crucial to disease prevention than vaccines. However, even these measures, though commendable, leave the roots of disease untouched unless there is additional effort to purify the psychic and moral natures.

It can be seen that Pasteur has contributed to the growth and development of many different aspects of chemistry and bacteriology. The greatest tribute paid to him was the building of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, which today is famous as a centre for medical research. His advice to young students and scientists was: “Keep your early enthusiasm...but let it be regulated by rigorous examinations and tests. Never advance anything which cannot be proved in a simple and decisive fashion. Worship the spirit of criticism.”

(*Concluded*)

REFLECTIONS ON COMPLACENCY

COMPLACENCY is an evil confronting individuals as well as nations. This characteristic veils and disguises the true nature of events and environment. Self-satisfaction, to the extent that it is present, causes us to underestimate our associates and conditions generally. This is a great error, always productive of tragic consequences. Complacency demands that all people conform to the standard defined by the self-satisfied, who live in a world seen through rose-coloured glasses. Complacency is a universal characteristic. Students of Theosophy also are inclined to be influenced by its insidious effects, as are members of creeds and religious sects.

An examination of the events and attitudes attending the decline of former great civilizations will indicate that complacency was an important contributing factor in preparing the way for their eventual downfall. Some of the great errors being made in the diplomatic world today flow from the weakness of complacency. The failure to concede the right of others to pursue their self-chosen ways of life arises, more often than not, from a self-satisfied regard for our own achievements and position. If our particular way of life leads us to assume that we live “in the best of all possible worlds,” then we shall hardly extend sympathy to those who choose to lead a different kind of life.

This characteristic, when evidenced by nations, produces arrogance and the desire for conquest and tyranny. Numerous examples could be quoted. To take but one: the Spanish conquest of South America, and especially of Peru. The conquistadors were completely satisfied that theirs was the only true religion; they believed that their way of life was the only right and satisfactory one. Their conviction was so strong that in spite of the friendly and brotherly manner in which they were received by the Incas, despite the riches and wealth showered upon them, they did not hesitate to slay cruelly the rulers and thousands of people because they would

not accept God as described by the Christian Church. Suppose these conquerors had been less self-complacent, less sure that they were the sole possessors of truth. Suppose they had been able to admit that maybe there was some merit in the faith of the Incas; then perhaps they would not have behaved with the same degree of ruthless savagery toward the welcoming and kindly Incas. All persons, be they ever so evil, constantly strive to justify their actions.

What of the student of Theosophy and his all-embracing philosophy? Self-satisfaction will lead him, too, to stagnation and deterioration. The student of Theosophy possesses a philosophy that presents no contradictions; it is logical and consistent, dealing with all departments of nature and providing eternal principles for the study of science, religion and philosophy. The key to an understanding of the nature of man is available in Theosophy; hence, it might be argued, the student of Theosophy has every reason to be satisfied with his philosophy.

Complacency, however, does not arise from such satisfaction, but from self-satisfaction. It should not be subtly implied that because the student of Theosophy is identified with a soul-satisfying and consistent system of thought, therefore he must be one of nature's favoured few. What ground for self-satisfaction is there if one is as yet unable to embody the noble teachings and ethics of the Wisdom-Religion? To be firmly grounded in and motivated by the Teachings the Great Ones present is to be incapable of complacency. "He does good who knows how to do good" is axiomatic. Its realization calls for a degree of understanding that only the tolerant can achieve. Tolerance can spring only from an attitude that is the opposite of a false sense of self-satisfaction. It can spring only from a willingness to accept, in all humility, the identity of all souls with the Universal Soul. By understanding the hierarchical nature of Brotherhood, all are recognized to be the same in kind, differing only in degree. So, we never should be self-satisfied but should ever strive to satisfy the demands of the great SELF, in which we live, move, and have our being.

THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE

FRAGMENT ONE—VI

WHEN the disciple has ceased to hear the many, he discerns the One, the inner sound. The Inner Voice, or the Voice of the Silence, can be said to pertain to our Higher Ego. This Voice speaks to us only when *we* turn to it for guidance. It gives us intuitive knowledge of how to act and what is the best course of action. A student-aspirant who subordinates his personal needs to the general good and reflects on universal ethics can get frequent promptings of their higher nature, akin to the “still small voice” of *intuition* that directs one to a definite action or an idea. It grows if one strives for the ethical and spiritual betterment of oneself and others. Intuition is considered in Theosophy as “Divine Conscience.” The lower mind, when freed from *Kama* or lower propensities, turns toward the Higher Ego.

“Before the Soul can comprehend and may remember, she must unto the Silent Speaker be united, just as the form to which the clay is modelled is first united with the potter’s mind. For then the Soul will hear, and will remember. And then to the inner ear will speak—THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE.”

What distinguishes the “form” from the “potter’s mind”? The “Form” is the creation or expression of “potter’s mind.” “Potter’s mind” represents the capacity or the power to evolve the form, which is inexhaustible. Potter’s mind has all the powers that go into making the form. And this form is firmly fixed in his mind before he starts making the pot out of the clay. The pot will be shaped depending upon this form. The power to create the most beautiful pot lies in the potter’s mind. He can create, each time, a better pot by first having an idea of a better form, which enables him to make better use of the clay.

What distinguishes “the Soul” from the “Silent Speaker”? The “Silent Speaker” represents the Spirit. In “Answers to Questions on the Ocean of Theosophy,” Mr. Crosbie points out: “Spirit is the ‘power to become;’ Soul is ‘the becoming.’ Spirit is the power to see and

know; Soul is the seeing and knowing. Soul is the accumulation of perceptions and experiences by means of which Spiritual Identity is realized.” The power to make, unmake, and remake lies in the “Silent Speaker,” which represents Spirit or *Atma-Buddhi* Monad, the Higher Self, the very highest in man. It is the source of Creative Will. The clay represents the personality or the instrument—consisting of the lower quaternary, *i.e.*, the physical body, astral body, *kama-manas* and *prana*. The Soul or the *Manas* is distinguished from the “Silent Speaker” because it is the “conscious principle” through which the Higher Self expresses itself on the physical plane of existence. In like manner, the form is distinguished from the potter’s mind because it represents the material expression, which had its origin in the potter’s mind.

The power of perfection is inherent in the Monad, and the instrument or personality is provided for the expression of that power. The better and more refined the instrument, the better is the expression of this power. The moulding of the personality depends upon the “form,” which represents the state or quality of the *Manas* (Soul) in man. The form “united” with the potter’s mind seems to imply “attunement.” The more the Soul is in attunement with *Atma-Buddhi*, the greater and better is the expression of the power needed for shaping the instrument. However, if the “form” conceived in the potter’s mind wavers, then the pot turns out to be imperfect. Hence the mind has to acquire universal ideas and act from the universal basis; only then can the power from within find full expression. If the windowpane is covered with cardboard, no sunlight can enter the room. But if we make a hole in the cardboard, the sunlight entering the room would depend upon the size of the hole.

In the article, “Creative Will” Mr. Crosbie points out, “We contract the divine power of the Spirit within us to the pin-holes of personal desires and selfishness. Do we not see that? Do we not see that we ourselves stand in the way of the use of the power within us because our ideas are selfish, small and mean? The great work of evolution proceeds from within outwards. The Soul is the Perceiver; it looks

directly on ideas. The action of the Will is through the ideas. The ideas give the direction. Small ideas, small force; large ideas, large force; the Force itself is illimitable, for it is the force of Spirit, infinite and exhaustless. What we lack are universal ideas.”

“For then the Soul will hear, and will remember.” In the Fifteenth Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, “I am in the hearts of all men, and from me come memory, knowledge, and also the loss of both.” In *Transactions*, we read that “There is a sort of conscious telegraphic communication going on incessantly, day and night, between the physical brain and the inner man.” Our Higher Nature is trying to convey something to our brain-mind. When the brain-mind is attuned, then we are able to hear or register. “Remembering” may mean acting in accordance with an experience. Often, we experience that something that we heard in a lecture had made an appeal, and later, although we may not recollect the exact time, words, speaker, etc., a feeling lingers because it had touched the soul, and we just act under its influence without trying to recollect the details. When the brain-mind is attuned to the Higher Nature, the inner voice will speak to the inner ear and say:

“If thy Soul smiles while bathing in the Sunlight of thy Life; if thy Soul sings within her chrysalis of flesh and matter; if thy Soul weeps inside her castle of illusion; if thy Soul struggles to break the silver thread that binds her to the MASTER; know, O Disciple, thy Soul is of the earth.”

“If thy Soul smiles while bathing in the sunlight of thy life”: This literally means that if the soul, the *kama-manas* or the lower mind, is happy when conditions are favourable but laments otherwise, then the soul is of the earth. The term “life” means vitality or *Prana*, which is necessary for sustenance, and the “sunlight of life” seems to imply the state of physical well-being. “Health is the greatest of gifts.” To be healthy is to be in a wholesome state, not just bodily but also in one’s psychic and mental nature. The “Sunlight of Life” also indicates the worldly pleasures that bring happiness to ordinary men. It refers to the events in life that enable man to go on

living, sometimes happy and sometimes sad, and the soul, like a child that cares only for what it wants, struggles to break away from the inner guide so as to enjoy life without any restraint. The ordinary humanity clings to pleasures which come and go instead of searching for permanent happiness.

“If thy Soul sings within the chrysalis of flesh and matter”: When inside a chrysalis, the butterfly is called a pupa, which represents the transformation stage between the larva and the butterfly. The pupa, when it comes out of the chrysalis, is a completely transformed thing, *i.e.*, a butterfly. Its wings signify freedom. The chrysalis is built by its own saliva. So also, we are bound in a chrysalis of flesh and matter (our body) due to our own karma.

The Soul or the reincarnating Ego is trapped in the chrysalis of flesh and matter. We generally identify ourselves with the body. When we say “I,” we mean the present personality. However, at times, we feel trapped in the body due to its limitations and shortcomings. But when we have emerged as a free being, having unconditioned consciousness, like the Buddha, the body will no longer be a barrier but work as a perfect instrument according to the Will of the God within. Our body, like the chrysalis, is of our own making. Our soul, through its past lives, has, so to say, made and chosen the present body, the best possible for further development, for which we should neither blame the body nor our parents. Our soul has to work through the body to finally emerge as an entity united with the Higher Self. In Greek mythology, psyche, the soul is represented by the butterfly, and its marriage (union) with Eros symbolizes the union of Soul with Love or Compassion Absolute.

“If thy Soul weeps inside her castle of illusion”: If the soul rebels under unfavourable conditions, then it is an earthly soul. All the pleasures arising out of the quality of *Rajas* are short-lived. They are usually of the type where one strives hard to achieve the desired thing, but as soon as it is obtained, one loses interest. We learn from experience that “all such objects of desire are found Dead Sea fruit

in the moment of attainment,” writes H.P.B.

“If thy Soul struggles to break the silver thread that binds her to the MASTER”: Here, the Master refers to the Higher Self. Silver thread is that consciousness that binds or links the lower self with the Higher. It seems to refer to the *Antahkarna* or *Antaskarna*, the bridge between the higher and the lower (or incarnated) mind. When a string or thread is stretched too much, it tends to break. Extending the silver thread is only a metaphor. If a child walking on the road, holding the hand of the parent, is attracted by something on the other side of the road, then it may pull the parent in that direction. It may even succeed in breaking his hand free from the grip of the parent and running across, and run the risk of meeting with an accident. Likewise, when we assert our personal Will, disregarding the divine Will, the silver thread is stretched. When the mind becomes *Kama*-tending instead of *Buddhi*-tending, it pulls itself away from the divine parent. If it persists, then the silver thread may even break. When the lower mind extends the silver thread that binds it to the divine parent, it is sinking more and more into self-identifying attachment to personality. The sense of “I” goes awry.

We stretch the silver thread when we are identified with certain pain or pleasure. A person is able to maintain his balance while he is standing or walking because the perpendicular from the centre of gravity of his body falls within the base of support—between his feet. When we bend forward or backward too much, the perpendicular from the centre of gravity no longer falls within the base of support, and we fall down. Our psychological base of support is our Spiritual nature, which gives us a true sense of “I am I.” When there is a sudden surge of emotion, centred in one feeling, then our awareness of “I am I” goes awry and falls, so to speak, outside the base of support. We begin to identify ourselves with the thing we are contemplating. As a result, people go mad with grief or with sudden good news.

We may connect this with what is given on page 4 of the *Voice of the Silence*: **When waxing stronger, thy Soul glides forth from**

her secure retreat; and breaking loose from the protecting shrine, extends her silver thread and rushes onward; when beholding her image on the waves of Space she whispers, “This is I,”—declare, O Disciple, that thy Soul is caught in the webs of delusion.”

“Waxing stronger” means increasing in strength and power, indicating growth or development towards a more powerful state. Our soul, when newly launched in the body, is not confident, but as it gains experience, it gains confidence and ultimately reaches a stage when it begins to assert its independence—confident that it needs no guidance of the Higher Self. It may be compared to a timid student on the first day in a new school, who begins to get bolder as days pass. “Waxing stronger” refers to both the physical and astral (psychical) progress of the soul.

Images are not to be taken at face value. Each image has its peculiarities depending upon the medium that reflects it. As children, we enjoyed ourselves looking at the variety of images of ourselves in different types of mirrors, such as concave, convex, etc. In one, we appeared fat and short; in the other, we appeared tall and thin; in another, the figure was thoroughly distorted, etc. Likewise, when one sees one’s image in the water that is not calm but has waves, the image looks very distorted and broken. The world, and all in the material existence, are like so many waves arising in space. A wave in the ocean has its separate existence for a short time before it merges back into the ocean. Likewise, all in the phenomenal world, including our personality, are like “waves” in space. We know ourselves in terms of our social status, our knowledge, our ideas, our feelings, our achievements, our skills, etc. But these are only reflections of the real Self. Mr. Crosbie reminds us that we identify ourselves with the ever-changing perishable body and with its conditions and relations, which are ever-changing. But through all these changes, there is that in us, the real “I,” which has remained unchanged and unchanging.

(To be continued)

DIVINE EVOLUTION OF IDEAS

THE TERM “Idea” mentioned in the caption has a meaning other than the one used in common language or in modern psychology; it bears no relation to them. In common parlance, the word idea means a thought, a mental image of a thing thought of or perceived. Nor does it mean “concept” or “conception,” which means a number of specific ideas formed in the mind to understand a process or a design or a plan of action, and so on. Modern cognitive psychology and neuroscience have made a thorough study of the mechanism of the mental processes. They trace how sense perception gives rise to mental perception, which is the faculty of interpreting sensory information in terms of time, space, and causation, followed by cognitive processes encompassing broader mental action, such as selective attention, thinking, reasoning, evaluation of meaning, purpose, feeling, emotion, and so on. Modern psychology traces the various mental processes, feelings, and emotions to specific centres of the brain, which, it says, are the generative cause of the former, and that mind is the by-product of brain activity.

Ancient Wisdom-Science, however, teaches the contrary, that mind is an independent factor using the brain as its instrument, and that it causes and forms the various centres of the brain, corresponding to the different mental and emotional faculties independent of the brain. It may be mentioned *en passant* that, in order to help modern psychology to rise above its materialistic bias, H.P.B. proffers a seed thought that “...how these senses could exist, *i.e.*, be perceived and used in a self-conscious way, unless there was the *sixth* sense, mental perception, to register and record them; and (this for the Metaphysicians and Occultists) the SEVENTH to preserve the spiritual fruition and remembrance thereof, as in a Book of Life which belongs to Karma,” (*S.D.*, I, 535, first footnote). This is so because Manas is a thinking principle, the brain being its instrument in the body, and yet it is also the Thinker, the Soul, the Perceiver (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 181, Indian Edition), “vision itself pure and simple;

unmodified; and looks directly upon ideas” (*Patanjali’s Yoga Aphorisms*, Book II, Aph. 20). Actually, in our waking or dream state we do not perceive *things in themselves* but only ideas of them, the mysterious power of the Manas (*Jnana Sakti*) generating the notion of an external object. (*S.D.*, I, 292)

The purport of all that is said in the foregoing is to underscore the point that “*Idea*” mentioned in the heading does not bear the same meaning as the term used in common parlance or in modern cognitive psychology but has the meaning given by Plato in his discourse on the Doctrine of *Ideas* and *Form*. The Manifested universe is the unfoldment of the Eternal Idea, and all forms, visible or invisible, even abstract ideas, such as justice, beauty, etc., have their fundamental basis in invisible and eternal Archetypes. This is better understood in contemplating Aristotle’s three principles of natural bodies, namely, Privation, Matter, and Form. An artist, for instance, conceives in his mind an idea of the artwork to be produced, then forms a mental conception of a model of how it should be, *i.e.*, the prototype of the thing to be, and then concretises into a visible object the invisible primal idea and the archetype thereof. Privation of a watch produced by the watchmaker is first present in the mind of him, and the idea is first translated into a conceptual prototype, on the basic design of which the watch is produced in concrete shape on the lines of the original idea. So [it] is with the universe. So is the body of man evolved. “Only it must not be understood that this *thought* creates matter. No; it creates but the design for the future form; the matter that serves to make this design has always been in existence and has been prepared to form a human body through a series of progressive transformations as the result of evolution” (*Isis*, I, 310-11). Therefore, neither the human form nor that of any animal, vegetable, or mineral was ever created but became objectivised, beginning from their eternal Archetypes into the material plane through a series of transformations down through the intermediate planes as ethereal or Astral ante-types, which in turn are concretised as material forms by the action of terrestrial forces and laws.

Idea in Platonic philosophy, therefore, is the Intelligent First Cause, the One, Ineffable. All forms, whether visible or invisible, are mutable and pass away, hence unreal, but the *Idea* and the Archetypes thereof remain immutable; hence that alone is Truth, perfect and entire. It is the principle of all principles, the measure of all intelligibles. The procession of manifestation from the First Cause is shown to proceed in three steps, each of which is represented by a triad, differentiating more and more along the descending arc, the last of which forms the cause of infinitude of mutable forms, all comprehended in the Intellectual energy of the first triad of the immutable First Cause, One. There is thus an involution of the all-perfect Archetypal Form and Idea into a multitude of mutable material forms, each of which potentially contains the purity and perfection of the former, which is to be realised consciously as they evolve along the ascending arc of evolution. It is thus the original estate of perfection is raised to a still higher standard of perfection, a superior degree of consciousness, owing to the accrual of the experience gained through the cycles of descent and ascent.

Our earth, with all its denizens, then, is the gross material manifestation, imperfect and impure, of the invisible whole and perfect Archetypal model in heaven. The former is spiritualised and improved in texture and quality, as well as in consciousness, as it evolves stage by stage back to its Archetype. “When free from all impurity, she [the earth] will become united with the Spiritual *Logos*, *i.e.*, in the 7th Race of the 7th Round—after the regeneration, on the day of ‘SABBATH’” (*S.D.*, I, 240); the term *Sabbath* however, means, among others, the culmination of a cycle and is not to be understood in the biblical dead letter sense. This spiritualising and raising up of the earth—“the mother of all that lives” and the arena of human evolution—to its original purity and perfection is to be effected by Man, as he himself evolves by self-effort from his imperfect mortal earthly type towards the perfection of his original Archetypal divine Heavenly Man. “Theosophy considers humanity as an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 214). This raising of the imperfect to the

original perfection, raising of the corruptible to the incorruptible and transmuting of the impure to primordial purity is allegorised as the marriage of heaven and earth. “It is only by the attractive force of the contrasts that the two opposites—Spirit and Matter—can be cemented on Earth, and, smelted in the fire of self-conscious experience and suffering, find themselves wedded in Eternity.” (*S.D.*, II, 103)

In this whole cosmic drama of the involution of the spiritual and the perfect into the gross and imperfect, and the raising of the imperfect type back into the perfect Archetype, which latter itself is thereby raised to a higher standard as the fruition of the great sacrifice, one discerns the great purpose of life and the duty of Man, who is the crown of all evolution. The forms of consciousness sojourning in the lower kingdoms of Nature look up to Man, who is the Macrocosm to them, for their progress towards the human stage. It is his duty to aid this evolution of all Nature to a higher life, towards perfection; to so think and act as to raise them up to the stage where he stands on the evolutionary ladder, as he strives to raise himself to his Archetypal Model, the Heavenly Man, his Macrocosm.

The first step in this great journey an aspirant must take is to acquire the right knowledge of the nature of man and the universe, of the intertwining of both in their origin, evolution, and common destiny, of the fact of universal brotherhood and interdependence of all, and of the universal laws of Karma and Reincarnation. Each lives in all, and all in each, such that the action of the one impacts on all for good or ill. The sense of separateness that we feel is the child of ignorance, which gives rise to selfishness, which is the source of all sorrow, suffering, and death. The illusionary notion of separate self is dispelled only by the light of Spiritual knowledge, which transforms one’s personal interests and aspirations to universal Love and Benevolence.

“In helping on the development of others, the Theosophist believes that he is not only helping them to fulfil their Karma, but that he is also, in the strictest sense, fulfilling his own. It is the development of humanity, of which both he and they are integral

parts, that he has always in view, and he knows that any failure on his part to respond to the highest within him retards not only himself but all in their progressive march. By his actions, he can make it either more difficult or more easy for humanity to attain the next higher plane of being.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 234)

Each individual has to make the choice, whether to follow the dictates of the lower personal preferment, peddling thereby the endless cycles of birth, decay, sorrow, and death, or take up a firm position in the spiritual and divine centre of his being and strive constantly to raise himself spiritually and morally so as to fit himself to be constantly helping Nature in the divine evolution of *Ideas* that leads to emancipation and perfection of all.

FOR all men one rule holds good—live the purest and most unselfish life you possibly can—cultivate alike your mind and heart—detach your mind as far as possible from worldly pleasures, worldly desires, worldly objects, and set your heart as undividedly as your strength permits on doing good to all living things. If you thus reach, or have in past lives by similar exertions reached, a certain stage of spiritual advancement, you will find other more advanced from whom you will receive encouragement and some little help (though in the main each soul has to work out its own road); if you meet none such, then you know that you have not reached the stage at which such encouragement is desirable, and you have only to persevere in the right path, quite sure that in the inexorable sequence of cause and effect that dominate the universe, you will, if not in this, at least in the next life, reach the gateway that leads to the higher life. The way may seem long and weary—but never despair; it leads to the everlasting condition, and to this sooner or later according to your own exertions and deserts *you* will attain—as all men—not utterly destroyed on the way, and these are few (the time of trial comes later)—do likewise attain.

—*The Theosophist*, September 1884

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In the recent Air India plane tragedy that took 241 lives, the survival of a single passenger may well be considered miraculous. The passenger himself confessed that he did not know how he survived, though he narrated that he unfastened his seat belt and escaped through a small space and walked up to an ambulance. Another passenger was saved because she got delayed by ten minutes due to a traffic jam and missed the flight. She considers it a miracle and attributes her delay and missing the flight to divine intervention. Such incidents defy the standard chain of cause and effect and cannot be explained on the basis of statistical probability. “The incident compels one to ask a deeper question: Is a miracle something entirely unknown and beyond the perception of the human mind?” asks Vijay Hashia. A miracle may be defined as “an event that defies natural laws or exceeds known powers of nature.”

The author gives five other examples of lone survivors in a plane crash and observes that the human mind, which typically interprets events within a framework of cause and effect, is not able to account for such an anomaly. Philosophers have different perspectives. According to Spinoza, it is impossible that “miracles” are the result of violation of natural laws because God and Nature are the same, and nature operates according to eternal universal laws. However, Thomas Aquinas and Leibniz view “miracle” as “a purposeful intervention by a higher principle, a manifestation of God’s will.” Traditional Hinduism holds similar view as it regards universe as an expression of Brahman, the ultimate reality, and therefore, “the will of this supreme principle can interrupt ordinary causality to produce what we call a *chamatkar* [miracle]—an improbable event.... Such phenomena consider the possibility of hidden causal orders, subtler than physical laws, which govern extraordinary events.... Miracles, therefore, are not violations of nature but revelations of their greater potential than the physical, measurable world. Here, the Supreme principle can interrupt ordinary causality to produce a wonder

beyond human knowledge and causal explanations,” writes Vijay Hashia. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, June 17, 2025)

According to Chamber’s Dictionary, a miracle is “an event or act that breaks a law of nature, especially one attributed to deity or supernatural force; a marvel, a wonder.” Laws work all the time, whether we know about them or not. Just as there are laws governing the *physical* realm, there are those governing the invisible realms. Theosophy teaches that “There is no miracle. Everything that happens is the result of law—eternal, immutable, ever active.... There may be laws once ‘known,’ now unknown to science.” The miraculous escape from a disaster may be explained on the basis of the law of Karma. “Karma is that unseen and unknown law *which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably* each effect to its cause, tracing the latter [effect] back to its producer” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 199, Indian Ed.). However, the *Gita* says that the way of Karma is indeed very difficult to understand (*gahana karmano gati*).

Aphorism 31 on Karma states that “*Egos who have no Karmic connection with a portion of the globe where a cataclysm is coming on are kept without the latter’s operation in two ways: (a) by repulsion acting on their inner nature, and (b) by being called and warned by those who watch the progress of the world.*” This shows that suffering that comes from natural disasters is neither an accidental or a chance occurrence, as science thinks, nor an “Act of God,” as anthropomorphic theistic religions believe, but the action of exact and absolute justice ever tending to restore equilibrium, which had been disturbed by thoughts of men. At times, whole towns or provinces are engulfed in devastating earthquakes, or wild fires, or floods. Epidemics sweep across a whole continent, killing many thousands, and millions perish in a prolonged drought and famine. Only such of the Egos who had contributed in creating the cause of the disturbances, in the present life or in the past lives, inescapably find themselves in the place at the time of occurrence of the disaster and experience the painful effects. Egos who had *no Karmic connection* with the cataclysm will not find themselves in the place

of disturbance when it occurs; and, even if they happen to be present there, they escape the calamity by moving away from the scene of occurrence either because of a repulsive force acting on their inner nature or because they get called and warned by one of the members of the fraternity of Adepts who watch over human progress and evolution. The prophetic warning may come in dreams in some cases. Instances of individuals and families prevented from boarding a flight that met with a fatal accident due to one or the other obstruction are not uncommon.

H.P.B. narrates two other cases of “chance” or “miraculous” escape. In one case, two lapdogs who were madly chasing each other fell from the terrace of a house over sixty feet high. They remained unhurt, except for stiffness in the limbs. There is no “chance” in Nature, wherein everything is mathematically co-ordinate and mutually related in its units. “Chance,” says Coleridge, “is but the pseudonym of God (or Nature) for those particular cases which He does not choose to subscribe openly with His sign manual.” Replace the word “God” by that of *Karma* and it will become an Eastern axiom (*S.D.*, I, 653). In other words, we might say that everything happens under the law. But occurrences for which we are not able to discover some obvious cause, we try to explain them away as “chance.” The answer in all these cases is that it is the result of the cause sown in some past life.

Such miraculous escapes of individuals could also be explained on the basis of pure, spiritual love. If there exists pure love between two individuals, such as mother and daughter, husband and wife, two friends, two brothers, etc., then when one of them dies, their love would have the power to protect the other on the earth. H.P.B. writes, “we say that love beyond the grave, illusion though you may call it, has a magic and divine potency which reacts on the living. A mother’s *Ego* filled with love for the imaginary children it sees near itself...that love will always be felt by the children in flesh. It will manifest in their dreams, and often in various events—in *providential* protections and escapes, for love is a strong shield,

and is not limited by space and time. As with this Devachanic ‘mother,’ so with the rest of human relationships and attachments...” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 148)

In our world today, we find that peace and harmony are painfully lacking both within and between the nations. Our world emphasizes intelligence and material perfection, but both these are hopelessly inadequate in bringing about peace and harmony. It appears that what we lack is “wisdom.” It is easy to see that though human intelligence has succeeded in devising weapons of immense destructive power, such as atomic bombs, hydrogen bombs, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and so on, it cannot save humanity. On the contrary, it may destroy humanity along with all the spectacular achievements. “Intelligence undisciplined, unrestrained, and above all unguided is the most dangerous of all human traits,” and the educational institutions all over the world are engaged in preparing intelligent and skilful young men and women to meet the demands of a machine-oriented, soulless world.

Humanity is now at the crossroads, and we are in need of wisdom that can prevent a human holocaust and can turn intelligence from destructive aims to constructive goals. We desperately need wisdom for “reducing selfishness, restraining greed, and bringing peace, harmony, goodwill, and, above all, love and affection to homes, communities, nations, and the world.” Wisdom is insight and also profound understanding. Arrogant and selfish men can never hope to have a glimpse of wisdom. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, June 1-15, 2025)

Rational knowledge is a relative knowledge and belongs to the realm of intellect. It is “Head Learning.” As against this, there is Absolute Knowledge or Wisdom, of which Job in the Bible says: “With the Ancient (man’s Higher Ego) is Wisdom, and in the length of days (or the number of its reincarnations) is understanding.” Thus, Wisdom is something that *we have potentially*, but its realization would take us many, many lives.

For our potentialities to flower forth, we must be able to extract something from our experiences, and for that the mind needs breadth and depth, says the *Voice of the Silence*. *Breadth* of mind is, in one sense, a large scope of awareness. It means acquiring non-parochial, unbiased, and unprejudiced views. It is the ability to welcome truth from whichever quarter it comes. It is enthusiasm and commitment to go deeper into the subject and being able to relate a multiplicity of scattered facts to the Universals.

But to acquire “Wisdom,” we also need “points,” the heart qualities such as love, goodness, altruism, etc. Our age professes, more visibly every day, contempt for truth and justice, without which there can be no wisdom. Our society offers prizes for the biggest baby and the largest orchid but has no encouragement to offer to morality; no prize to give for any moral value, writes H.P.B. The method suggested for obtaining wisdom is easy to understand but difficult to practice because it involves tearing oneself away from one’s ordinary ways of living. In the beginning there is a mighty struggle to give up familiar ways. It is only by gradually paralyzing within ourselves the appetites of the lower personality and deadening the voice of the animal in us that we may make room for the spiritual. This is what the Yogis and Mystics have always done and are still doing.

“Indian civilization is said to endure because the old seeds of Wisdom still live in India’s astral atmosphere. A few fragments exist. The ideal of soul life persists as a real thing....The descent of Kali Yuga obscures and wipes out our spiritual memory....Our inner Wisdom is obscured and, worse, even wiped out....Strong search on the path of enquiry, gentle service of the souls of your fellows, humility in both study and service, will make Wisdom spring up spontaneously in you,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

LIFE is not a matter of holding good cards, but of playing a poor hand well.

—R. L. STEVENSON