

सत्यान्नास्ति परो धर्मः ।



There is no Religion Higher than Truth

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HOLD GRIMLY ON

The superior man cultivates a friendly harmony without being weak. When bad principles prevail in the country, he maintains his course to death without changing.

—CONFUCIUS.

The one-pointed tenacity to hold grimly to the Line of Theosophical Action through all the ups and downs which Karma precipitates is the only saviour of the aspirant to Adeptship. Service of the Great Cause being his sole motive, and sacrifice the method to be continuously used, there is nothing that he cannot survive, nothing that he cannot turn to beneficence. The Inner Path is not only long and broad, it has depth also. As the aspirant marches onward and makes progress he encounters greater difficulties larger in number and even more complex in character. On this path human souls are served by the soul; the soul-servant acquires the power to sacrifice to a greater extent, copying the example of the Perfect Living Servant and Sacrificer. Therefore the new difficulties which the progressing soul-servant ever encounters are out of the ordinary, are more complex than the human frailties we usually encounter in business or club or home. By his own earnestness the aspirant not only stirs up his own latent weaknesses but by his devoted service of other souls he also acts as a catalytic agent which stirs their personalities. "Great Sifter" is the name of the Heart Doctrine, O Disciple," says *The Voice of the Silence*.

The Theosophical beginner has to prepare himself to face this twofold din and clatter which is bound to occur in the near future, if he be earnest and sincere. From the very first let this be his line of life-meditation: *Through good and evil report, through success and failure, in fame and in ignominy, respected or suspected, hold on and march on with the Eye of the Heart on the distant goal, and the Eye of the Mind on the work of the day.*

The aspirant is on a more perilous and adventurous voyage than Columbus. Joaquin Miller in his inspiring poem has a message for every aspirant to the New World. Columbus on the shoreless seas never lost hope or courage when all others on his ship were waiting to be engulfed by the waves of death. Again and again in response to the appeal from his men he resolutely exclaimed, "Sail on!" Hope without courage is impotent as courage without hope is disrupting.

"Brave Admiral, say but one good word :
What shall we do when hope is gone?"
The words leapt like a leaping sword :
"Sail on ! sail on ! sail on ! and on."

PERSIAN ZOROASTRIANISM AND RUSSIAN VANDALISM

[From *The Theosophist*, Vol. I, p. 19, for October, 1879].

Few persons are capable of appreciating the truly beautiful and esthetic; fewer still of revering those monumental relics of bygone ages, which prove that even in the remotest epochs mankind worshipped a Supreme Power, and people were moved to express their abstract conceptions in works which should defy the ravages of Time. The Vandals—whether Slavic Wends, or some barbarous nation of Germanic race—came at all events from the North. A recent occurrence is calculated to make us regret that Justinian did not destroy them all; for it appears that there are still in the North worthy scions left of those terrible destroyers of monuments of arts and sciences, in the persons of certain Russian merchants who have just perpetrated an act of inexcusable vandalism. According to the late Russian papers, the Moscow arch-millionaire, Kokoref, with his Tiflis partner the American Cræsus, Mirzoeff, is desecrating and apparently about to totally destroy perhaps the oldest relic in the world of Zoroastrianism—the “Attesh-Gag” of Baku.*

Few foreigners, and perhaps as few Russians, know anything of this venerable sanctuary of the Fire-worshippers around the Caspian Sea. About twenty versts from the small town of Baku in the valley of Absharon in Russian Georgia, and among the barren, desolated steppes of the shores of the Caspian, there stands—alas! rather stood, but a few months ago—a strange structure, something between a mediæval Cathedral and a fortified castle. It was built in unknown ages, and by builders as unknown. Over an area of somewhat more than a square mile, a tract known as the “Fiery Field,” upon which the structure stands, if one but digs from two to three inches into the sandy earth, and applies a lighted match, a jet of fire will stream up, as if from a spout.† The “Guebre Temple” as the building is sometimes termed is carved out of one solid rock. It comprises an enormous square enclosed by crenelated walls, and at the centre of the square, a high tower also rectangular resting upon four gigantic pillars. The latter were pierced vertically down to the bed-rock and the cavities were continued up to the battlements where they opened out into the atmosphere; thus forming continuous tubes through which the inflammable gas stored up in the heart of the mother rock were conducted to the top of the tower. This

tower has been for centuries a shrine of the fire-worshippers and bears the symbolical representation of the trident—called *teersoot*. All around the interior face of the external wall, are excavated the cells, about twenty in number, which served as habitations for past generations of Zoroastrian recluses. Under the supervision of a High Mobed, here, in the silence of their isolated cloisters, they studied the Avesta, the Vendidad, the Yaçna—especially the latter, it seems, as the rocky walls of the cells are inscribed with a greater number of quotations from the sacred songs. Under the tower-altar, three huge bells were hung. A legend says that they were miraculously produced by a holy traveller, in the tenth century during the Mussulman persecution, to warn the faithful of the approach of the enemy. But a few weeks ago, and the tall tower-altar was yet ablaze with the same flame that local tradition affirms had been kindled thirty centuries ago. At the horizontal orifices in the four hollow pillars burned four perpetual fires, fed uninterruptedly from the inexhaustible subterranean reservoir. From every merlon on the walls, as well as from every embrasure flashed forth a radiant light, like so many tongues of fire; and even the large porch overhanging the main entrance was encircled by a garland of fiery stars, the lambent lights shooting forth from smaller and narrower orifices. It was amid these impressive surroundings, that the Guebre recluses used to send up their daily prayers, meeting under the open tower-altar; every face reverentially turned toward the setting sun, as they united their voices in a parting evening hymn. And as the luminary—the “Eye of Ahura-mazda”—sank lower and lower down the horizon, their voices grew lower and softer, until the chant sounded like a plaintive and subdued murmur. . . . A last flash—and the sun is gone; and, as darkness follows daylight almost suddenly in these regions, the departure of the Deity’s symbol was the signal for a general illumination, unrivalled even by the greatest fire-works at regal festivals. The whole field seemed nightly like one blazing prairie

Till about 1840, “Attesh-Gag” was the chief rendezvous for all the Fire-worshippers of Persia. Thousands of pilgrims came and went; for no true Guebre could die happy unless he had performed the sacred pilgrimage at least once during his life-time. A traveller—Koch—who visited the cloister about that time, found in it but five Zoroastrians, with their pupils. In 1878, about fourteen months ago, a lady of Tiflis, who visited the Attesh-Gag, mentioned in a

* Attesh-Kudda also.

† A bluish flame is seen to arise there, but this fire does not consume, “and if a person finds himself in the middle of it, he is not sensible of any warmth.”—See Kinneir’s *Persia*, page 35.

private letter that she found there but one solitary hermit, who emerges from his cell but to meet the rising and salute the departing sun. And now, hardly a year later, we find in the papers that Messrs. Kokoref and Co., are busy erecting on the Fiery Field enormous buildings for the refining of petroleum! All the cells but the one occupied by the poor old hermit, half ruined and dirty beyond all expression, are inhabited by the firm's workmen; the altar over which blazed the sacred flame, is now piled high with rubbish, mortar and mud, and the flame itself turned off in another direction. The bells are now, during the periodical visits of a Russian priest, taken down and suspended in the porch of the superintendent's house; heathen relics being as usual used—though abused—by the religion which supplants the previous worship. And, all looks like the abomination of desolation "It is a matter of surprise to me," writes a Baku correspondent in the *St. Petersburg Vjedomosti*, who was the first to send the unwelcome news, "that the trident, the sacred *teersoot* itself, has not as yet been put to some appropriate use in the new firm's kitchen . . . ! Is it then so absolutely necessary that the millionaire Kokoref should desecrate the Zoroastrian cloister, which occupies such a trifling compound in comparison to the space allotted to his manufactories and stores? And shall such a remarkable relic of antiquity be sacrificed to commercial greediness which can after all neither lose nor gain one single rouble by destroying it?"

It must apparently, since Messrs. Kokoref and Co. have leased the whole field from the Government, and the latter seems to feel quite indifferent over this idiotic and useless Vandalism. It is now more than twenty years since the writer visited for the last time Attesh-Gag. In those days besides a small group of recluses it had the visits of many pilgrims. And since it is more than likely that ten years hence, people will hear no more of it, I may just as well give a few more details of its history. Our Parsee friends will, I am sure, feel an interest in a few legends gathered by me on the spot.

There seems to be indeed a veil drawn over the origin of Attesh-Gag. Historical data are scarce and contradictory. With the exception of some old Armenian Chronicles which mention it incidentally as having existed before Christianity was brought into the country by Saint Nina during the third century,* there is no other mention of it anywhere else so far as I know.

* Though St. Nina appeared in Georgia in the third, it is not before the fifth century that the idolatrous *Grouzines* were converted to Christianity by the thirteen Syrian Fathers. They came under the leadership of both St. Antony and St. John of Zedadzene,—so called, because he is alleged to have

Tradition informs us,—how far correctly is not for me to decide—that long before Zarathustra, the people, who now are called in contempt, by the Mussulmans and Christians, "Guebres," and, who term themselves "Behedin" (followers of the true faith) recognized Mithra, the Mediator, as their sole and highest God,—who included within himself all the good as well as the bad gods. Mithra representing the two natures of Ormazd and Ahriman combined, the people *feared* him, whereas, they would have had no need of fearing, but only of loving and reverencing him as Ahura-Mazda, were Mithra without the Ahriman element in him.

One day as the god, disguised as a shepherd,

travelled to the Caucasian regions on purpose to fight and conquer the chief idol *Zeda*! And thus, while,—as incontrovertible proof of the existence of both,—the opulent tresses of the black hair of St. Nina are being preserved to this day as relics, in Zion Cathedral at Tiflis,—the thaumaturgic John has immortalized his name still more. *Zeda*, who was the Baal of the Trans-Caucasus, had children sacrificed to him, as the legend tells us, on the top of the Zedadzene mount, about 18 versts from Tiflis. It is there that the Saint defied the idol, or rather Satan under the guise of a stone statue—to single combat, and *miraculously* conquered him; *i. e.*, threw down, and trampled upon the idol. But he did not stop there in the exhibition of his powers. The mountain peak is of an immense height, and being only a barren rock at its top, spring water is nowhere to be found on its summit. But in commemoration of his triumph, the Saint had a spring appear at the very bottom of the deep, and—as people assert—a fathomless well, dug down into the very bowels of the mountain, and the gaping mouth of which was situated near the altar of the god *Zeda*, just in the centre of his temple. It was into this opening that the limbs of the murdered infants were cast down after the sacrifice. The miraculous spring, however, was soon dried up, and for many centuries there appeared no water. But, when Christianity was firmly established, the water began re-appearing on the 7th day of every May, and continues to do so till the present time. Strange to say, this fact does not pertain to the domain of legend, but is one that has provoked an intense curiosity even among men of science, such as the eminent geologist, Dr. Abich, who resided for years at Tiflis. Thousands upon thousands proceed yearly upon pilgrimage to Zedadzene on the seventh of May; and all witness the "miracle." From early morning, water is heard bubbling down at the rocky bottom of the well; and, as noon approaches, the parched up walls of the mouth become moist, and clear cold sparkling water seems to come out from every porosity of the rock; it rises higher and higher, bubbles, increases, until at last having reached to the very brim, it suddenly stops, and a prolonged shout of triumphant joy bursts from the fanatical crowd. This cry seems to shake like a sudden discharge of artillery the very depths of the mountain and awaken the echo for miles around. Every one hurries to fill a vessel with the miraculous water. There are necks wrung and heads broken on that day at Zedadzene, but every one who survives carries home a provision of the crystal fluid. Toward evening the water begins decreasing as mysteriously as it had appeared, and at midnight the well is again perfectly dry. Not a drop of water, nor a trace of any spring, could be found by the engineers and geologists bent upon discovering the "trick." For a whole year the sanctuary remains deserted, and there is not even a janitor to watch the poor shrine. The geologists have declared that the soil of the mountain precludes the possibility of having springs concealed in it. Who will explain the puzzle?

was wandering about the earth, he came to Baku, then a dreary, deserted sea-shore, and found an old devotee of his quarrelling with his wife. Upon this barren spot wood was scarce, and she would not give up a certain portion of her stock of cooking fuel to be burned upon the altar. So the Ahriman element was aroused in the god and, striking the stingy old woman, he changed her into a gigantic rock. Then, the Ahura-Mazda element prevailing, he, to console the bereaved widower, promised that neither he, nor his descendants, should ever need fuel any more, for he would provide such a supply as should last till the end of time. So he struck the rock again and then struck the ground for miles around, and the earth and the calcareous soil of the Caspian shores were filled up to the brim with naphtha. To commemorate the happy event, the old devotee assembled all the youths of the neighbourhood and set himself to excavating the rock which was all that remained of his ex-wife. He cut the battlemented walls, and fashioned the altar and the four pillars, hollowing them all to allow the gases to rise up and escape through the top of the merlons. The god Mithra upon seeing the work ended, sent a lightning flash, which set ablaze the fire upon the altar, and lit up every merlon upon the walls. Then, in order that it should burn the brighter, he called forth the four winds and ordered them to blow the flame in every direction. To this day, Baku is known under its primitive name of "Baadéy-ku-bá," which means literally the gathering of winds.

The other legend, which is but a continuation of the above, runs thus: For countless ages, the devotees of Mithra worshipped at his shrines, until Zarathustra, descending from heaven in the shape of a "Golden Star," transformed himself into a man, and began teaching a new doctrine. He sung the praises of the One but Triple god,—the supreme Eternal, the incomprehensible essence "Zervana-Akerene," which emanating from itself "Primeval Light," the latter in its turn produced Ahura-Mazda. But this process required that the "Primeval One" should previously absorb in itself all the light from the fiery Mithra, and thus left the poor god despoiled of all his brightness. Losing his right of undivided supremacy, Mithra, in despair, and instigated by his Ahrimanian nature, annihilated himself for the time being, leaving Ahriman alone, to fight out his quarrel with Ormazd, the best way he could. Hence, the prevailing Duality in nature since that time until Mithra returns; for he promised to his faithful devotees to come back some day. Only since then, a series of calamities fell upon the Fire-worshippers. The last of these was the invasion of their country by the Moslems in the 7th century, when these fanatics commenced most cruel persecutions against the Behedin. Driven away from every quarter, the Guebres found refuge but in the province of

Kerman, and in the city of Yezd. Then followed heresies. Many of the Zoroastrians abandoning the faith of their forefathers, became Moslems; others, in their unquenchable hatred for the new rulers, joined the ferocious Koords and became devil, as well as fire-worshippers. These are the Yezids. The whole religion of these strange sectarians, with the exception of a few who have more weird rites, which are a secret to all but to themselves—consists in the following. As soon as the morning sun appears, they place their two thumbs crosswise one upon the other, kiss the symbol, and touch with them their brow in reverential silence. Then they salute the sun and turn back into their tents. They believe in the power of the Devil, dread it, and propitiate the "fallen angel" by every means; getting very angry whenever they hear him spoken of disrespectfully by either a Mussulman or a Christian. Murders have been committed by them on account of such irreverent talk, but people have become more prudent of late.

With the exception of the Bombay community of Parsees, Fire-worshippers are, then, to be found but in the two places before mentioned, and scattered around Baku. In Persia some years ago, according to statistics they numbered about 100,000 men;* I doubt, though, whether their religion has been preserved as pure as even that of the Gujaráthi Parsees, adulterated as is the latter by the errors and carelessness of generations of uneducated Mobeds. And yet, as is the case of their Bombay brethren, who are considered by all the travellers as well as Anglo-Indians, as the most intelligent, industrious and well-behaved community of the native races, the fire-worshippers of Kerman and Yezd bear a very high character among the Persians, as well as among the Russians of Baku. Uncouth and crafty some of them have become, owing to long centuries of persecution and spoliation; but the unanimous testimony is in their favour and they are spoken of as a virtuous, highly moral, and industrious population. "As good as the word of a Guebre" is a common saying among the Koords, who repeat it without being in the least conscious of the self-condemnation contained in it.

I cannot close without expressing my astonishment at the utter ignorance as to their religions,

* Mr. Grattan Geary in his recent highly valuable and interesting work "Through Asiatic Turkey" (London, Sampson Low & Co.) remarks of the Guebres of Yezd—"it is said that there are only 5,000 of them all told." But as his information was gleaned while travelling rapidly through the country, he was apparently misinformed in this instance. Perhaps, it was meant to convey the idea to him that there were but 5,000 in and about Yezd at the time of his visit. It is the habit of this people to scatter themselves all over the country in the commencement of the summer season in search of work.

which seems to prevail in Russia even among the journalists. One of them speaks of the Guebres, in the article of the *St. Petersburg Vjedomosti* above referred to, as a sect of Hindu idolaters, in whose prayers the name of Brahma is constantly invoked. To add to the importance, of this historical item Alexandre Dumas (senior) is quoted, as mentioning in his work *Travels in the Caucasus* that during his visit to Attesh-Gag, he found in one of the cells of the Zoroastrian cloister "two Hindu idols"!! Without forgetting the charitable dictum: *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, we cannot refrain from reminding the correspondent of our esteemed contemporary of a fact which no reader of the novels of the brilliant French writer ought to be ignorant of; namely, that for the variety and inexhaustible stock of *historical facts*, evolved out of the abysmal depths of his own consciousness, even the immortal Baron Münchhausen was hardly his equal. The sensational narrative of his tiger-hunting in Mingrelia, where, since the days of Noah, there never was a tiger, is yet fresh in the memory of his readers.

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

GOOD INTENTIONS

Good intentions are commendable as far as they go, but alone they do not go very far. One of the great Masters wrote in the early days of the Theosophical Movement of our era:—

Intentions—you may tell your Fellow-Members—and kind words count for little with us. Deeds are what we want and demand.... It is by *doing* noble actions, and not by determining that they shall be done, that the fruits of meritorious actions are reaped.

When it is said of someone that he meant well, the implication is that his performance was poor. The well-meaning person is morally at a higher stage than the malevolent one, but his mistakes due to ignorance and to his failure to put his good intentions into practice may be only less mischievous in their practical effects than the malefactor's deliberate evil-doing. The man of good intentions only either comes to grief straightway or else he muddles

through somehow, stirring up trouble by his unconsidered speech, wasting time that does not belong to him, ineffective in all his dealings because he has not put his personality under subjection to his Soul.

But are good resolutions then of no avail? Certainly they are of great avail—*provided* that there is sincere attempt to give effect to them. "Right Resolve" is a step in the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. "Even a Buddha or a Jesus," we are told in *The Ocean of Theosophy*, "had first to make a vow, which is a desire, in some life, that he would save the world or some part of it." But also he had to persevere through countless lives with that desire alive in his heart.

Good intentions are indispensable, then, but they must be so strong that the will to carry them out will be brought into action to reinforce the desire. It is recognized as a dangerous business practice to date a cheque ahead; it is no less dangerous to date a good resolution ahead! "Next year I shall become a student of Theosophy in earnest." "When I am a little older, I mean to take up Theosophy seriously, and to try to live it." But if we do not foster our present interest it may die, and the opportunity neglected now may not present itself again for many lives. "Put without delay your good intentions into practice, never leaving a single one to remain only an intention," one of the Masters wrote.

The only effective way to encourage good resolutions is to keep them constantly in mind and to try honestly to carry them out. No effort is ever lost. The Master once called good resolutions "mind-painted pictures of good deeds" and "whisperings of the *Buddhi* to the *Manas*."

If we encourage them they will not fade away like the dissolving mirage in the Shamo desert, but grow stronger and stronger until one's whole life becomes the expression and outward proof of the divine motive within.... There are innumerable pages of your life record still to be written up, fair and blank they are as yet. Child of your race and of your age, seize the diamond pen and inscribe them with the history of noble deeds, days well-spent, years of holy striving. So will you win your way ever upward to the higher planes of spiritual consciousness. Fear not, faint not, be faithful to the ideal you can now dimly see.

THE TALKING MONGOOSE OF THE ISLE OF MAN

Since 1931 a creature resembling a weasel or a mongoose has made his home in an isolated farmhouse on the Isle of Man. Evidence points to his being an animal spectre, though he is sufficiently material, at least at times, to devour human food and to strangle rabbits. Once he bit the finger of his hostess. The creature has the power of speech, which he uses often for most vulgar and profane remarks. He is very malicious, throwing stones and other objects, spitting at people he does not like and threatening worse violence. He claims sometimes to be a mongoose; sometimes to be the Holy Ghost; at other times he calls himself an "earth-bound spirit."

Psychical researchers have been investigating the case and Messrs. Harry Price of the University of London Council for Psychical Research and R. S. Lambert, Editor of *The Listener*, have written a book about it. The creature absented itself during their own visit to the spot, so they content themselves with analysing the abundant evidence at second-hand. They try to link the mongoose with the "familiar" of the witchcraft excitement of two hundred years ago—and favour a psychological hypothesis to account for both. They admit, however, the inconclusiveness of their theory of the creature being an adolescent fantasy of the daughter of the house, in view of the number of adults, related and unrelated to the girl, who share her belief in the mongoose's existence, accepting the evidence of their own senses. In other words, they are unable to explain this phenomenon.

Without the possession of all the facts it is impossible to give an explanation, but certain passages from the works of H. P. Blavatsky might prove helpful to the investigators. In her "Thoughts on the Elementals" and "Chinese Spirits," reprinted in *Raja-Yoga*, and in *Isis Unveiled* she repeatedly mentions animal spectres, the most significant reference for our purpose being the following:

The phantoms of dogs, cats, and various other animals have been repeatedly seen, and the world-wide testimony is as trustworthy upon this point as that with respect to human apparitions. Who or *what* personates, if we are allowed such an expression, the ghosts of departed animals? . . .

Before venturing to decide the question whether the spectral animal forms so frequently seen and attested are the returning spirits of dead beasts, we must carefully consider their reported behaviour. Do these spectres act according to the habits and display the same instincts, as the animals during life?

Do the spectral beasts of prey lie in wait for victims, and timid animals flee before the presence of man; or do the latter show a malevolence and disposition to annoy, quite foreign to their natures? . . . Unless we discredit the testimony of thousands of witnesses, in all parts of the world, and in all ages, and allow a monopoly of seership to modern mediums, spectre-animals do appear and manifest all the worst traits of depraved human nature, without themselves being human. What, then, can they be but elementals? (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 70-71)

H.P.B. pointed out (*Ibid.*, I, 319), that elementals or nature spirits, themselves not self-conscious, are used for materializations by "elementaries," the disembodied souls of the depraved, "these souls having at some time prior to death separated from themselves their divine spirits, and so lost their chance for immortality." (*Ibid.*, xxx)

Once divorced from their bodies, these souls . . . of purely materialistic persons, are irresistibly attracted to the earth, where they live a temporary and finite life amid elements congenial to their gross natures. From having never, during their natural lives, cultivated their spirituality, but subordinated it to the material and gross, they are now unfitted for the lofty career of the pure, disembodied being, for whom the atmosphere of earth is stifling and mephitic, and whose attractions are all away from it. (*Ibid.*, I, xxx)

These, after their bodily death, unable to soar higher, attached to terrestrial regions, delight in the society of the kind of elementals which by their affinity with vice attract them the most. They identify themselves with these to such a degree that they very soon lose sight of their own identity, and become a part of the elementals, the help of which they need to communicate with mortals. But as the nature-spirits are not *immortal*, so the human elementary who have lost their divine guide—spirit—can last no longer than the essence of the elements which compose their astral bodies holds together. (*Ibid.*, I, 616, footnote)

Such are the "Diakka" described by the American Spiritualist, Andrew Jackson Davis. (cf. *Isis Unveiled*, I, 218-19).

If the psychic researchers would accept these facts as working hypotheses and investigate along these lines, they might not only solve the mystery

of the talking mongoose but might also induce the haunted family to rid their home of their ghastly visitor, whose influence cannot, to say the least, be uplifting.

THE SACRED THREAD

A Zoroastrian friend has sent us a copy of the new edition of *The Naajote Ceremony of the Parsees*, by the late Sir J. J. Modi, with a request to supplement its explanations of the Sacred Thread from the Theosophical point of view. We cannot do better than reprint an article which treats of the Brahminical Thread between which and the Zoroastrian *Kusti* there is a close identity. This article appeared in *The Theosophist* for February 1883 (Vol. IV, p. 109), under the heading—

THE BRAHMINICAL THREAD

[BY A SARMAN.]

I. The general term for the investiture of this thread is *Upanayana*; and the invested is called *Upanita*, which signifies brought or drawn near (to one's Guru), *i.e.*, the thread is the symbol of the wearer's privilege.

II. One of the names of this thread is *Yajna-Sutra*. *Yajna* means Brahma, or the Supreme Spirit, and *Sutra*, the thread, or tie. Collectively, the compound word signifies that which ties a man to his spirit or god. It consists of three yarns twisted into one thread, and three of such threads formed and knotted into a circle. Every Theosophist knows what a circle signifies and it need not be repeated here. He will easily understand the rest and the relation they have to mystic initiation. The yarns signify the great principle of "three in one, and one in three," thus: the first trinity consists of Atma which comprises the three attributes of *Manas*, *Buddhi*, and *Ahankara*: (the mind, the intelligence, and the egotism). The *Manas*, again, has the three qualities of *Satva*, *Raja*, and *Tama*: (goodness, foulness, and darkness). *Buddhi* has the three attributes of *Pratyaksha*, *Upamiti* and *Anumiti* (perception, analogy and inference). *Ahankara* has also three attributes, *viz.*, *Jnata*, *Jneya*, and *Jnan* (the knower, the known, and the knowledge).

III. Another name of the sacred thread is *Tridandi*. *Tri* means three, and *Danda*, chastisement, correction, or conquest. This reminds the holder of the three great "corrections" or conquests he has to accomplish. These are: (1) The *Vakya Sanyama*;* (2) The *Mana Sanyama*; and (3) The *Indriya* (or *Deha*) *Sanyama*. *Vakya* is speech, *Mana*, mind, and *Deha* (literally, body) or *Indriya*, are the passions. The three conquests therefore mean the control over one's speech, mind, and the passions.

This thread is also the reminder to the man of his secular duties, and its material varies, in consequence, according to the occupation of the wearer. Thus, while the thread of the Brahmans is made of pure cotton, that of the Kshatriyas (the warriors) is composed of flax—the bow-string material; and that of Vaishyas (the traders and cattle-breeders), of wool. From this it is not to be inferred that caste was originally meant to be hereditary. In the ancient times, it depended on the qualities of the man. Irrespective of the caste of his parents, a man could, according to his merit or otherwise, raise or lower himself from one caste to another; and instances are not wanting in which a man has elevated himself to the position of the highest Brahman (such as Vishvamitra Rishi, Parasara, Vyasa, Satyakam, and others) from the very lowest of the four castes. The sayings of *Yudhishtira*, on this subject, in reply to the questions of the great serpent, in the *Arannya Parva* of the *Māha-Bhārata* and of *Manu*, on the same point, have already appeared—on page 285 of the *Theosophist* for August 1882, in the valuable contribution by Babu Raj Narain Bose. Nothing further is therefore necessary than to refer the reader to the same. *Rig Veda* makes no mention of caste and both *Manu* and *Māha-Bhārata*—the fulcrums of Hinduism—distinctly affirm that a man can translate himself from one caste to another by his merit, irrespective of his parentage.

The day is fast approaching when the so-called Brahmans will have to show cause, before the tribunal of the Aryan Rishis, why they should not be divested of the thread which they do not at all deserve, and are degrading by misuse, unless they should work to deserve the privilege of wearing it. Then will be the time for the people to appreciate it.

There are many examples of the highest distinctive insignia being worn by the unworthy. The aristocracies of Europe and Asia teem with such.

* *Danda* and *Sanyama* are synonymous terms.—A.S.

“THE PLACE OF MYTH IN PHILOSOPHY”

Myths have a legitimate function in philosophy, according to the Very Reverend W. R. Inge, writing under this title in *Philosophy* (April 1936). They bridge the gulf between the natural and the spiritual.

When the mind communes with the world of values its natural and inevitable language is the language of poetry, symbol, and myth...Our reason—some would say reason itself—has reached its limits. We are driven to mythologize, confessing that we have left the realm of scientific fact. We give reign to the imagination, not exactly claiming with Wordsworth that it is reason in her most exalted mood, but hoping that the creative imagination may reveal to us some of the real meaning of questions which we cannot answer.

But this definition does less than justice to the rôle of myth, to which Dr. Inge refuses the deliberately illustrative function of allegory.

An allegory, like a myth, half conceals and half reveals the truth which it clothes. But in an allegory the thought is first grasped by itself, and then consciously dressed up in a sensible image...But the myth is not illustrative; it does not, like the allegory, represent pictorially results already obtained in argument.

He calls the genuine myth of Plato, in which the Orphic eschatology was expanded “‘a fact-like story’ with a spiritual meaning.” He cites, apparently with approval, the views of the Russian mystic, Nicolas Berdyaeff, that “the language of spiritual experience is inevitably symbolic and mythological and that the reality of the world of sense is symbolic.”

Its meaning and value are not in itself, but in the world of spirit. In a word, all nature is sacramental; in being what it is, it half conceals and half reveals truths which belong to another order.

Dr. Inge seems in general less in sympathy with the views of Mr. George Santayana, one of which he paraphrases:—

Their function [that of myths] is to interpret events in terms relative to spirit. In practice, they are often defecated into Theosophy or corrupted into a justification of magic.

We must point out in passing that Theosophy is not the result of a defecation of myths but, as the ancient and consistent record of eternal truth, it furnishes the clue to their understanding. Nor is any corruption of myths involved in the justification of true magic, which is the knowledge of the constitution of man and “of the way by which the omniscience and omnipotence of the spirit and its control over nature’s forces may be acquired by the individual while still in the body.” (*Isis Unveiled*, II, 588)

No less mistaken than this imputation is the charge of unscrupulousness made by Dr. Inge against Plato because that great Initiate anticipated with approval that future generations of his Republic might to their profit take one of his symbolical myths for literal truth. Dr. Inge questions the necessity of even any connection of Plato’s myths with historical

fact. In *Isis Unveiled* H. P. B. referred to “the ancient claim of the philosophers, that *there is a logos in every mythos*, or a ground-work of truth in every fiction.” (I, 162) And elsewhere she has written:—

No mythological story... has ever been, at any time, pure fiction, but that every one of such narratives has an actual historical lining to it. (*The Secret Doctrine*, I, 303)

A myth... means oral tradition, passed from mouth to mouth from one generation to the other; and even in the modern etymology the term stands for a *fabulous* statement conveying some important truth; a tale of some extraordinary personage whose biography has become overgrown, owing to the veneration of successive generations, with rich popular fancy, but which is no *wholesale* fable. (*Ibid.*, I, 425)

Allegory and a mythical ornamentation around the kernel of tradition, in no wise prevent that kernel being a record of real events... All the so-called myths of the Hindu, Grecian, Chaldean, and Jewish Pantheons are found to be built on fact and truth. (*Ibid.*, II, 235-6)

The Brahmanas and Puranas the Gathas and other Mazdean Scriptures, down to the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman, and finally to the Jewish Sacred records, all have the same origin. None are meaningless and baseless stories invented to entrap the unwary profane: all are allegories intended to convey, under a more or less fantastic veil, the great truths gathered in the same field of pre-historic tradition. (*Ibid.*, II, 409-10)

Popular folk-lore and traditions, however fanciful at times, when sifted may lead to the discovery of long-lost, but important, secrets of nature. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 40).

Dr. Inge’s conclusion in regard to the relation between philosophy and mysticism is important:—

The question which we really have to consider is whether philosophy ought to include within its scope the higher religion and mysticism, although these can only express their aspirations and intuitions in imaginative and symbolical language. I maintain that if philosophy treats this part of human nature as beyond its scope, it will necessarily be enslaved to natural science, or to psychology, which is a natural science if it is a science at all. Now that natural science, abating its former pretensions, claims only to be a hypothetical study, a matter of pointer readings and mathematical symbols, we have to choose between returning to Plato *and* admitting that philosophy itself is out of contact with reality.

THEOSOPHY

IN THE BOMBAY PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS.

[The Ramakrishna Missions, all over the world, are celebrating the Centenary of Ramakrishna (1836-1886). The Bombay Mission organized a Parliament of Religions which was held on the 7th to the 9th of May 1936. Sir S. Radhakrishnan delivered the Presidential Address on the first day; the religions of the world were represented, each by a distinguished spokesman. In the closing session held in the Convocation Hall of the Bombay University under the presidency of Mr. M. R. Jayakar, Chairman of the Reception Committee, an Associate of the United Lodge of Theosophists represented Theosophy. Below we print the stenographic report of the speech.]

Friends,

It is but appropriate that, in this Parliament of Religions, Theosophy be given a place at the end of the programme, after the representatives of all creeds have had their say. For Theosophy is not a religion, but the Soul of all religions, the common source of all faiths. Theosophy is the fountainhead of eternal, immemorial and ever consistent Truth. It is the very root of the original great Banyan Tree, and from the world of Spirit it sends forth the branches of the various religions and the shoots of the many creeds. These religions, alas, have now been overlaid with errors; not one has escaped the hand of time. Each has become polluted, each is full of corruptions and superstitions. If any proof were needed that this is so, the strong and fearless paper that we just listened to, differentiating between the religion of Jesus and that of the present Christian churches, would be a conclusive one. And what is true of Christianity is also true of other faiths. And yet each at its source is divine, natural and true. This dual recognition of basic truth and gross and palpable error at the surface has sometimes caused confusion in the minds of the people and they have asked: "Is Theosophy the friend of religions or their opponent?" And the answer itself is puzzling. Theosophy is the Peace-maker among different religions, but only in their pure and noble aspects; Theosophy opposes all special claims, as it opposes priestcraft and superstition in every form and under every mantle; Theosophy ever befriends and honours Truth wherever and by whomsoever it may have been uttered. Theosophy is the enemy of untruth no matter under whose authority that untruth be promulgated. Thus it is indeed a most difficult position that Theosophy occupies in the modern world.

But in that very position lies Theosophy's first and vital message to all of us. We are closing to-day this Parliament of Religions. In it recognition and appreciation of all, or almost all, faiths has taken place. That is well, that is indeed a great, a splendid step, yet it is not enough—something more needs to be understood. We must go back to eternal and universal principles and define religion itself. Theosophy defines religion as *dharma* as defined in the *Karnaparva* of the *Mahabharata*:

"That which supports, that which holds together the peoples, that is *dharma*." We say, that is religion. Religion is therefore a unifying power *par excellence*, and not a separative force. That which unites man to man is religion. That which labels a man as distinct and separate from other men, separating him from his fellow-beings, that is *not*, *cannot* be, religion. This does not mean that the different forms of religious thought are necessarily wrong, but that the special claims made on behalf of any one form are wrong. Therefore in the Declaration of our United Lodge of Theosophists we find a clause which describes the attitude of the true Theosophist in matters of religion:—"The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all." What does it mean? It means that every real student of Theosophy is called upon to make a dual distinction, a twofold differentiation. And it is this distinction that the world needs to-day. First, we must learn to distinguish between the truths common to all religions on the one hand, and the falsehoods and superstitions also to be found in all creeds without exception, on the other. To differentiate between truth and falsehood that is the first step. Next, we must distinguish between the common truths of the different faiths and the variety of expressions of those truths. The same principles are given out in different garbs, and these differences of form are not meaningless, they have a purpose and a *raison d'être*. Let us illustrate. We must learn to distinguish between the true and the false. Thus every religion teaches the great and significant fact of the immortality of the Spirit in man. That is a universal truth. But when it comes to the method of realization of that immortal and divine Spirit, ah! then we find disagreement, and each one claims his own method as the only true one. Some say only in a Shiva temple is communion with God possible; others declare the Vishnu temple is superior. Muslims believe salvation to be possible only through the one Prophet, while Christians believe that Jesus is the only door, and if you happen to be a Roman Catholic you cannot be saved even by Jesus alone: you must also recognize the Pope! These exclusive and unique claims cannot all be true; they bring about strife and disunion among men; they are absurd and illogical. They are but

arrogant superstitions, and any man holding them thereby narrows his mind and injures his heart. Such false notions it is which are destructive of real religion since they divide man from man. In passing we might note that often these very dogmas and superstitions and even some evil practices are themselves but the gross and distorted shadows of some misunderstood religious symbol. Originally they represented some aspect of truth, but they have now become misinterpreted and corrupted. So the first distinction is between truth and falsehood.

What is the second distinction every Theosophist is called upon to make? What is the difference between the sacred thread of the Hindu and that of Parsi? None whatsoever. Both represent and symbolize the very same idea. What is the difference between the Muslim in his Mosque on Friday, the Jew in his Synagogue on Saturday, the Christian in his Church on Sunday? None. Are they not all three expressing the same aspiration even though their form of worship is different? So the second distinction enables us to perceive the same underlying ideal back of the variety of outer expressions. First, we must distinguish between that which is true in all religions and that which is false; and then we must learn to see behind the various expressions of religions one and the same truth. How shall we do this? By what process?

This very Parliament of Religions is one way, and a powerful one it is. It serves to strengthen the bond of true religion, and to break the fetters of sectarianism. This Parliament was formed on the model of the one held in 1893 in Chicago, in the United States, and of which we all know, for it was attended by prominent Indians. But long before that Chicago conference, in one of its Three Objects, the Theosophical Movement advocated the comparative study of all religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study. As far back as 1877 when our Teacher Madame Blavatsky wrote her *Isis Unveiled* she showed this dual task as necessary for the eradication of materialistic atheism on the one hand, and the restoration of the pure religion of Universal Brotherhood on the other. Thus Theosophy came as a peacemaker with its light dispersing the darkness not only of ignorance but also of false beliefs and dogmatic orthodoxy.

But what is Theosophy? What is this ancient source of all religions? Not something new which Madame Blavatsky invented, and those who are looking out for new and original innovations are bound to be disappointed. Theosophy as a system of thought is as old as thinking man himself. Even the word Theosophy itself is not new, was not invented by H. P. Blavatsky, the Founder of the

present Theosophical Movement. The word had already been used before she used it. It was used in the middle of the last century. Nay, it had been used long before that, as far back as the third century of the Christian era by Ammonius Saccas, the *Guru* of Plotinus, and the Founder of the Neo-Platonic School in Alexandria. Madame Blavatsky explains the word Theosophy. She calls Theosophy, Divine Wisdom, the "Wisdom-Religion," an expression which is the exact equivalent of *Bodhi-Dharma* familiar to us in Buddhistic culture—better known among the Hindus as "*Brahma-Vidya*", the knowledge of Brahman, *i. e.*, Divine Wisdom. It is true Wisdom, eternal and universal, as differentiated from the knowledge of the intellect and the learning of the brain.

Some of you may ask: "But if Theosophy is such ancient and immemorial knowledge, why was it given afresh? Why was it necessary to promulgate again the truths of *Brahma-Vidya* and *Atma-Vidya*?" Friends, because these ancient truths had become forgotten in the world of mortal men. They were hardly known in the western hemisphere. The concept of reincarnation, the sublime idea of the Law of Karma, the Law of moral compensation and absolute justice, these were absolutely unknown in the West before our Theosophical Movement was launched. As for India, even in our India the educated Hindu scoffed at the spiritual inheritance of the Motherland, while orthodoxy enveloped the vast majority, and the Great Art of Krishna and Buddha and Shankara was practised only by a few. Picture to yourselves this city of Bombay in 1879 when Madame Blavatsky and her co-worker, Colonel Olcott, landed here. Consider the state of India as a whole. Even the *Gita* was not much known, and genuine spiritual effort was the practice of only a few. We are not forgetting the work which flowed from the hearts of Ram Mohan Rai and Dayananda Sarasvati, noble sons of India. But it was Theosophy which alone linked East and West, and made the work of spreading spiritual knowledge all over the world imperative and possible.

Theosophy, Wisdom-Religion, has many aspects and to-day it will not be possible to do more than touch upon only one of them. The time allotted to us is already generous and we do not wish to try the patience of our kind organizers to whom we feel grateful for this opportunity. What aspect then shall we consider? Let us look upon Theosophy as a Way of Life, a dynamic and spiritual Way of Life, bringing to man a new vision, leading him to the recognition of his own Divinity, energizing him to love and serve his fellow-men. It is not ordinary good morals which Theosophy teaches. Its rules of conduct, its principles of action, are founded upon

its philosophy and its psychology. Its philosophy deals with the origin and evolution of the cosmos; its psychology deals with the constitution of the whole of man—physical, psychical, mental and, last but not chief of all, spiritual which is the basic reality. The intimate relation between the Universe and man, between the Macrocosm and microcosm brings to birth the rules of conduct to be practised day by day. Theosophy must be lived, must be applied steadfastly and with assiduity in devotion. That gives us another Theosophical axiom:—"A Theosophist is who Theosophy does." Such a principle should be true of every religion, but nowadays religion is not a matter of actual living, but only of lip-profession and outward observances. To be a Theosophist, however, one has to *do* Theosophy. The whole attitude of the practitioner undergoes a change, his relationship to others becomes a spiritual one as he knows himself more and more as a unit in a Spiritual Family. The Way of Life taught by Theosophy is precisely that realization, the realization that Humanity is essentially spiritual. Humanity is not composed of bodies—black and white, yellow and brown, male and female. Humanity is not composed of minds—scientific, artistic, philosophic, political. Humanity is composed of Souls—every Soul a divine spark, the whole of humanity animated by the same universal essence, the same divine energy. We all recognize that God is everywhere, that God speaks through the sage, and sings through the poet and acts through the saint; but all of us do *not* recognize that God sweeps through the scavenger, and cooks in the kitchen and is the beggar in the street. All religious Prophets have taught us that God is omnipresent, present in the hearts of all of us, but we have not seen the implication of that stupendous fact, the spiritual identity of all Souls with the one Over-Soul, call it Atman, Alaya, the Universal Spirit, Krishna, Buddha, Ahura Mazda, Christos, what matters the name? That which alone matters is the reality.

To realize, to live that reality, that is our task. But to act, day by day, with the conviction that humanity is spiritual is not only difficult, it becomes well-nigh impossible, friends, when the God we are encountering is caught out telling a lie!—when another God is discovered to be dishonest, and yet another to be greedy and lustful! It is most difficult for the human mind to perceive the God in the debauchee, in the prostitute, in the drunkard lying in the gutter! Why is it difficult? Because the method of realization that our humanity is spiritual is unknown or falsely practised. Theosophy teaches that each one of us has first to unfold the divinity within himself. That is the beginning of the Way, for as we try to unfold our own divinity we encounter the weakness of our own mind, the vices of our own flesh and blood. Our difficulty

in recognizing the *devi* in the prostitute, the god in the drunkard, lessens, if it does not altogether disappear, when we find that each one of us is drunk with the toddy of anger and is passion wrought in a dozen different ways. The prostitution of the heart, and the drunkenness of the mind within ourselves dispassionately studied enable us to understand the prostitute in the street and the drunkard in the gutter, nay more, enable us to perceive that the most direct and efficient way to help all prostitutes and all drunkards is by ourselves overcoming those tendencies within our own natures. To realize one's own Higher Self implies the recognition and subsequent purification of one's own lower self. Only when you have made a sincere effort to eradicate your own blemishes can you have true compassion for the weaknesses of others. Thus Theosophy transforms man into a self-reformer before he becomes a reformer of others. As we saw "A Theosophist is who Theosophy does," and the *doing* of Theosophy begins with self-reform. Each must correct himself, discipline himself, purify himself. Each one must endeavour to radiate forth the Light of the One Self, and thus to disperse the darkness of his own ignorance and selfishness, ultimately spreading the one unfading Light of Spirit for the benefit of the whole of humanity.

Knowledge, true knowledge, is needed, but knowledge alone does not suffice. It is the energization to practise what we know to be true that our world needs to-day. "For even a little of this practice delivereth a man from great risk," as the *Gita* puts it. Our religion has become an outer show instead of an inner exercise. Theosophists are able to appreciate and, more, to understand, the psychological experimentation of Ramakrishna whose Centenary we are celebrating. And what better mode of celebration than this Parliament of Religions in the name of one who is said to have practised different religions? Ramakrishna, we are told, *lived* as mere believers in religion do *not* live, and therefore he was able to experience in his own consciousness what ordinary men of different denominations vaguely feel or inadequately understand about their own creed. To experience in consciousness the validity of the knowledge clear to our mind—that is a Theosophical practice. In his efforts at this religious experiencing, Ramakrishna proves himself a Yogi with a vision of Universal Brotherhood. And speaking of Ramakrishna we must remember Vivekananda, his pupil and disciple. These two, in and through their relation, give us another great Theosophical truth—the life of the chela under the guidance of the guru. We have brought with us a quotation from Vivekananda because it appeals to us by its humility and tenderness. You all know what a powerful individual Vivekananda was, and how

he could roar like a lion, but just listen to his words, uttered on his arrival at his own city of Calcutta, after his return triumphant from his mission in the West. They exemplify the true attitude of a pupil to his teacher:—

If there has been anything achieved by me, by thoughts or words or deeds; if from my lips has ever fallen one word that has helped any one in the world, I lay no claim to it, it was his. But if there have been curses falling from my lips, if there has been hatred coming out of me, it was all mine, and not his. All that has been weak has been mine and all that has been life-giving, strengthening, pure and holy, has been his inspiration, his words, he himself.

There is Vivekananda speaking as the chela, revealing not the strong virility of the mind, but the tenderness of the heart which is more powerful than virility. And these words all of us ought to remember, for we are apt in our local enthusiasms to give vent to hatred and to ridicule of others.

But now we must close. We began by stating that Theosophy was the fountainhead of all religions and philosophies. Let us end by showing how Theosophy speaks in the language of different religions. Eternal truth, the Wisdom-Religion, ever strikes the key-note of the immortality of the Spirit, but the same principle is given out clothed in different garments, expressed in different language. In the story of Guru Nanak at the time of his receiving the sacred thread the central Theosophical view comes out very forcefully. We had brought the story with us hoping we might read it together, and thus serve the purpose of our Parliament of Religions—we would not have neglected Sikhism altogether. I was not present at yesterday's session and am therefore not sure if Sikhism was represented or not, but I do know no mention of it was in the printed programme. I should have liked, therefore, to read this story to you all, but time is short, I fear I have already exceeded the period which was assigned to me, and so we cannot delay. Let us merely state that the story evinces a truly Theosophical attitude; Guru Nanak remained obedient to his mother, yet fearlessly declared his own conviction and explained that the outward symbol was nothing without the inner reality.

Understanding what Guru Nanak taught, that the Way to Spirit is within ourselves, we shall also be able to appreciate the saying of Islam—“There are as many ways to God as there are breaths of the children of men.” The Prophet did not say that he was the only door to salvation, no, he stated that there are as many ways as there are men. And what is the nature of that Inner Traveller, the drawer of spiritual breath? John answered this when he said “It is the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” And it was that same Light which was proclaimed

by the Buddha, the Enlightened One—the Light of Nirvana. Did he not say, as we heard to-day, “Be ye lamps unto yourselves, oh! ye Bhikkhus.” And he said it not only to his royal cousin and disciple Ananda, but also to Upali, the barber. Have you read the charming poem which Vivekananda wrote on Upali, the barber? Upali became an Arhat. How? By following the Path of Purity which the long line of Zarathushtras taught in old Iran. In the *Gathas* we read that “the *Vohu-Mano*, the Superior Mind in man, acts in him only who makes *Druj*, the evil, bondmaiden to *Ashoi*, purity.” And in whom is there no aspiration to be pure in mind, in morals, in body? Who is there among us who does not aspire to become better, more useful, nobler than he is? And why this common aspiration in all human hearts? Because

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

“I am the Ego seated in the hearts of all beings.”

Note please—not only in male Brahmanas, but also in women and chandalas, in all without any exception. Krishna is seated in the heart of every one. He has hands and feet in every direction; He says that your feet, your hands, and mine, are His feet and His hands. What glorious days are ours with the conviction that we are all immortal and divine.

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम् ॥

“I myself never was not, nor thou, nor all the princes of the earth; nor shall we ever hereafter cease to be.”

To realize that divine immortality, to shine forth the Light of the One Spirit—that is Theosophy, that is *Brahma-Vidya*, *Atma-Vidya*, *Bodhi-Dharma*, Wisdom-Religion. As indicated in the Vedic motto chosen by our Parliament, “Truth is one, Sages have called it by various names.” And those Sages are not only of the past, but also of the present. The Great Theosophists are the Living Embodiments of Eternal and Universal Truth, the constant source of inspiration and energization of those who have consecrated themselves to the spiritual service of the whole of humanity. They Themselves have called Themselves the Servants of mankind. They stand on the glorious summits of Wisdom and Compassion, Custodians of eternal Truth, Guides and Friends of all men. They are our Teachers, the Gurus of the whole of humanity. We cannot close therefore without uttering a shloka in uttermost reverence to express in a measure what we owe to Them:

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव ।

त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणं त्वमेव त्वमेव सर्वं मम देवदेव ॥

INFLUENZA

Another straw which shows the set of the wind towards the prophesied vindication of H.P.B.'s teachings in this century is a report in the *British Medical Journal* of a paper recently read by the distinguished physician, Sir William Hamer. He suggested that "ions" and "electrical influences" from the atmosphere might be "the most important actors in the influenza drama, and perhaps the much-sought-for invisible viruses themselves." He argued that during the last fifty years "the overpowering fascination of the germ theory" had hindered a closer examination of the possible effects of atmospheric electricity, with its varying degrees of "ions" and intensity, on the human constitution.

An editorial in *The Manchester Guardian* (7th March 1936), commenting on this report, mentions that the Italian word "influenza" meant to begin with simply "influence"—and that influence was early held to be the occult and often maleficent force which rained in upon men and their affairs from the stars and the outer heavens.

H.P.B. printed in *Lucifer* for February, 1890 (Vol. V, pp. 447-450), an article entitled "The Last Song of the Swan," in which she put the definite question whether it did not seem that the causes of influenza were rather cosmical than bacterial and that they ought to be searched for in abnormal changes in the atmosphere. We reprint below the pertinent portions of that article:—

Apropos of Influenza—miscalled the "Russian," but which seems to be rather the scape-goat, while it lasts, for the sins of omission and commission of the medical faculty and its fashionable physicians—what is it? Medical authorities have now and then ventured a few words sounding very learned, but telling us very little about its true nature. They seem to have picked up now and then a clue of pathological thread pointing rather vaguely, if at all, to its being due to bacteriological causes; but they are as far off a solution of the mystery as ever. The practical lessons resulting from so many and varied cases have been many, but the deductions therefrom do not seem to have been numerous or satisfactory.

What is in reality that unknown monster, which seems to travel with the rapidity of some sensational news started with the object of dishonouring a fellow creature; which is almost ubiquitous; and which shows such strange discrimination in the selection of its victims? Why does it attack the rich and the powerful far more in proportion than it does the poor and the insignificant? Is it indeed

only "an agile microbe" as Dr. Symes Thomson would make us think? And is it quite true that the *influential* Bacillus (no pun meant) has just been apprehended at Vienna by Drs. Jolles and Weichselbaum—or is it but a snare and a delusion like so many other things? Who knoweth? Still the face of our unwelcome guest—the so-called "Russian Influenza" is veiled to this day, though its body *is* heavy to many, especially to the old and the weak, and almost invariably fatal to invalids. A great medical authority on epidemics, Dr. Zedekauer, has just asserted that that disease has ever been the precursor of cholera—at St. Petersburg, at any rate. This is, to say the least, a very strange statement. That which is now called "influenza," was known before as the *grippe*, and the latter was known in Europe as an epidemic centuries before the cholera made its first appearance in so-called civilized lands. The biography and history of Influenza, *alias* "grippe," may prove interesting to some readers. This is what we gather from authoritative sources.

The earliest visit of it, as recorded by medical science, was to Malta in 1510. In 1577 the young influenza grew into a terrible epidemic, which travelled from Asia to Europe to disappear in America. In 1580 a new epidemic of *grippe* visited Europe, Asia and America, killing *the old people, the weak and the invalids*. At Madrid the mortality was enormous, and in Rome alone 9,000 persons died of it. In 1590 the influenza appeared in Germany; thence passed, in 1593, into France and Italy. In 1658-1663 it visited Italy only; in 1669, Holland; in 1675, Germany and England; and in 1691, Germany and Hungary. In 1729 all Europe suffered most terribly from the "innocent" visitor. In London alone 908 men died from it the first week; upwards of 60,000 persons suffering from it, and 30 per cent. dying from catarrh or influenza at Vienna. In 1732 and 1733, a new epidemic of the *grippe* appeared in Europe, Asia and America. It was almost as universal in the years 1737 and 1743, when London lost by death from it, during one week, over 1,000 men. In 1762, it raged in the British army in Germany. In 1775 an almost countless number of cattle and domestic animals were killed by it. In 1782, 40,000 persons were taken ill *on one day*, at St. Petersburg. In 1830, the influenza made a successful journey round the world—that only time—as *the first pioneer* of cholera. It returned again from 1833 to 1837. In the year 1847, it killed more men in London than the cholera itself had done. It assumed an epidemic character once more in France, in 1858.

We learn from the St Petersburg *Novoyé Vremya* that Dr. Hirsh shows from 1510 to 1850

over 300 great epidemics of *grippe* or *influenza*, both general and local, severe and weak. According to the above-given data, therefore, the influenza having been this year very weak at St. Petersburg, can hardly be called "Russian." That which is known of its characteristics shows it, on the contrary, as of a most impartially cosmopolitan nature. The extraordinary rapidity with which it acts, secured for it in Vienna the name of *Blitz catarrhe*. It has nothing in common with the ordinary *grippe*, so easily caught in cold and damp weather; and it seems to produce no special disease that could be localized, but only to act most fatally on the nervous system and especially on the lungs. Most of the deaths from influenza occur in consequence of lung-paralysis.

All this is very significant. A disease which is epidemic, yet not contagious; which acts everywhere, in clean as in unclean places, in sanitary as well as in unsanitary localities, hence needing very evidently no centres of contagion to start from; an epidemic which spreads at once like an air-current, embracing whole countries and parts of the world; striking at the same time the mariner, in the midst of the ocean, and the royal scion in his palace; the starving wretch of the world's Whitechapels, sunk in and soaked through with filth, and the aristocrat in his high mountain *sanitarium*, like Davos in Engadin,* where no lack of sanitary arrangements can be taken to task for it—such a disease can bear no comparison with epidemics of the ordinary, common type, *e.g.*, such as the cholera. Nor can it be regarded as caused by parasites or microscopical microbes of one or the other kind. To prove the fallacy of this idea in her case, the dear old influenza attacked most savagely Pasteur, the "microbe-killer," himself, and his host of assistants. Does it not seem, therefore, as if the causes that produced influenza were rather cosmical than bacterial; and that they ought to be searched for rather in those abnormal changes in our atmosphere that have well nigh thrown into confusion and shuffled seasons all over the globe for the last few years—than in anything else?

It is not asserted for the first time now that all such mysterious epidemics as the present influenza are due to an abnormal exuberance of ozone in the air. Several physicians and chemists of note have so far agreed with the occultists, as to admit that the tasteless, colourless and inodorous gas known as oxygen—"the life supporter" of all that lives and breathes—does get at times into family difficulties with its colleagues and brothers, when it

tries to get over their heads in volume and weight and becomes heavier than is its wont. In short—oxygen becomes ozone. That would account probably for the preliminary symptoms of influenza. Descending, and spreading on earth with an extraordinary rapidity, oxygen would, of course, produce a still greater combustion: hence the terrible heat in the patient's body and the paralysis of rather weak lungs. What says Science with respect to ozone: "It is the exuberance of the latter under the powerful stimulus of electricity in the air, that produces in nervous people that unaccountable feeling of fear and depression which they so often experience before a storm." Again: "the quantity of ozone in the atmosphere varies with the meteorological condition *under laws so far unknown to science.*" A certain amount of ozone is necessary, they wisely say, for breathing purposes, and the circulation of the blood. On the other hand "too much of ozone irritates the respiratory organs, and an excess of more than 1% of it in the air kills him who breathes it." This is proceeding on rather occult lines. "The real ozone is the Elixir of Life," says *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I. p. 144, 2nd foot-note. Let the reader compare the above with what he will find stated in the same work about oxygen viewed from the hermetic and occult standpoint (*Vide pp. 113 and 114, Vol. II.*) and he may comprehend the better what some Theosophists think of the present influenza.

It thus follows that the mystically inclined correspondent who wrote in *Novoyé Vremya* (No. 4931, Nov. 19th, old style, 1889) giving sound advice on the subject of the influenza, then just appeared—knew what he was talking about. Summarizing the idea, he stated as follows:—

.... It becomes thus evident that the real causes of this simultaneous spread of the epidemic all over the Empire under the most varied meteorological conditions and climatic changes—are to be sought elsewhere than in the unsatisfactory hygienical and sanitary conditions The search for the causes which generated the disease and caused it to spread is not incumbent upon the physicians alone, but *would be the right duty of meteorologists, astronomers, physicists, and naturalists in general*, separated officially and substantially from medical men.

This raised a professional storm. The modest suggestion was tabooed and derided; and once more an Asiatic country—China, this time—was sacrificed as a scapegoat to the sin of FOHAT and his too active progeny. When royalty and the rulers of this sublunary sphere have been sufficiently decimated by influenza and other kindred and unknown evils, perhaps the turn of the Didymi of Science may come. This will be only a just punishment for their despising the "occult" sciences, and sacrificing truth to personal prejudices.

* "Colonel the Hon. George Napier will be prevented from attending the funeral of his father, Lord Napier of Magdala, by a severe attack of influenza at Davos, Switzerland."—*The Morning Post* of January 21, 1890.

THE U. L. T. DECLARATION

The policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy, without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion.

The work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues. That work and that end is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF; a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.

It holds that the unassailable *Basis for Union* among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is "*similarity of aim, purpose and teaching,*" and therefore has neither Constitution, By-laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that *basis*. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity.

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and it welcomes to its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.

"The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all."

Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its "Declaration," I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate; it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part other than that which I, myself, determine.

The foregoing is the form signed by Associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists.

Inquiries are invited from all persons to whom this Movement may appeal. Cards for signature will be sent upon request, and every possible assistance given to Associates in their studies and in efforts to form local lodges. There are no dues of any kind, and no formalities to be complied with.

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