

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

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THEOSOPHY AND ASCETICISM

[The following stenographic report of a talk by Robert Crosbie was first published in *Theosophy* (Los Angeles) for September 1919.]

WHAT is the greatest delusion and what causes it? Always one thing: *relative* truth; and its cause is ignorance. There never was a religion, there never was a philosophy, but what embodied relative truth. It is this relative truth which confuses mankind. Men do not see that Truth is *one*; that truth agrees only with truth; that error disagrees with truth and disagrees with error.

Relative truth is the cause of man's becoming involved in a partial view of the universe and of himself. Each man tries to *segregate* truth, by looking only in some given direction. He thinks all is right on this side; all wrong on that. Thus each man makes his own limitations. We say, thus far shall we go, and no farther. As a man thinks, he becomes. If he thinks he is a poor miserable sinner, he certainly will not step beyond the limitation thus self-imposed, until he changes his fundamental ideas. We are always acting upon and affecting each other, in thought and action. So we get a consensus of ideas, and that consensus forms the general impression and the general limitation, of the individual, of a class of men, of mankind generally. This is the barrier that each has to overcome for himself if we are ever to get beyond personal or racial limitations.

Soul means experience. Our "soul" is all the experience we have gained that has brought us up to our present status. So what governs the man, and what governs mankind generally, is the idea and ideas held as to what life is and what the nature of man is. These ideas have differed

at different times and among different peoples. We at the present time have ours. Our personal life, our social life, our civilization, have all arisen from the ideas we hold in regard to life. The real question should be with each one of us, Are those ideas true? Do they cover the whole ground? Are they susceptible of improvement? Have the results obtained through them been all that we could wish? What are our ideas of God, of Nature, of Man?

The religion we have nominally adopted has proved a failure. It has not changed human nature in any degree. The good by nature are good under this or any other religion. The bad by nature are bad, whether under our own or any other religion.

There is something wrong with our *basis* of thought and action, for we must remember that it is from our basis and habits of thought that our actions flow; if we have a true basis of thought, then we will certainly have right actions and practices.

Theosophy is not a religion, not a formula or dogma invented by man, but is, as a matter of fact, a statement of the Laws which govern the intellectual, the psychical, astral and physical constituents of man and of nature. It does not depend upon revelation or authority, but upon its inherent truth and the fact that its truth can be verified by every man for himself. The whole cry of Theosophy is to arouse man to an understanding of his own illimitable nature, so that he may know the action that is necessary to proceed along the truest and highest lines.

What has all this to do with Asceticism? Everything. Buddha was an Ascetic. Jesus was an Ascetic. So were the Founders of every great religion or philosophy. We do not hear from them insistence on this kind of food, or that kind of food; this kind of practice or that. From one and all of them we have these essential statements: Love one another; forgive your enemies; do good to them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Or again, William Q. Judge or H. P. Blavatsky—Do you think that they were ascetics, and if so, what kind?

They were ascetics in the truest sense. They never made any pretensions in their actions. They never said, Copy me. They always said, Do not follow me or my path; follow the path I show, the Masters who are behind.

They were ascetics and they had all the power which comes from true asceticism; not through refraining from or denying anything or anybody, but by the acceptance of all, the use of all. For everything in great nature

of whatever kind, has been produced by the beings in the world, and is a natural evolution—everything. Where we have erred is in the improper use, the abuse of the very powers which we all possess. The most sacred of all our powers have been sacrificed on the altar of selfishness.

The true ascetic knows that. He knows that men have dugged a pit for themselves by the very power of the Spirit which they are, and that no one above us, however high, can remove men from the ditch they have digged but themselves.

Everyone has some idea as to what asceticism means. We know that monks and nuns have segregated themselves, withdrawn from the world and all participation in its affairs—and for centuries that was considered to be asceticism, and still is by many people.

It has been thought that asceticism consists in renouncing very many of the things that are used in the world. Some imagine that the eating of unaccustomed food is going to produce a spiritual effect; that through this relinquishment they are going to attain some spiritual advantage. The same is true with regard to many other practices.

Might we not well consider the motive of such practices? If one brought up in a certain way, accustomed to certain things, renounces them with the idea that thereby he is going to benefit by that relinquishment, there must be behind that intention and practice a selfish, personal desire. That selfish, personal desire could not by any possibility bring one to a state of enlightenment, regardless of what the practice might consist in.

If it be food we are thinking of, if we imagine that we will benefit spiritually by eating this and by not eating that, then food is all that we are considering. That is not high thinking, and the mere fact of thinking of one kind of food in preference to another will not lead to any development whatever. There are those who consider that a vegetarian diet, or a diet of nuts, cereals, or some other thing, rather than flesh, would be beneficial to them. Always to *them*. They forget that there are many peoples, the Hindus for instance, who do not eat flesh at all, and yet it cannot be said that the mass of Hindus are in any way spiritual in their development, or any great factors in the advancement of true civilization. We might consider also that animals, many of them, are very strict vegetarians; yet they are not especially spiritual.

It has many times been stated that true asceticism does not consist in the eating or non-eating of any kind of food whatever; nor in any practice

whatever; nor in any posture whatever; but consists solely of *an attitude of mind*. Jesus said, To the pure all things are pure; and that was an occult statement, and has been many times repeated. So if we are come to consider asceticism we must look along other lines than those which have been so, unfortunately, generally accepted by people looking for knowledge.

The object of existence is to gain knowledge. The fact of existence as we find it, and our ideas as to what constitutes truth, have been brought about under law, by ourselves. Each one finds himself in that place, mentally as well as physically, which he has prepared for himself as a result of what he has thought and done in the past, in this and other lives. Our present and our future are also under law. Our present is mitigated, and the future may be entirely changed and corrected, by a right attitude toward all things, asceticism included, and then by the right and full performance of duty—true asceticism—in the light of the perception of universal Truth.

A true ascetic is not one who cares whether he eats or doesn't eat, or what he eats; the manner of his incoming and outgoing concerns him but little; that he may be able in every action consonant with human life to do the right thing at the right time and in the right way is what concerns him all the time. He would look to the spirit of the action, and acting as spirit whatever he did in any direction would be for the great end in view, the benefit of all beings of every grade.

In the ancient teachings of the Upanishads a statement is made which we might consider. It is this, that "the work of the ascetic is neither pure nor dark, but is *peculiar to itself*, while that of other men is of three kinds." The three kinds of works alluded to in other men than the ascetic are, first, purity in action and motive; second, dark, such as those of the infernal beings; and third, mixed, that of the general run of men, which are a mixture of pure and dark.

Jesus when he walked the earth was not particular as to what he should do, what he should eat, what he should drink, nor with whom he would associate. We might say with truth that he was an Ascetic, yet he never withheld himself from other men, never desired to do so. His aim was to benefit mankind, and he touched Humanity—his fellowmen—in every possible direction, wherever it was permitted. The true Ascetic must of necessity take that course. He is one who tries to get all the knowledge and all the power that he possibly can, in order that he may lay these at

the feet of of his fellow-men and do them service. There is nothing forbidden to him in the whole universe. With Saint Paul he will consider that now all things are lawful to him, but all things may not be expedient. He judges of the necessity of any action from the need of the case in hand, and finds that his hand is not stayed in any direction by any rules whatever, or any ideas that may prevail among the men of his time. Every great religious Teacher has come to break the moulds of men's minds from the shackles of relative truth and false ideas as to man, nature and God.

We may dismiss from our minds all ideas of semi-starvation, all ideas of becoming something ourselves. That is something we ought to get deep in our hearts, deep into our natures—a perception of the selfishness of becoming something ourselves, of gaining anything for ourselves. What we ought to strive to do is to do the best we can in every direction for the sake of all others. In so doing we *are* what that doing procures; we strive not to become; we strive to do. There is nothing selfish, nothing personal, in that attitude and action. There is always the endeavour to use our very best knowledge and our very highest powers for the benefit of every other whom we may be able to touch.

The world to each of us is what we make it. What we get out of the world is what we put into it. We cannot get anything else. The world stands to us according to the quality of our attitude towards it, according to the ideas we hold in regard to it. Do we not know that our minds are simply bundles of ideas; many of them false, many of them relative, erroneous—perhaps most of them? We cherish them, look through them, act in accordance with them. Do we not see how needful it is that these brain-minds of ours should have a true conception of man's nature, so that by thinking and acting in accord with true conceptions that brain will gradually respond to the real nature of the man himself—Man the Spiritual Being? Then he will not need to know; he will not need anyone to tell him; he will not care what religions and practices have been, are now, or ever will be; for he will know in himself, of himself, and for himself his own nature and the nature of every other being.

ASHES fly back in the face of him who throws them.

—*Yoruba Proverb* (Nigeria)

SELF-EDUCATION AND SELF-GROWTH

IT is a common idea, almost universally held, that this world is a school in which experience is the teacher. There may be, and there is, considerable difference of opinion as to the purpose and aim of that learning, but there is hardly any dispute as to the fact that all of us are learning through experience.

The joy and the zest of life suffer many rude shocks because we often, nay, most of the time, forget that we are at school, are in the midst of the struggles of life for the purpose of learning. But even in the case of those who do hold to the stern fact that all men and women are learners and probationers in the hard school of experience, there is much confusion. Not knowing their real nature as pupils, nor the aim and the programme of the school, people go through life unintelligently, live without learning, and experience joy and sorrow not knowing why and how they are here.

There are two preliminary ideas that we should examine. First, that life is not a meaningless farce; the aim and purpose of existence, the method and mode of its school, and the why and the how of it all can be known and should be known. Secondly, in spite of all the denials of arrogance, all the doubts resulting from false seeking, the great fact must be asserted that in the ancient, very ancient, Science of Theosophy the answers to all problems are available. We may not have found all the answers, but we know that they *can* be found. These answers are consistent and explain the whole and not only a part of life.

The pivotal teaching of Theosophy, round which all other teachings revolve, is that man is the maker of his own destiny. This ancient Science of Theosophy rules out fatalism, chance and accident. It also rules out vicarious atonement and forgiveness of sins. It teaches that each one must and does atone for his or her own sins, and therefore real forgiveness of sins consists in so learning from one's better nature that no sin is committed. The difference between a sin and a mistake is that we sin knowingly, while a mistake is committed unconsciously. People generally call certain heinous acts sins, and ordinary wrongs are classified as mistakes. The true way of looking at it is this: it is not what we do but how we do it that differentiates between a sin and a mistake. One may commit the most heinous offence not knowing it is wrong; his ignorance makes his act a mistake. Another commits a relatively minor offence knowing

that it is wrong; his knowledge of the fact makes it a sin. In all experiences of mistakes there is suffering, but from it can result elevation. In all experiences of sins too there is suffering, but it brings greater degradation.

All through life each of us makes his or her own destiny and can weave a splendid, harmonious, vital and radiant pattern by avoiding sins and by learning through mistakes.

So we evolve through experiences which come to us in the daily routine of life. Our knowledge and ignorance are the main cause of our growth and progress. Knowledge gives power; to avoid sins we must use our knowledge to do that which is the reverse of sin. Righteousness is the great lever of life; we must use it to raise ourselves. Adepts and Rishis use this lever to raise themselves to heavenly heights. Evildoers sink further and further into the morass of sin. Evolution through mistakes is possible, but growth through sin is impossible. Let us not be misled by those who say that if we get satiated with our bad desires we will overcome them. We will never get over a weakness by indulging in it. Indulgence in that which we know to be a mistake or a weakness is tantamount to committing a sin. The only wise thing we can do is to give it up, to starve it, to destroy it past resurrection.

We must learn a little more about *punya* and *papa*, righteousness and sin. *Punya* or righteousness is the result of actions which are deliberately performed because we know and willingly co-operate with the laws of Nature; *papa* or sin is the result of actions which are also deliberately performed, knowing full well that they are contrary to Order, to Harmony, to Truth, to Purity. The Perfected Adept of the Good Law always acts righteously; the adept in evil always does wrong living by sin.

But what about us who are neither all good nor all evil? We must study ourselves, and knowing our complex nature we will find the way of educating ourselves and thus growing and evolving. All knowledge leads to the knowledge of the Self or the Soul. That is why in all religions self-examination is advocated. Self-examination reveals to us the existence in us of contrary and seemingly opposing voices.

Within ourselves several powers, forces, *shaktis* are working; in occultism they are called the "assemblage of voices." There is (1) the voice of flesh; (2) the voice of mind; (3) the voice of conscience; (4) the voice of discrimination; and (5) the still, small voice of God within the human heart. In the trans-Himalayan School from which our teacher H.P.

Blavatsky graduated, it is said that where these five voices work together, there Parameshwara, the Supreme Lord, is present. Let us study the five voices, which each one of us possesses. In educating them we learn thoroughly the lessons of existence. Self-education and self-growth consist in training these five voices, in enabling them to express themselves in unison and harmony.

In the final analysis, all these voices belong to Atma, the Self. In the process of evolution they seem to act independently, causing much clash and deep suffering, but philosophical analysis shows them to be but powers of the Self, the Supreme Soul in man. Just as our five senses belong to the one body, so also these five voices belong to the Highest Soul, though they seem to be acting independently. The Supreme Soul within every human heart is the father of these five voices, and the mother is Will-Power, the Power of Spirit in action. Will is the source of all powers, the Mother-Shakti. Each of us as Divine Soul has a spouse, that power without which neither our divinity nor our soulfulness can manifest—the power of the Will. When Will ceases to function, the Self is asleep in the long night of *pralaya*; when the dawn of manifestation comes, the Will awakens and the Soul begins its function, wherever it left off.

The great difficulty, the root trouble, lies in our overlooking the fact that our five voices can be moved by the Soul through its primal power of Will. The many conflicting schools of psychology and philosophy owe their existence to this confusion. Let us get our basics right, lay our foundations firmly, and we will be able to erect a strong and unassailable edifice.

When any of these five voices or any combination of them functions independently of the Soul, usurping the nourishment that the "Mother-Will" supplies, we err, we make mistakes. When we persist in our mistakes, great suffering is caused to us and it shows us how we made those mistakes. If we still persist, we commit sins, and sin is the gate to dark hell which ever grows darker, and in which the person forgoes the knowledge of being human and ceases to know himself as the "I"; he is then like unto an animal, a beast born in human shape, a soulless man!

Let us cultivate the right relationship between the five voices by the right method taught by the great Teachers of *Brahma-Vidya* or *Gupta-Vidya*, the Esoteric Wisdom-Religion.

(1) *The Voice of Flesh*: This is the voice of our five senses under the

dominance of passion or *Kama*. In the Theosophical philosophy, the body *per se* is not looked upon as the source of trouble; it is the temple of the Soul, as St. Paul taught, following the ancients. The Hatha Yogis torture the body in the hope of gaining salvation; they are on the wrong path. Most people torture it indirectly, by permitting it to do what it pleases or by letting it come under the dominance of passions instead of under the influence of the Soul. Our bodily diseases, deformities, weaknesses, all result from non-control of the actions of the body when *Kama* or passion dominates. The voice of flesh is not the voice of the five senses alone; it is the voice of passions, the voice of the devil in us, who leads the senses on to wrongdoing. That which gives rise to the cravings and appetites of the flesh is the principle of desires and passions, and we have to purify this voice of flesh by firm control, and by making the body do actions of the proper kind. Wrong action, as also abstaining from action, are the two evils we have to be wary of. Let us not be idle, for it will lead us to mischief. Let us give our body labour, deeds to do. Karma compels us to act, but let us choose to do righteous deeds and stifle the voice of desire which makes us say, "I want." *Ahankara* which dwells on "I," "I," "I," should be eliminated. One want multiplies into many wants; so let us be on the lookout. The voice of flesh, then, is entombed in the phrase "I want."

(2) *The Voice of Mind*: All the learning imbibed by us—through education at school and in the home, at work and at play—evolves the voice of convention, the voice of our fellows. People say arbitrarily, "This is right, that is wrong." National, racial and communal knowledge which divides person from person expresses itself in us as the voice of our mind. "My mother taught me thus; I learnt that at school; the law of my country forbids this; my religion bids me do that." That voice has its value. The voice of flesh can be checked by the voice of mind and this will give us some guidance and protection. We can use it to check wrongdoing, but we cannot take it to be the source of knowledge of right action. We will not grow in righteousness by listening to the voice of our fellowmen, which in each one of us acts as the voice of our mind. It is the combined voice of our heredity, our education, our surroundings. Just as the voice of flesh can be checked by the voice of mind, so also we have the duty to check that voice of mind by our voice of conscience—a higher aspect of the voice of mind.

(3) *The Voice of Conscience*: It is the voice of the accumulated

experiences of all our past lives. While the voice of mind is the voice of our present life-experiences, the voice of conscience is that of *all* our previous lives. The latter tells us what *not* to do--*not* to commit sins. Let us listen to that voice and not try to evade it. It is the great corrective to the voice of mind. But it will not be able to protect us from mistakes by telling us what we *should* do. Having gone through experiences in past lives, it can tell us, "This is wrong, this is pain-producing--avoid it." But we have not gone through *all* experiences; so something more than the voice of conscience is needed.

(4) *The Voice of Discrimination, of Viveka, of Buddhi*: Wisdom comes through the practice of discrimination, *Viveka*--that faculty which is unfolded through study and meditation. It is a faculty which grows as we study such books as *The Secret Doctrine* and the *Gita*. When we act, let us find out the principles of such action. Let us not depend solely on our own unaided and unillumined experience. All that we feel and think, all that we say and do, has been experienced before by others, by Those Who Know, and we have Their Teachings in the immemorial philosophy of Theosophy. In any particular difficult situation, in the solution of our personal problems, let us seek the aid of Those who have gone before, whose record is like a soul pharmacopoeia; each mental and moral "disease" is described and its remedy is given. No sane person should act without due consultation with the divine pharmacopoeia, face to face with his own "disease." This is the value of Theosophy. Its study arouses in us the voice of discrimination. Just as ignorance of state laws does not save us from the consequences of wrongdoing on the physical plane, so also ignorance of Nature's laws does not save us from the consequences, for we are supposed to know. Theosophy is *not* unrelated to practical life, to everyday living, to our intimate problems. The voice of mind is the voice of ordinary humanity; the voice of discrimination is the voice of perfected human beings. But, just as to put to the test the voice of mind we have to use the voice of conscience, so also to understand and use rightly the voice of discrimination we need the still, small voice of God, the Atman, the Self within.

(5) *The Voice of God Within*: It is the highest voice, the voice of Divinity. Discrimination may tell us what is right, what should be done; but the power to act accordingly, the faculty of execution, comes from the Soul within, the Self, the Atman. If the voice of kama-passion cries out, "I want, I want," the still, small voice of God, of the Inner Divinity,

whispers, "I give, I give," for it is of the nature of Compassion Absolute. When the voice of discrimination illumines the voice of conscience, the still, small voice of God gives the power to conscience to act. How many times knowing a thing to be wrong we yet do it! How many times knowing a thing to be right we do not do it! Sins of omission and commission occur because the voice of the Soul does not speak to us, and it will not speak until right knowledge is acquired by the development of the voice of discrimination. Let us give ourselves at least a few minutes every day to shut our senses, to down our feelings, to steady our minds, and turn within to contemplate and commune with the Divine Soul. Brooding over the great truths taught in the Wisdom-Religion of Theosophy, we will glimpse the glory within our heart, we will touch the power within our Self.

Through this system of self-education, growth of the soul takes place. We may need many lives to accomplish that task, but not so many as are required if we do not undertake this system of training. "Even a little of this practice delivereth a man from great risk," says the *Gita*. The Knowledge is there, and so are there the Knowers of the Knowledge, Knowers of the essence of all things--*Tattva-jnanis*. What an inspiration there is in the fact that Teachers, perfect and infallible, exist! It is in the Heart that They can be found. When the Heart energizes the body, all deeds are righteous, harmonious, compassionate. And the Heart begins to function when the mind is ready to catch its light. The Light of the Self shines in the Heart; from there its rays illumine the head, and from the brain the *nadis* or nerves secure real nourishment. So let us go to the Heart by the way of the mind--there is no other way--and draw out from the Heart the radiance, the light, the illumination, which enables the mind to understand, the nerves to feel, and the body to act correctly. Let the mind go to the Heart in search of the *Tattva-jnanis*, the Knowers of all things; in the Heart let the mind learn to assimilate the light of the Perfect Ones, and return to serve Humanity, to free all slaves to sense-life, passion-life, mind-life, and to establish true freedom of the soul.

ETHICS is introducing a bit of order in a chaotic world.

—ALBERT CAMUS

THE NUMBER SEVEN

I

[Collated from *The Secret Doctrine*]

WE have now to approach a mystery--the Hebdomad in nature...and attempt to explain the perpetual recurrence of this truly mystic number in every scripture known to the Orientalists. As every religion, from the oldest to the latest, claims its presence, and explains it on its own grounds agreeably with its own special dogmas, this is no easy task....The numbers (3, 4, 7) are the sacred numbers of *Light, Life, and Union*--especially in this present manvantara, our Life-cycle; of which number seven is the special representative, or the *Factor* number. (II, 589-90)

Belief in "Creators," or the personified Powers of Nature, is in truth no polytheism, but a philosophical necessity. Like all the other planets of our system, the Earth has seven Logoi--the emanating rays of the one "Father-Ray"--the PROTOGONOS, or the manifested "Logos"--he who sacrifices his Esse (or flesh, the Universe) that the world may live and every creature therein have conscious being.

Numbers 3 and 4 are respectively male and female, Spirit and Matter, and their union is the emblem of life eternal in spirit on its ascending arc, and in matter as the ever resurrecting element--by procreation and reproduction. The spiritual male line is vertical; the differentiated matter-line is horizontal; the two forming the cross. The former (the 3), is invisible; the latter (the 4), is on the plane of objective perception. This is why all the matter of the Universe, when analyzed by science to its ultimates, can be reduced to four elements only--carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and hydrogen: and why the three primaries, the noumenoi of the four, or graduated Spirit or Force, have remained a *terra incognita* and mere speculations, names, to exact Science. Her servants must believe in and study first the primary causes, before they can hope to fathom the nature and acquaint themselves with the potentialities of the effects. Thus, while the men of Western learning had, and still have, the four, or matter to toy with, the Eastern Occultists and their disciples, the great alchemists the world over, have the whole septenate to study from. As those Alchemists have it: "When the Three and the Four kiss each other, the Quaternary joins its middle nature with that of the Triangle," (or Triad, *i.e.*, the face of one of its plane surfaces becoming the middle face of the other), "and becomes

a cube; then only does it (the cube unfolded) become the vehicle and the number of LIFE, the Father-Mother SEVEN." (II, 592-93)

Thus Number Seven, as a compound of 3 and 4, *is* the factor element in every ancient religion, because *it is the factor element in nature*. Its adoption must be justified, and it must be shown to be *the number par excellence*....And here let the student be told at once, that in all such numerical divisions the ONE universal Principle—although referred to as (the) one, because the *Only One*—never enters into the calculations. IT stands, in its character of the Absolute, the Infinite, and the universal abstraction, entirely by ITSELF and independent of every other Power whether noumenal or phenomenal. IT "is neither matter nor spirit; IT is neither Ego nor non-Ego; and IT is neither object nor subject....This grand universe is in reality but a huge aggregation of various states of consciousness..." [*Five Years of Theosophy*, Art. "Personal and Impersonal God"]. Being itself entirely out of human reckoning or calculation, yet this "huge aggregation of various states of consciousness" is a Septenate, in *its* totality entirely composed of Septenary groups; simply because "the capacity of perception *exists in seven different aspects corresponding to the seven conditions of matter*" (*ibid.*), or the seven properties, or states, or conditions of matter. And, therefore, number 1 down to number 7 begins in the esoteric calculations with the first manifested principle, which is number one if we commence from above, and the *seventh* when reckoning from below, or from the lowest Principle. (II, 598-99)

Number *seven*, or the *heptagon*, the Pythagoreans considered to be a *religious and perfect* number. It was called "*Telesphoros*," because *by it all in the Universe and mankind is led to its end, i.e., its culmination*. Being under the rule of seven sacred planets, the doctrine of the Spheres shows, from Lemuria to Pythagoras, the seven powers of terrestrial and sublunary nature, as well as the seven great Forces of the Universe, proceeding and evolving in seven tones, which are the seven notes of the musical scale. The *heptad* (our Septenary) was regarded "*as the number of a virgin, because it is unborn*" (like the Logos or the "Aja" of the Vedantins); "without a father or a mother, *but proceeding directly from the Monad*, which is the origin and crown of all things." (*Pythag. Triangle*, p. 174.) And if the *heptad* is made to proceed from the Monad directly, then it is, as taught in the Secret Doctrine of the oldest schools, the perfect and sacred number of this Maha-Manvantara of ours.

The septenary, or *heptad*, was sacred indeed to several gods and

goddesses; to Mars, with his seven attendants, to Osiris whose body was divided into seven and twice seven parts; to Apollo (the Sun), between his seven planets, and playing the hymn to the seven-rayed on his seven-stringed harp; to Minerva, the fatherless and the motherless, and others.

Cis-Himalayan Occultism with its *sevening*, and because of such sevening, must be regarded as the most ancient, the original of all. (II, 602)

Hippocrates said that number seven "by its occult virtues tended to the accomplishment of all things, to be the dispenser of life and fountain of all its changes." The life of man he divided into seven ages (Shakespeare), for "As the moon changes her phases every seven days, this number influences all sublunary beings," and even the Earth, as we know. With the child, it is the teeth that appear in the seventh month and he sheds them at seven years; at twice seven puberty begins, at three times seven all our mental and vital powers are developed, at four times seven he is in his full strength, at five times seven his passions are most developed, etc., etc. Thus for the Earth. It is now in its middle age, yet very little wiser for it. The *Tetragrammaton*, the four-lettered sacred name of the Deity, can be resolved on Earth only by becoming Septenary through the manifest triangle proceeding from the concealed *Tetraktis*. Therefore, the number seven has to be adopted on this plane. As written in the Kabala, "The greater Holy Assembly" v. 1161: "For assuredly there is no stability in those six, save (what they derive) from *the seventh*. For *all things depend from the SEVENTH*." (II, 312 fn.)

It has been repeatedly stated in this work that every religious and philosophical symbol had seven meanings attached to it, each pertaining to its legitimate plane of thought, *i.e.*, either purely metaphysical or astronomical; psychic or physiological, etc., etc. These seven meanings and their applications are hard enough to learn when taken by themselves; but the interpretation and the right comprehension of them becomes tenfold more puzzling, when, instead of being correlated, or made to flow consecutively out of and to follow each other, each, or any one of these meanings is accepted as the one and sole explanation of the whole symbolical idea. (II, 538)

The use of number seven was never confined to any one nation. This is well testified by the seven vases in the temple of the Sun, near the ruins of Babion in Upper Egypt; the seven fires burning continually for ages before the altars of Mithra; the seven holy fanes of the Arabians; the

seven peninsulas, the seven islands, seven seas, mountains, and rivers of India; and of the *Zohar* (see *Ibn Gebirol*); the Jewish Sephiroth of the *Seven* splendours; the seven Gothic deities, the seven worlds of the Chaldeans and their seven Spirits; the seven constellations mentioned by Hesiod and Homer; and all the interminable sevens which the Orientalists find in every MS. they discover. (II, 603)

The Rig Veda, the oldest of *all the known* ancient records, may be shown to corroborate the occult teachings in almost every respect. Its hymns—the records written by the earliest Initiates of the Fifth (our race) concerning the primordial teaching—speak of the Seven Races (two still to come) allegorising them by the "seven streams" (I, 35, 8); and of the Five Races (*pancha krishtayah*) which have already inhabited this world (*ibid.*) on the five regions "*pancha pradishah*" (IX, 86, 29), as also of the *three continents* that were....The same doctrine is found reflected in the other old religions. (II, 606-7)

The Puranas, along with other sacred texts, teem with allusions to the Septenary Division of Kosmos and human principles. First of all, the mundane Egg which contains Brahma, or the Universe, "was externally invested with *seven* natural elements, at first loosely enumerated as Water, Air, Fire, Ether, and *three secret* elements (Book I); then the "World" is said to be "encompassed on every side" by seven elements, also *within* the egg—as explained, "the universe is encompassed on every side, above and below by the *Andakataha*—the shell of the egg of Brahma."...Around the shell flows water, which is surrounded with fire; fire by air; air by ether; ether by the origin of the elements (Ahamkara); the latter by Universal Mind ("Intellect" in the Texts) (Book II, ch. VII, *Vishnu Purana*). It relates to spheres of being as much as to principles....Furthermore, it is not only in the Hindu Scriptures and philosophy that one finds references to the *Seven Earths*, but in the Persian, Phoenician, Chaldean, and Egyptian Cosmogonies, and even in Rabbinical literature. (II, 616-17)

As much, if not much more, even than in the Jewish Bible, scattered about in the thousands of Sanskrit texts, some still unopened, others yet unknown, as well as in all the Puranas, the numbers seven and forty-nine (7x7) play a most prominent part....From the Seven Creations, seven Rishis, Zones, Continents, Principles, etc., etc. in the Aryan Scriptures, the number has passed through Indian, Egyptian, Chaldaic, Greek, Jewish, Roman, and finally Christian mystic thought, until it landed in

and remained impressed indelibly on every exoteric theology. The seven old books stolen out of Noah's ark by Ham, and given to Cush, his son, and the seven Brazen columns of Ham and Cheiron, are a reflection and a remembrance of the Seven primordial mysteries instituted according to the "Seven secret emanations," the "Seven Sounds," and seven rays—the spiritual and sidereal models of the seven thousand times seven copies of them in later aeons. (II, 611-13)

Allusions to the Septenary constitution of the Earth and Man, to the seven Rounds and Races, abound in the New as in the Old Testaments, and are as visible as the sun in the heavens to him who reads both symbolically. What do the laws in chapter xxiii, v. 15, of *Leviticus* apply to? What is the philosophy of reason for all such *hebdomadic* offerings and symbolical calculations as: "ye shall count...from the morrow after the Sabbath...that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; *seven Sabbaths shall be completed*" (15), "And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish" (18), etc., etc. We shall be contradicted, no doubt, when we say that all these "wave" and "peace" offerings were in commemoration of the *Seven* "Sabbaths" of the mysteries, which Sabbaths are seven pralayas, between seven manvantaras, or what we call *Rounds*—for "Sabbath" is an elastic word, meaning a period of Rest of whatever nature. (II, 747)

In "the Philosophical writings of Solomon Ben Yehudah Ibn Gebriol" it is said on the structure of the Universe, "R. Yehudah began, it is written: 'Elohim said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.' Come, see, at the time that the Holy...created the World, He created 7 heavens above, 7 earths below, 7 seas, 7 days, 7 rivers, 7 weeks, 7 years, 7 times, and 7,000 years that the world has been. The Holy *is the seventh* of all," etc. This, besides showing a strange identity with the cosmogony of the Puranas (e.g., Vishnu Purana 1st Book), corroborates with regard to number seven, our teachings....The Hindus have an endless series of allegories to express this idea. (I, 347-48)

Far earlier than the Jews had devised their golden candlestick of the temple with *three* sockets on one side and *four* on the other, and made of number 7 a feminine number of generation, thus introducing the phallic element into religion, the more spiritually-minded nations had made of the cross (as $3, 4 = 7$), their most sacred divine symbol. In fact, Circle, Cross, and Seven—the latter being made a base of *circular* measurement—are the first primordial symbols. Pythagoras, who brought

his wisdom from India, left to posterity a glimpse into this truth. His school regarded number 7 as a compound of numbers 3 and 4, which they explained in a dual manner. On the plane of the noumenal world, the triangle was, as the first conception of the manifested Deity, its image: "Father-Mother-Son"; and the Quaternary, the perfect number, was the noumenal, ideal root of all numbers and things on the physical plane....Viewed as a compound of 6 and 1, the *senary* and the *unity*, number seven was the invisible centre, the spirit of everything, as there exists no body with six lines constituting its form without a *seventh* being found as the central point in it (see crystals and snowflakes in so-called *inanimate* nature). Moreover, number *seven*, they said, has all the perfection of the UNIT--the number of numbers. For as absolute unity is uncreated, and impartite (hence number-less) and no number can produce it, so is the seven: no digit contained within the decade can beget or produce it. (II, 581-82)

"The number seven," says the Kabala, "is the great number of the Divine Mysteries"; number ten is that of all human knowledge (Pythagorean decade); 1,000 is the number ten to the third power, and therefore the number 7,000 is also symbolical. In the Secret Doctrine the figure and number 4 are the male symbol only on the highest plane of abstraction; on the plane of matter the 3 is the masculine and the 4 the female: the upright and the horizontal in the fourth stage of symbolism, when the symbols became the glyphs of the generative powers on the physical plane. (I, 36)

In the Egyptian Papyri the whole Cosmogony of the Secret Doctrine is found scattered about in isolated sentences, even in the "Book of the Dead." Number seven is quite as much insisted upon and emphasized therein as in the *Book of Dzyan*. "The Great Water (the Deep or Chaos) is said to be *seven* cubits deep"--"cubits" standing here of course for divisions, zones, and principles. Therein, "in the great mother, all the Gods, and the *seven great ones* are born." (See chapter cviii, 4, *Book of the Dead* and *Egyptian Pantheon*.) Both Fohat and Toun are addressed as the "Great ones of the Seven Magic Forces," who "conquer the Serpent *Apap*" or Matter. (I, 674)

Number Seven, the fundamental figure among all other figures in every national religious system, from Cosmogony down to man, must have its *raison d'etre*. It is found among the ancient Americans, as prominently as among the archaic Aryans and Egyptians....Says the

author of the "*Sacred Mysteries among the Mayas and Quiches, 11,500 years ago*":—

"Seven seems to have been the sacred number *par excellence* among all civilized nations of antiquity. Why? Each separate people has given a different explanation, according to the peculiar tenets of their (*exoteric*) religion. That it was the *number of numbers for those initiated into the sacred mysteries, there can be no doubt*. Pythagoras... calls it the 'Vehicle of Life' containing body and soul, since it is formed of a Quaternary, that is Wisdom and intellect, and of a *Trinity* or *action and matter*..."

And who, acquainted with the Puranas, the Book of the Dead, the Zendavesta, the Assyrian tiles, and finally the Bible, and who has observed the constant occurrence of the number seven, in these records of people living from the remotest times unconnected and so far apart, can regard it as a coincidence? (II, 34-35)

(*To be continued*)

A DEEP significance was attached to numbers in hoary antiquity. There was not a people with anything like philosophy, but gave great prominence to numbers in their application to religious observances, the establishment of festival days, symbols, dogmas, and even the geographical distribution of empires. The mysterious numerical system of Pythagoras was nothing novel when it appeared far earlier than 600 years B.C. The occult meaning of figures and their combinations entered into the meditations of the sages of every people; and the day is not far off when, compelled by the eternal cyclic rotation of events, our now sceptical unbelieving West will have to admit that in that regular periodicity of ever-recurring events there is something more than a mere blind chance. Already our Western *savants* begin to notice it. Of late, they have pricked up their ears and begun speculating upon cycles, numbers and all that which, but a few years ago, they had relegated to oblivion in the old closets of memory, never to be unlocked but for the purpose of grinning at the uncouth and idiotic superstitions of our *unscientific* forefathers.

—*The Theosophist*, June 1880

PROGRESS AND HAPPINESS

THE mission of Theosophy is to provide moral, intellectual and spiritual nourishment to all. It affects directly those who come under its influence, and indirectly all others, near or far, who believe in the ideal of Universal Brotherhood and in the possibility of the mental and moral regeneration of the human individual. And is there any person who totally rejects the truth of brotherhood and the possibility of man's mental and moral regeneration?

Students of Theosophy are engaged in the "beneficent work of increasing human happiness by promoting knowledge and by uniting together different people into one bond of an Intellectual Brotherhood." These words by Damodar K. Mavalankar are from a memorandum entitled "The Work of the Branches," printed in the *Supplement to The Theosophist* for March 1884 (reprinted in *THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT*, May 1964). He adds:

Selfishness having sealed the eyes of the critics to the fact that they form but a part of the INTEGRAL WHOLE, they fail to perceive that the good of their fellowmen is their own good. The cloud of self-benefit darkens their mental horizon, through which their sight cannot pierce to have a glance at the future results of their attitude. They see no superior advantage within the narrow range of their vision, and therefore they conclude no such advantage exists.

The words "progress" and "happiness" are bandied about thoughtlessly. Many concepts of progress and of happiness are advanced, and only a few care to examine them dispassionately and intelligently.

Progress? Of what, in what? What about the how of it? And what is happiness?

There are numerous kinds of progress. There is a person's economic progress, measured by the power of his purse and his standard of living. There is the biological progress of his bodily sensitivity through heredity. There is the psychological progress of the subconscious and the unconscious. There is evolutionary progress. Not one single branch of modern knowledge has a satisfying and complete answer about human progress; and confusion reigns supreme if we try to bring together the many definitions of progress offered by modern specialists. And the same applies to happiness. Men of modern knowledge discard the

wisdom of the ancients. Even in India the recognition of ancient culture is more formal than real; words and not ideas, more philology and less philosophy, more speculation and less meditation, are in evidence. Intellectualism prevails and the living of the life according to ancient ideals is neglected.

Theosophy has very definite knowledge to offer about the origin, the unfoldment and the end of the cosmos and of the earth; about the soul and the body of the human individual; about effort and progress and the *summum bonum*. The Theosophical principles of learning--how to progress, how to be happy--and of teaching, which also contributes to our progress and happiness, are not valued, are not recognized, by the world at large. Theosophy has a vital contribution to make on the acquiring of knowledge, on the method of research, on the ideas of originality and the assimilation of the knowledge derived from ancient civilizations. The real significance of the teaching about true progress leading to supreme enlightenment is enshrined in these words : "...if thou would'st be Tathagata, follow upon thy predecessor's steps, remain unselfish till the endless end."

The Enlightened One is he who has attained perfection, the end of progress, and Bliss Supreme, *i.e.*, happiness. It is necessary to remind ourselves that *our* immediate predecessor is not a Buddha or a Jivanmukta. The teachings of Theosophy clearly point to the starry stairs of Teachers--*Guruparampara*. From the vast body of Wisdom each of us masters that which someone brings to our notice. One acquires new knowledge by an extension of old knowledge, and we are indebted to those who draw out that knowledge from within our own heart.

Whatever nugget of wisdom is our own, not only does it enable us to progress but it also brings us the gift of true happiness, because anything that increases our knowledge creates an inner satisfaction born of understanding. Only the fully Enlightened One embodies Supreme Bliss.

It is most necessary, however, to recognize the part played in the gaining of Wisdom by our faith in the principles of Unity in Nature, Universal Causation and the Brotherhood of Man. The student of Theosophy is apt to lose himself in collecting detailed information and acquiring the bulk of theoretical knowledge if he overlooks the universal aspect of men and things and events. Man's progress-happiness depends on his seeing his own small place in the big cosmos; however tiny that

place, it is his; and a single small cog is as necessary to the smooth running of a complicated machine as a large part is. It is the perception of the unity of the whole that engenders in us reverence for Nature and fecundates our heart. And let us remember that we do not learn Wisdom by mind; we have to learn it by Heart.

Therefore at every turn, in individual or collective study, in conversation or in correspondence, in writing for the press or in speaking from a platform, the principles of Unity, Universal Causation and Human Solidarity should energize and inspire us.

Today it may be truly said, in Damodar K. Mavalankar's words, that U.L.T.

forms the centre of light, and he who steps into its sphere from the outer darkness, comes within the radius of vision of the BLESSED ONES. To advance further depends upon his *active* goodness and work. By joining he has got his reward of giving an expression to his sympathy and thus affording moral support—and that reward is that he puts himself in a prominent position whence he can be more easily perceived than those who prefer to remain in the outer darkness.

MENCIUS said, "How can one get a cruel man to listen to reason? He dwells happily in danger, looks upon disaster as profitable and delights in what will lead him to perdition. If the cruel man listened to reason, there would be no annihilated states or ruined families...."

"Only when a man invites insult will others insult him. Only when a family invites destruction will others destroy it. Only when a state invites invasion will others invade it. The Tai Chia says, when Heaven sends down calamities, there is hope of weathering them; when man brings them upon himself, there is no hope of escape. This describes well what I have said."

—MENCIUS

THE PICTURE-GALLERY

WE are familiar with the idea that all that we do, think and feel is recorded on that plane of matter whose characteristic is, so to say, photographic. But we often fail to make use of this idea practically.

If the above is true, then we carry with us the "photographs" of all our actions, of all that we are. This must mean that we show to the world a composite picture that is called our character. This character is impressed, also as a composite picture, on the subtle screen of the world--on men, animals, plants, the earth, the water, etc., for the world is one. At times these pictures are in harmony with each other; at other times there is disharmony.

Where is the real man, the real animal, the real plant, the real earth, water, etc.? These are also photographed on yet another subtler plane of matter, but we are not so aware of it because we have no senses as yet developed by which we can perceive or feel it.

Hence it is that we are "ceaselessly self-deceived."

If we want to know ourselves, not only as spiritual beings, but as decent human beings, we have to look at the photographs we make in the picture-gallery of the world without. That is to say, we must find out how all those we meet react to us.

For instance, others may know from experience that we are unpunctual. We may think we have a good excuse, and may even blame others for our unpunctuality. But let us look at what our friends know of us in this respect. We may upset a friend by a momentary facial expression of which we are totally unaware. But the expression must be that of our own feelings and thoughts, unconscious as we may be of it. Let us watch for the photograph of that expression in the way our friends react to us, and let us not blame them for being upset, but rather blame ourselves for the reflection of our character. How often do we say, "O no! I am not like that!" But the reflection on the photographic matter of the friend shows that we are, or such a photograph could not exist.

Granted there are those whose screen or lens is so distorted that a totally wrong impression is given of us, but we may discount this if we wish to improve our character. Granted we may be so schooled that the picture thrown on the screen is just that of the trained exterior, but even here there must be the inner character, which perhaps is unknown to ourselves, but which the photograph brings out. If we look into a mirror,

we find that the reflection seen there reveals facial defects of which we are normally unaware.

Let us look at the other beings in the world in which we live. We are composed of mineral, vegetable and animal matter, so there is a contact between us and all nature, and nature responds to our touch and receives on its sensitive plate the pictures of our character. Are we in harmony—*i.e.*, free from harmful or selfish thoughts—with the earth, with the plants and trees, with the animals? Does the condition of the earth, the plant life and the animals mirror back our character? It is an interesting thought. The true yogi is so much at peace with Nature that even wild animals respect him and reflect the harmonious feelings present in him towards them. Gardens and houses reflect our character. Let us look at these. Order and harmony, cleanliness and beauty should be present in our surroundings. Are they? Let us look around us to know our character. Our Lodge work is a reflection of our character; our attitude towards fellow students is a reflection of our character; our attitude towards our servants is a reflection of our character. Our attitude towards life itself is a reflection of our character. Orderliness in our home, in our person, is a reflection of the harmony of a lawful universe.

Let us not be content with thinking that all is well with us because we are the Ego! Let us ask ourselves how much of the Ego's character is reflected in our personal character. Does our mind reflect only the ordinary humdrum life and its affairs, or does it reflect the character of the Ego? It is only by observing the analysis of our character as suggested above that we can find out how much of the spiritual is present in us. Unless we learn this through the reactions of others towards us, we may deceive ourselves and live in a world of glamour, a fool's paradise, until we are awakened by some shock which forces us to see ourselves as we really are.

FIVE are the robbers lodged in this body—lust, wrath, avarice, attachment, and egotism.

—Adi Granth

CULTURE OF CONCENTRATION

II. – Eradicating the Undesirable

UNDESIRABLE traits have no hold upon the person save through violence, insincerity, untruthfulness, wrongful gains and covetousness. The removal of these is not possible unless he himself is in earnest for their eradication. If he regrets the loss of the pleasure or of the elation which they provided for him, if he inwardly feels that the case for their total destruction has not been made out, then will he find himself pulled in two opposite directions with nothing but the prospect of a long-drawn agony. The balm of the spiritual orientation cannot be his because doubt poisons his efforts and stays his progress. On the other hand, the pleasure which he previously extracted from his earth-bound desires has left him because even a hazy gaze of the truth for a fleeting instant of time has planted in his bosom dissatisfaction for transient joys and vanishing possessions.

Therefore is the first step irrevocable. The person who has taken it cannot retrace it nor force himself back into the matrix of *avidya* and irresponsibility. Once that the battle with the lower is joined, it cannot be abandoned till either victory is obtained or the life is drained out in the dying effort to still win the field. Yet, for those who would enter the lists against their deadliest enemy—their own lower self—the picture is not wholly of sombre hue. Says *The Voice of the Silence*:

Yea, if he conquers, Nirvana shall be his....And if he falls, e'en then he does not fall in vain; the enemies he slew in the last battle will not return to life in the next birth that will be his.

And again:

The holy germs that sprout and grow unseen in the disciple's soul, their stalks wax strong at each new trial, they bend like reeds but never break, nor can they e'er be lost. But when the hour has struck they blossom forth.

The undesirable tendencies that clutter one's life have first to be recognized as undesirable. That which the world may call sweet may be as bitter poison to the inner life. In a society that lives on inverted values, the student has a duty to evaluate his character and possessions by no

other norms than those of the transcendental virtues. Any thought, sentiment or power that runs contrary to the *Paramitas*, Divine Virtues, has to be eschewed. The dissociation from the undesirable and the questionable is effected by the cultivation of its opposite. Anger can thus be eradicated by love, the explosive by the cohesive, violence by brotherliness, and wrong desires by the absence of covetousness. This discipline has to be dynamic. A lukewarm effort may not only produce weak results but may give more strength to the undesirable through a demonstration of a loose tameness of effort.

The choice of an "opposite" being made, it must now be divorced from the realm of words and fixed by mind-painted images in the consciousness of the aspirant. The exercise of invoking these images, of endowing them with life and of enriching their import is done in moments of calm when the reverse affliction is not obsessing the mind. The efficacy of these opposite virtues will remain academic unless it is made to demonstrate its superior force and dominance at those identical moments when the questionable trait begins to obtrude upon the consciousness. It is here that the knowledge of the cyclic rise of impressions becomes important. The new cycle of the emergence of the opposite virtue must be made to circumscribe and override the cycle of the undesirable. On any plane, no two objects can simultaneously occupy the same place. Therefore, during the critical period neither place, time nor consciousness should be made available to the undesirable. Exclusive possession of these has to be preserved for the opposite virtue. In this, there is no time limit to effort. To gain familiarity with the invoking of the opposite virtue, it is recommended that the performance of the lower self be regularly inspected in the light of the *Paramitas*. For, it is one or the other of these *Paramitas* which constitutes the opposite virtue to any folly, foible or sin. The habit of comparing the two pictures—the one, the actual; the other, the ideal—could be so cultivated that the practice is automatically taken up whenever the need for it arises.

The next logical step would be contemplating on the ideal at or just before the time when a cycle of weakness commences. The higher force could with practice be made strong enough to plunge the individual deep into his own higher nature, leaving no part of his consciousness vacant for occupation by the lower. So can the undesirable cycles be interrupted and finally broken. There are several alternatives to this practice and each has its validity for some specific occasion. The cultivating of the opposite

virtue is a slow and oftentimes a laborious process. It is undertaken in moments when the cycle of weakness is not upon us. The process may be likened to the fabrication of a weapon which may some day be used upon the battlefield. During the time that it is being fabricated, it is hardly capable of use, and since the cycles of weakness do not stop running, the method of combating evil when it impinges upon the person is the isolating of oneself in meditation. He can, for instance, dissociate himself from the prevailing mood, circumstance or activity by deliberately engaging himself whole-heartedly in another. He can withdraw himself from all extraneous and interior considerations and remain in silent adoration of the Ishwara within. He can bring up the memory of some spiritual experience which he may have undergone in dreams or in waking, and consider that to the exclusion of all else; or he may cogitate how his "Father in Heaven" would wish him to act. The important thing to note in this practice is that the effort must be sustained from one opportunity to another and not be motivated by any mortal desire.

The chasing away of the undesirable is in a sense a gauntlet flung at evil. The collective embodiment of vileness in men and women senses it and concentrates itself in embodiments of terror, cajolery, ridicule and temptation to wean away the aspirant from his new purpose. The loss or defection of dear ones, the enmity of those to whom one was wont to pay respect, the sudden loss of possessions are the common lot of him who would restrain the mind from what Judge called "questionable" things. Each such obstacle has to be met and overcome. It is part of the training necessary for the isolation of the mind. There is, however, one encouraging consideration: The spiritual force which was generated to overcome the undesirable becomes by the very nature of its use more readily available to those who are of the same brotherhood. The example and the effort of one added to those of the many who have gone before him build a sort of protective wall guarding the young fledglings that aspire to fly.

Long before an ambitious scheme of discipline is embarked upon, a satisfactory answer has to be found to the question, "What is it that is desirable?" Were the mere intellect to attempt an answer, the most coveted thing would be pleasure. Yet, if the individual is at all a thinker, he will have recognized that the roots of pain are within the very pleasure that he seeks. It often happens in a lifetime that Nature in her own time confers that which was coveted some years previously. It is a common experience, however, that with the moment of realization, the

anticipated pleasure fades away and the person finds the new possession barren of joy. Contentment is neither in riches nor in poverty, and the destitute finds himself as enmeshed in desires as are the rich. Possessions or a lack of them, satiety or a harsh austerity, heightened sensitivity or a stoic indifference are not passports to peace. The tranquillity that all men seek but seldom find is a product laboriously fashioned in the factories of the mind. The poet and the sculptor, the musician and the mystic are nearer to the tranquil state than most men, for they insulate themselves from the hubbub of an inchoate world and build for themselves a haven where they withdraw for a regeneration of their faiths.

If the search for peace is not abandoned, then, sooner or later, the questing mind must come to the conclusion that that alone is desirable which is pleasing to Ishwara. There are times when that which has been laboriously acquired as a desirable possession is found rejected by Ishwara. It is then that the mettle of the person is tested. Will he, once he knows that the possession is not pleasing to Ishwara, reject it himself, or will he still treasure the corpse (for that which is rejected by Ishwara decays) and risk infection himself, or, worse still, risk the spreading of the scourge to those whom he loves?

The discipline that is called for is stern and exacting. A relentless pursuit of the fast-moving Soul, without relaxation, without grumbling at the tortures and sorrows to be met with on the way--that is the target for the mind to achieve. The prospect may appear frightening if seen with the coloured lenses of the personality. But it has to be remembered that an individual is capable of sustained, tireless effort if he opts for it. There are games--chess, for instance--where a keen awareness has to be kept up continuously, till the end. There are athletics where, to obtain the high pitch of excellence that is required, the aspirant undergoes, for many months of training, a strict regimen of diet, exercise for long and tiring spells, and discipline and continence in all things. If all this hardship is gone through to gain laurels that wither and prizes that lose their value in time, there is no reason why the same effort multiplied a thousandfold cannot be imposed upon oneself to gain some advance on the path of Occultism. The miser and the hoarder are anachronisms in a bountiful world. Yet, if the miser can year after year bend himself to the task of augmenting his hoard, suffering for his ideal all deprivations imaginable, why cannot the same one-pointedness be the property of the tyro in Occultism? There is one reason which may perhaps contribute to the

difficulty. Whereas the miser can picture to himself his ultimate goal, the would-be Occultist may not be able to visualize clearly his target even for one incarnation. Ishwara and Bhagawan cannot but remain for years and lives as names only, and though at times he may have felt the benign influence of their proximity, he has to draw largely upon his faith for sustenance.

The questionable traits belong to the lower mind. It is impossible for this lower mind to cognize Ishwara or to reach immortality. It is only the Higher Mind which through training can reach into the depths of the all-pervading Absoluteness. The lower mind can get a glimpse of this profundity if it grafts itself on to the Higher Mind. That which prevents this grafting are the undesirable tendencies. Their elimination is the first direct step towards one-pointedness.

(To be continued)

WE should remember that we were self-conscious beings when this planet began; some even were self-conscious when this solar system began; for there is a difference in degree of development among human beings. If the planet or solar system began in a state of primordial substance, or nebulous matter, as Science calls it, then we must have had bodies of that state of substance. In that finest substance are all the possibilities of every grade of matter, and hence it is that within the true body of primordial matter all the changes of coarser and coarser substance have been brought about; and within that body is all experience. Our birth is within that body. Everything that occurs to us is within that body—a body of a nature which does not change throughout the whole *Manvantara*. Each one has such a body of finest substance, of the inner nature, which is the real container for the individual. In it he lives and moves and has his being, and yet even the great glory and fineness of that body is not the man; it is merely the highest vesture of the Soul. The Real Man we are is the Man that was, that is, and that ever shall be, for whom the hour will never strike—Man, the thinker; Man, the perceiver—always thinking, continually acting.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In 1995, the United Nations celebrates its 50th anniversary, yet its principal aim, to build a world free from strife, still remains a dream. Soka Gakkai International (SGI) President Daisaku Ikeda, in announcing on SGI Day, January 26, a peace proposal titled "Light of the Global Spirit: A New Dawn in Human History," emphasized that it is up to the people themselves to build a world free from strife. Only seven years remain until the 21st century, and its fate hinges on whether we give up the idea as being impossible, or continue to work at the difficult task of achieving true peace. The full text of Mr. Ikeda's proposal is printed in *Soka Gakkai News*, March 1994, from which the following is excerpted:

In a world of growing interdependence among nations, it is no longer possible for any single country to flourish in isolation. We have no choice but to work together, searching for a road to peaceful coexistence and mutual prosperity. "Symbiosis," which means living and prospering together, has become the key word of our time, whether in reference to the relationship between nations or that between humankind and nature. What is needed now is a "total revolution for symbiosis," which can be achieved only through a human revolution on a global scale....

In view of the need for a new borderless perspective, it is difficult to be optimistic from where we now stand. Our youth, to whom we will entrust the 21st century, look upon neither their future nor their world with bright hope....The world's youth have been drawn into a whirlpool of confused values. In a way, it is only natural that they have fallen under the spell of Mammon, and have come to look upon material wealth as the only thing they can trust....The misconduct of youth and the rise of crime are symbolic expressions of an underlying malaise....

People in all ages have recognized that the curbing of selfish impulses is the first step in developing good habits, and that freedom without self-restraint leads to self-indulgence, unhappiness and confusion, and, in extreme cases, tyranny. The most serious problem we face is the difficulty of instilling this common knowledge, this reasoning, in the hearts of our youth.

What is really being questioned is the very principle that has served as the driving force for modern civilization. As we all know, modern industrial civilization places priority on convenience and efficiency as the primary standards of progress and development, and in this context it is difficult to avoid, or indeed resist, the single-minded

pursuit of pleasure, which has become the supreme value. Therefore, the materialism, hedonism and mammonism that now cloud the end of our century are almost the inevitable consequence of modern civilization, which has neglected to rein in human desire....

It is not enough to simply decry these "negative" aspects of modern civilizations. We must also show our youth new standards and values that can take the place of the negative ones, and provide them with models that will help them become what they need to be: people who are in control of their own desires and deportment. If the self-restraint and self-control we profess are not based on true conviction, our efforts will not be persuasive, nor will we be able to instil an ethos of world citizenship in the younger generation....

I believe this is the ironclad principle—indeed, the imperishable "golden rule" of human education and moral upbringing: that the fervent involvement of the teacher is precisely what gets the students involved. Reverberating from such a relationship is the resonance of individual personalities associating and interacting in earnest and in harmony as complete human beings. The form of trust created in this way is precisely what has been called "virtue" since antiquity. It seems to me that this is where we must seek the underlying, fundamental cause for the rising misbehaviour, crime and other problems we observe among modern youth: the lack of fully human interaction between individuals. We cannot expect our various treatments for the symptoms of this "disease" to work effectively at least until we clearly address this underlying need....

The time has come for the ordinary people, those who have been tossed about on the waves of war and violence in the 20th century, to take the leading role in history. It is they who must take the initiative in constructing a new framework for symbiosis. By linking hands in an alliance that transcends national borders, the ordinary people can realize a world without war, and make our third millennium an era of bright-hued hope.

"Universal Responsibility and Our Global Environment" was the subject of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's address on March 22 to the Society for the Protection of Nature, Israel (reproduced in *Tibetan Bulletin*, March-April 1994). As the 20th century draws to a close, he said, we find that the world has grown smaller, but at the same time we are faced with many challenges—the environmental crisis in particu-

lar—to face which we will have to develop a greater sense of "universal responsibility":

Each of us must learn to work not just for his or her own self, family or nation, but for the benefit of all mankind. Universal responsibility is the real key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace, the equitable use of natural resources and, through concern for future generations, the proper care of the environment....

The need for a sense of universal responsibility is present in every aspect of modern life. Nowadays, significant events in one part of the world eventually affect the entire planet. Therefore, we have to treat each major local problem as a global concern from the moment it begins. We can no longer invoke the national, racial or ideological barriers that separate us without destructive repercussions. In the context of our new interdependence, considering the interest of others is clearly the best form of self-interest.

We need to appreciate interdependence in nature far more than we have in the past. Our ignorance of it is directly responsible for many of the problems we face. For instance, tapping the limited resources of our world—particularly those of the developing nations—simply to fuel consumerism, is disastrous. If it continues unchecked, eventually we will all suffer. We must respect the delicate balance of life and allow it to replenish itself....

To pursue growth properly, we need to renew our commitment to human values in many fields. Political life, of course, requires an ethical foundation, but science and religion, as well, should be pursued from a moral basis. Without it scientists cannot distinguish between beneficial technologies and those which are merely expedient. The environmental damage surrounding us is the most obvious result of this confusion. In the case of religion, it is particularly necessary....

Because of the lessons we have begun to learn, the next century will be friendlier, more harmonious, and less harmful. Compassion, the seeds of peace, will be able to flourish. At the same time, I believe that every individual has a responsibility to help guide our global family in the right direction. Good wishes alone are not enough, we each have to assume responsibility.

One of the misconceptions about Indian society held even today is that our ancestors were "other-worldly" and attached little importance to the affairs of material existence. Another is the idea that the country's

economic predicament is the result of our philosophy of life, that we must discard our culture and accept western ways of life if we want to improve our lot.

Bhai Mahavir, a retired Professor of Economics, Delhi University, debunks these notions in his article in *The Sunday Times of India*, April 10, 1994:

Were our ancients really escapists, neither desirous nor capable of solving the problems of an earthly life? An examination of our history and philosophy suggests otherwise. In fact, rather than shying away from the challenges of their times, our forefathers devoted themselves to their material life with an exemplary thoroughness.

"The Hindu view does not neglect the worldly and the temporal. It recognizes four ends of life (*purusharth chaturshaya*)—the ethical, the economic, the artistic and the spiritual," writes Radhakrishnan....

"The systematic treatises on the science of government of which economics may be taken as an integral part are numerous," says Prof. K.T. Shah (*Ancient Foundations of Economics*). "The *Arthashastra*, for example, Chanakya wrote towards the end of the fourth century. Inasmuch as his work itself contains clear references to his predecessors, to two of whom he offers salutations at the very start, and refers to contemporaries, it is obvious that the science, as he lays it out, is not entirely of his creation, but one which was already known....By the time of Kautilya, however, contacts had been established with the Greeks and the Persians."

One indication of India's economic development in ancient times, the writer reminds us, was its flourishing trade with other countries, a fact that has been well documented by historians. The skill of the Indians in the production of items as diverse as delicate woven fabrics and finished iron and steel products could hardly have been attained through the neglect of material pursuits. However, economic thought in India "did differ in one basic respect from that of modern western economists":

When the classical school, led by Adam Smith and Ricardo, was attempting an absolute divorce between ethics and economics, and insisting upon the concept of "economic man," Indian thinkers would not and could not fall in line with such compartmentalization. They would not accept the purpose of life to be an incessant struggle for the survival of the fittest in terms of physical force or material goods, and emphasized the obligation of the civilized to ensure an equal chance at least for the survival of the weakest....

What, if anything, can the ancient economic wisdom of India offer, by way of advice, in the world of today? Modern industrialism has brought us to a state where several contradictions stare us in the face....There are a number of reports urging that mankind's population and consumption of resources be steered towards a permanent and sustainable equilibrium, failing which the downfall of civilization will not be a matter of science fiction....

Gandhiji observed: "Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind." For him, economic thinking started from people, whereas the thinking of modern economics unfailingly starts from "goods." That is why he insisted on production by masses in place of mass production which aims at elimination of the human factor....

"Agricultural research the world over," Schumacher laments, "still goes into methods of violence—insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, artificial fertilizers and the breeding of plants and animals which depend on the creation of highly abnormal living conditions—so that modern agriculture has become a gigantic battle with nature. If man should emerge as victor from this battle, he would undoubtedly find himself on the losing side."

The Hindu talks of Mother Earth (*Mata bhoomih putroham prithivyah*), abhors violence to nature and strives for harmony with it. Modern technology, however, is too conceited for that. Its latest achievement, nuclear fission, has the seeds of destruction....

But does anybody have time to think of such questions in a country with an insatiable hunger for foreign loans and foreign technology?

English is at present indisputedly the most widely used language of the globe. India's need of it is well brought out in *The Sunday Times of India* of April 17, in Kumar Ketkar's article entitled "Do We Really Need English?" In a country where there are over 1650 languages and dialects, including 15 official ones, the writer remarks, it is inevitable that the linguistic divide should flare up occasionally, as it is now doing in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Sometimes the row begins with the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. At other times, it is the old controversy of the linguistic division of states. Often the target is the English language, whose pre-eminence continues to overawe the people as well as the system. The writer gives the statistics and suggests a way out of the impasse:

No Indian language is spoken by more than 10 per cent of the population, except Hindi, which is spoken by about 39 per cent; therefore English tends to dominate....

One reason why many among the vast Indian-language-speaking community hate English is because they hate the way they are enslaved by this class of English-speaking Brahmins who occupy the educational institutions, the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the media.

Thus we have a different kind of cold class war. The privileged class that speaks, reads and writes English determines the levels of discourse, and even the issues. It also sets the lifestyle and social values....

With the wave of globalization now sweeping the world, the importance of English has taken a quantum jump. Indeed, it's impossible to overthrow it now. English is an official language in as many as 44 countries as against 27 for French and 20 for Spanish. It is used as an official language in countries with a population of about 1.6 billion, roughly a third of the world's total population. According to *The Economist*, two-thirds of all scientific papers are published in English, just as nearly half of all business deals in Europe are conducted in that language. More than 70 per cent of the world's mail is written and addressed in English.

Whether one likes it or not, the fact is that English has emerged as *the* international language. The Chinese, the French, the Japanese and the Russians have come to accept this reality.

The Indian languages cannot fight English. Indeed, what is required is not a fight against the language but a simultaneous promotion and enrichment of the Indian languages, even while integrating them with this international reality.

Without a large number of citizens of future India knowing well the English language, this nation will not be able to enjoy the benefits of the One World which internationally is coming to birth. The world language is as important a factor for consideration by the country's leaders and legislators as is the promotion of the Indian languages. English is not only the link language for the country but also India's window to the world.

Students of Theosophy should know why H.P.B. recorded her message in English—a language foreign to her, yet best understood the world over. Not only has the English language opened avenues for Western thought to creep into India, but it has also opened the floodgates of the life-giving waters of the Ancient Eastern Wisdom to flow to the West.

The consumption of alcohol as a beverage has increased alarmingly in India in recent years. The country now has the dubious distinction of being among the top ten whisky drinkers in the world, even as alcohol manufacturers with their advertising onslaught vie with one another for more of the market. Traditionally a male habit, now even women are queuing up to buy it. Kaveree Bamzai and Allen J. Mendonca's article, "Spirits of the Times" (*Indian Express Sunday Magazine*, April 10) sums it all up:

Till now restricted to seedy bars, prescribed permit rooms, shady shopping complexes, and bucolic border beer shops, alcohol is being drunk in greater quantities, in bigger numbers and more openly than before....

But health professionals see cause for concern amidst all this bubbling over of excitement. Says K. S. Reddy, professor at the Cardio-Thoracic Department of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS): "While with the rise of consumption of hard liquor we are accepting outdated Western lifestyles, hopefully we will also reject it faster." But in Karnataka, for instance, with sales escalating at the rate of 30 per cent every year in both the beer and hard liquor segments, an increasing number of youth are turning alcoholics. So much so that Bangalore's National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Surgery (NIMHANS), like AIIMS, has even opened a De-Addiction Centre. About 4,000 alcoholics are given counselling and treated at the 1,000-bed NIMHANS Centre annually. Even Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) that boasted only a single branch in Bangalore and its environs in the late '70s now has over a dozen. It's no better in New Delhi, where there are five AA branches. Says D. Mohan, who runs a small 30-bed De-Addiction Centre at AIIMS: "For 10 social drinkers now, 10 years later eight of them will have alcohol-related problems." He points to the 66 per cent rise in liver cirrhosis in North India over the past decade.

Ashwini Ailawadi, an alcoholics counsellor based in New Delhi, feels a beginning should be made by building up a strong anti-alcohol campaign, which posits a positive counter to the seductive and insidious image of shiny, happy, drinking people. Perhaps. Given that the consumerist onslaught is unavoidable, and drinking is seen as being part of it, a campaign that attacks alcoholism and yet portrays a liquor-free lifestyle as being fun-filled, could save us from drowning in a deluge of brands and bottles.

The psychic effects of alcohol are more serious than the physical, and even the occasional and moderate drinker cannot escape from these

effects. It is significant from the Theosophical viewpoint that investigators are recognizing the drink problem to be basically a psychological one. Unfortunately, the faulty assumptions and insufficient knowledge of modern psychologists stand in the way of an adequate solution. The profound and detailed system of ancient Oriental Psychology presented in the synthetic system known today as Theosophy makes clear the *why* of people's desire to drink, and can therefore equip them with the knowledge necessary to face their problems squarely and to rise above the temptation of alcohol.

Mr. Judge once wrote to a correspondent:

Generally speaking, the habit of drinking intoxicants is due to a desire to get rid of what might be called the present personal consciousness. When people drink to try and drown sorrow, pain, worry, they clearly do it with that motive in view. But others drink without any such ostensible motive, though still with the same actual motive, for they long to get rid of what is to them an intolerable sense of identity, of monotony, of sameness. It is an effort to produce by extraneous aids what can only be done properly and lastingly by interior development. People read trashy novels, gamble and so forth with the same motive, that is to say, with the intention of getting rid of their personal identity for the time being. Ultimately the race will come to realize that this can only be achieved by identification of the ego with the higher instead of the lower nature. Meanwhile, and for the ordinary person, healthy and interesting occupation is the best cure for such a habit. If possible, he should be made to understand that the desire for drink is now a habit in certain lives in his body whose very existence depends upon their being fed with alcohol. The desire is not in himself unless he is foolish enough to identify himself with the desire. Once he ceases to so identify himself, the desire will lose more than half its power over him. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, American ed., pp. 177-78)
