

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

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

**THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT**

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**THE MEANING OF PAIN**

We are all acquainted with that stern thing called misery, which pursues man, and strangely enough pursues him with...a positive and unbroken pertinacity...It is part of the heritage of men, this pain and distress; and he who determines that nothing shall make him suffer, does but cloak himself in a profound and chilly selfishness. This cloak may protect him from pain; it will also separate him from pleasure. If peace is to be found on earth, or any joy in life, it cannot be by closing up the gates of feeling, which admit us to the loftiest and most vivid part of our existence.

—*Through the Gates of Gold* (pp. 3-4)

PAIN is a physical sensation, which cannot be notionally defined. In fact no sensation can be accurately defined or described to anyone who has not personally experienced it. We have to use words like stabbing, burning, drawing pain, or acute and dull pain, etc. Pain is derived from the Latin “*poena*” meaning punishment, which brings home the undesirable nature of pain.

Buddha taught that all conditioned existence is suffering or pain. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, points out that there are three kinds of suffering: (1) Actual suffering, as when we have a toothache, bruised hand, etc. (2) Potential suffering, as when we possess something which is a source of enjoyment to us for some time but is potentially suffering because one day we will have to

give it up. (3) Metaphysical suffering, as nothing mundane, earthly or conditioned can give full or final satisfaction.

Pain is always standing at our door, keeping the door ajar, so that it can enter at any time it sees fit. What has given it this right? We have given it the right, as we primarily desire pleasure. But in our search for pleasure we find that pain is a co-ruler with pleasure. It is a package deal, so to speak. In this continuous war between pain and pleasure, we hope that some day pleasure will win and then we will be happy forever.

Pleasure is derived from fulfilment of desires. Buddha says, "What grief springs of itself and springs not of desire?" In satisfying the desires, we experience pain. It is because either we do not get what we wanted in the first place or, even if we do get what we wanted, in due course it all turns to dust and ashes in the mouth. *Or*, it may happen that having got what we wanted there is in us the desire to cling to that thing or that person forever, and that might not be possible under the circumstances.

"Pain arouses, softens, breaks and destroys. . . . It is an implement, a thing, which is used, evidently." Pain arouses. It is only when pain comes that we sit up and ask questions of life. We come to a realization that we need to learn to surrender *our* will to *divine* will.

Pain shows that all is not well with us. It shatters our illusion and shows that whatever we have, is not our own and is not sufficient. Something vital is missing in our lives. We do not care to know if God exists or not, so long as there is even a slight possibility of obtaining happiness in some other way. When all earthly doors are closed to us, then, as a last resort, we turn to God.

*Light on the Path* says, "No man desires to see that light which illumines the spaceless soul until pain and sorrow and despair has driven him away from the life of ordinary humanity." In other words, so long as life flows by smoothly, we do not ask those knotty questions of life, which we ask only when pain pursues us. The terrible void that is felt at the loss of a loved one indicates the need

to develop interest in impersonal activities like playing chess, playing a musical instrument, or even gardening, instead of putting all the eggs in one basket.

Pain alone makes us grow. H.P.B. writes:

Woe to those who live without suffering. Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change. And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage? Is it not those only who have learnt the deceptive value of earthly hopes and the illusive allurements of external nature who are destined to solve the great problems of life, pain, and death? (*S.D.*, II, 475)

It is up to us to learn from our experiences. Often, after a terrible experience and intense suffering we say, "I want to forget the whole thing as a bad dream." We are none the wiser and carry on with life as we used to, hoping all the time that we will not be placed in a similar situation again. Some of us would be like the cat, which when it feels very cold outside scratches on the door to be taken inside the house, but once inside and comfortable it goes out easily without any memory of the previous discomfort. Unless it is a very deep-reaching pain, we do not learn the lesson. Sometimes we find ourselves getting *used to it*, without much reflection.

Often, intense suffering makes people hard-hearted. At times, it produces fear that the same experience might repeat itself. If we had cared to learn from the experience, we would not be afraid, but would feel confident to tackle it.

Pain softens. For instance, Viktor Frankl mentions in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* the case of a doctor in a concentration camp, who was a most ruthless, satanic, Mephistophelean figure. Later, he was taken prisoner by the Russians. A person who was with him in this prison reported that this man died of cancer of the urinary bladder. But before that, he showed himself to be the best human being. He helped and consoled everybody in the prison and lived up to the highest conceivable moral standard (pp. 154-

55). His own suffering must have softened him. Often, we sympathize with others only if we have passed through similar troubles.

Mr. Judge says that sometimes a pure and powerful soul decides to take birth in painful and adverse situations, so as to learn fortitude and sympathy and eliminate defects.

It is in suffering that our faith in God and spiritual life is put to the test. Prof. C. S. Lewis points out that we never really know how much we believe in a thing, until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death. We must suffer, only then we would come out of our mere verbal thinking and notional beliefs.

It is true that at times, during adversity, people feel that they are forsaken by God. Some people even come to the conclusion, “After all there is no God.” What is difficult to accept is that when life hurts, it teaches. The composition, “Footprints,” describes the vision of a person walking side by side with God on a beach, in life’s journey. He observes two sets of footprints—one belonging to him and the other to God. But he complains that at the very lowest and saddest times of his life he noticed only one set of footprints. He asks God: “You said that once I decided to follow you, you would walk with me all the way....I do not understand why in times when I needed you most, you would leave me.” God replies, “My precious, precious child...I would never leave you during your times of trials and suffering. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.” If we will not make a mistake of regarding God to be a Being, we will recognize in these words a poignant way of describing the fact that all the help, solace and comfort in times of trouble comes from our inner planes of being. In fact, at a certain stage in spiritual discipline, every true aspirant experiences this feeling of being abandoned. *Light on the Path* puts it thus: “Your teacher, or your predecessor may hold your hand in his, and give you the utmost sympathy the human heart is capable of. But when the silence and the darkness comes, you lose all knowledge of him.” Jesus, too said, at the time of

crucifixion, “Father, why hast thou forsaken me?”

It is foolish to hope or look for divine intervention that would lift us out of the mire and place us in the sunshine. No master, saint or even God can interfere with our Karma. “Teach to eschew all causes; the ripple of effect as the great tidal wave, thou shalt let run its course.” Shiva has been described as a good gardener of nature who weeds out plants, human and cosmic alike. He destroys anything that refuses to grow. He destroys on the lower plane to regenerate on the higher plane. When the lesson is learnt the necessity ceases, *i.e.*, once we have learnt what we have to learn from a painful situation, we would no longer be put in that situation again, and even if we are, it no longer feels painful.

A spiritual man is affected by pleasure and pain, but does not allow them to shake him or influence his decisions in any way. A disciple has to experience intense pain or pleasure and yet not get shaken by it. We can do this by assuming the position of an observer. To reach this state we have to keep constant awareness of who we really are.

If grief, dismay, disappointment or pleasure can shake the soul so that it loses its fixed hold on the calm spirit that inspires it, and the moisture of life breaks forth, drowning knowledge in sensation, then all is blurred, the windows are darkened, the light is useless. This is as literal a fact as that if a man, at the edge of a precipice, loses his nerve through some sudden emotion he will certainly fall. The poise of the body, the balance, must be preserved, not only in dangerous places, but even on the level ground, and with all the assistance Nature gives us by the law of gravitation. (*Light on the Path*, pp. 38-39)

A person is able to maintain his balance while he is standing or walking because the perpendicular from the centre of gravity of his body falls within the base of support—between his feet. When we bend forward or backward too much, the perpendicular from the centre of gravity no longer falls within the base of support. Our psychological base of support is our higher nature, which gives

us a true sense of “I am I.” When there is a sudden surge of emotion, such that it is all centred in one feeling, then our awareness of “I am I” goes awry and falls, so to speak, outside the base of support. We begin to identify ourselves with the thing we are contemplating. As a result people go mad with grief or with sudden good news.

The first test that the novice, who wishes to become a disciple, has to pass through is to endure, without losing equilibrium, the keenest enjoyment, the bitterest pain, and the anguish of loss and despair.

Victor E. Frankl points out that there ought to be self-transcendence of human existence. “It denotes the fact that being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself—be it a meaning to fulfil or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself” (*Man’s Search for Meaning*, p. 133). Narrating his experiences in the concentration camp, he recalled the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. Such people may have been few, but they go to show that everything can be taken from a man except one thing, *i.e.*, to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances. Dostoevski said: “There is only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings” (*Ibid.*, pp. 86-87). If a man takes the opportunity afforded by miserable circumstances, he can add moral values to his living, and then he becomes worthy of his suffering.

We should not allow our suffering to get the better of us. What helps a person to pull through even the most painful conditions is a future goal. Nietzsche’s words are very profound: “He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*... That which does not kill me, makes me stronger.” (*Man’s Search for Meaning*, pp. 97 and 103)

## THE FRIENDLY PHILOSOPHER

ON June 25, 1919, just after the summer solstice, the founder of the United Lodge of Theosophists, regarded by many as the Friendly Philosopher, left his mortal coil after devotedly working for Theosophy for many long years. So, as this yearly cycle approaches and as one’s mind and heart respond to his vision and sacrifice and the teachings he gave out in a simple yet profound way, one needs to pour out one’s devotion and gratitude on this valiant soul.

Many have been touched by the simple yet lofty ideas and ideals presented in his letters and talks collected in the priceless volume, *The Friendly Philosopher*. It awakens in the reader new hopes for a more worthy and useful life, a new understanding of the mission to be fulfilled and the sublime goal to be reached.

The book has several sections under different headings, one of which is “Homely Hints.” It is a suggestive section indicating the soul-experiences of the noble writer. Home is, or should be, a centre of life and love and friendliness, and “homely hints” often prove more valuable than elaborate remedies in the affairs of daily living. Such homely prescriptions can be more relied upon and used with real benefit.

The very first line of the first paragraph in this section states: “To make ourselves ‘better able to help and teach others’ is the task.” Helping and teaching others implies that we must possess, first, the will to do so and the wherewithal to work. It means finding out ways and means to improve ourselves, to increase our ability and efficiency for the great work. “Skill in the performance of actions” is yoga. Helping and teaching others is the most important aspect of service to human souls. It is also referred to in one of the clauses of the inspiring Declaration of the United Lodge of Theosophists, and everyone who signs the membership card becomes responsible for the task. It is a full-time work—work in and upon oneself—calling for self-purification, self-control, self-

education through self-devised ways and means, study and practice of the philosophy in daily life. In the Second Discourse of the *Gita*, Sri Krishna points out: “In this path there is only one single object, and this of a steady, constant nature.” All thought for reward has to be abandoned.

“We learn to know our ability *by using it to the limit.*” This is another excellent hint given by Mr. Crosbie. Most people are unaware of their own ability. Only when the nature and powers of the Higher Self are known and recognized can that ability be used to the limit. *The Voice of the Silence* questions the aspirant, “Knowest thou of Self the powers, O thou perceiver of external shadows”? Most of the time, the majority of human beings take the external, material shadows to be real, and so they are lost in the whirlwind of this ever-changing, perishable world. Once it is recognized that each one of us in his higher nature is one with the Supreme Self, it is not difficult to use our ability to the limit. It is with faith and courage and confidence that we should tap the Source so that the powers may flow in.

“Faith is really our confidence in the fact that Masters exist, and that Their teachings are what we are following.” It is of the utmost importance to realize that the teachings we study and follow have been in existence for ages, that they were checked and tested and verified before they were handed down by the great perfected beings we call Masters. “From the teachings to the teachers” is the right approach. It is necessary to have faith while treading the spiritual path, faith in the justice of the divine law. *Light on the Path* states: “The truth is that faith is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. For it is the covenant or engagement between man’s divine part and his lesser self.” This is quite the opposite of blind belief. With true faith everything is possible. Mr. Judge and Mr. Crosbie were successful in their Theosophic life and work because of their faith in the Teachers and their Teachings.

“There is but one way to progress—to cultivate the *feeling* that

produces the work,” says Mr. Crosbie. Each individual has his feeling or emotional nature which is used or misused in a hundred different ways. One must try to cultivate the feeling for the great Cause of Theosophy, must realize that it is the prime need of the hour, that it cannot be neglected. We are told further that “true strength lies *within.*” If each one has the perception to realize that, has faith in his inner strength, and cultivates the true love and feeling for the Cause, very much can be achieved.

“The right kind of Theosophical talking comes only from practice. It is not merely the use of a facile vocabulary, but the possession of well-digested ideas that is necessary.” It is only reflection upon the teachings and their constant application that will enable the student to give them out in a simple, effective and impressive manner. A clear grasp of the teachings is the first requisite. There are newcomers at the meetings and their needs should be kept in mind. Mr. Crosbie states: “We have to learn that we are dealing with minds which need *leading*, by presenting wider ideas.” Herein lies the responsibility of the student. It is a grave responsibility indeed, and the Declaration again lays down that by example and precept the great task is to be accomplished. The Theosophical Movement has been called by H.P.B. the most serious movement of the age, and it needs reliable and devoted workers. It is hinted: “It would be better to expect to hit the mark, instead of expecting to miss it.” It is all up-hill work and whatever comes has to be handled cheerfully and used to the best advantage.

To work for Theosophy is a great privilege and a grave responsibility. However limited in capacity a student may think himself to be, there are resources within his own nature. He has to awaken the inner urge, and faith and devotion will surely enable him to hit the mark. To help human souls in their spiritual progress is the highest aspect of service and sacrifice.

## SPIRITUALITY IN OUR WORKADAY LIFE

MOST people would shrink from the alleged drab, dry and dull life of austerity to achieve holiness. For such is the common discouraging picture associated with the words “spiritual” and “spirituality.” A belief goes that for a man of the world, piety is unreachable, and that no “pious” man can be found active in the town council or involved in family affairs. But do we not have instances of holy men like Prophet Mohammed and Saint Kabir, equally skilled as traders as in inner culture, saintliness and enlightened usefulness to others? Another misconception is that what is called the “living of the Higher Life” is the same as religious strivings according to the canons of the creed or scripture, and rigid observances such as fasting, ablutions, rites, rituals, litanies, etc., preferably within a monastery or an *ashram*. Also, an unquestioning *faith* is supposed to be enough in a religious man. Such a “spiritual” man may ignore inquiry to gain necessary knowledge and wisdom while conducting consecrated “religious” practices. Here, spirituality and religiousness are considered the same. For, simple faith and worship of God are all that are needed to become “spiritual” in the religious sense.

A third misconception is that anyone who exhibits supernatural powers and claims holiness is walking the spiritual path. Even psychics and mediums are known to perform astonishing feats without being remotely committed to the conditions necessary for a truly spiritual life, such as self-denial, rectitude and service of others.

What then is spirituality or “the state of being spiritual”? One apt dictionary meaning of the word is: “Pertaining to the Soul and its affections, as influenced by the divine Spirit.” It is also living wisely according to the insights furnished by the enlightened strivings after truth, and gaining discernment concerning the human soul and its evolution. However, this does not rule out practical wisdom needed in the mundane world, but is guided by noble

motive and integrity.

Why and who is that aspirant who sincerely *desires his soul to come under luminous influence of the spirit*? Can such a one be found among us in the whirlpool of worldly activity? For, Lord Krishna speaks of “four classes of men” who seek nearness to the Divine, according to their own individual needs and means. The first is the sufferer or the one fed up of personal existence; the seeker after personal gains; those who are searchers after esoteric knowledge; and lastly the devotees who seek full enlightenment (*Gita*, VII). The last two classes are coming nearer in nature to the true “student-aspirants” (as they are called in theosophical works), and who are *preparing* themselves for an authentic consecrated life of the soul. These are the ardent students growing in *soul maturity*, who are willing to let go their “toys” of immature days and are keeping the goal of perfection in their sight, which too advances as their inner perception grows in depth and width.

All student-aspirants who have begun the necessary discipline as *tapasya* are on the “path of probation.” All have to pass through *stages* of inward strivings on their upward way. In fact, all life is considered to be the school of probationary learning. But for a seeker who has thus pledged himself, there are *conscious* and wilful efforts at self-transformation. It is always accompanied by the necessary tests and trials through ordinary life’s experiences under karma quickened by the intensity of aspiration.

In the school of life, in whatever condition we are placed by Karma or destiny, there are vast opportunities for growth in knowledge, wisdom and compassion. In addition, the guidelines and signposts along the way are readily available for the seeker. These are left by those Elder Brothers of humanity who have risen to the terrace of enlightenment and power, starting from our station and stage. They too had to struggle and have left the cream of their experiences for us, to be found in the world’s great scriptures. Theosophy, the great wisdom-teaching, too, is available for modern man’s guidance and inspiration. These are like the map of a territory

and traveller's Manual with all the practical hints needed along the difficult path of the higher life.

One of the processes by which unfoldment of inner faculties takes place is by becoming increasingly aware of one's inner life and the needs of others. It is a matter of inner change, a wider perspective of human existence and a profounder *attitude* to life and living.

One gradually becomes self-conscious, for instance, of one's positive traits as well as shortcomings, especially those not so apparent but revealed by vigilance and sincerity for self-purification.

We need to become aware of many moments—inner and outer—which we are prone to miss out in the daily affairs of life. For here lie subtle moments which try our mettle. The commonest failures are in regard to being careless, or laxity in concentration on daily chores, and sometime unmindful of moral consequences. Slip of the tongue is one such moment of negligence. This will not do in spiritual discipline.

That which veils from our sight the spiritual nature or our true centre of Consciousness are the “*Skandhas*”—the lower tendencies and attributes. These we must discover and learn to eradicate with earnest effort. A fundamental rule in all the world's religions is to control and conquer our lower tendencies—“*vasanas*.” Patanjali too, speaks of “*saucha*” or the purification of mind and body and the removal of all impurities as the first rule of *niyama*. And, as a result, there is increased awareness of the impermanence of temporal existence, and an increased capacity to meditate.

Another aspect of *increased awareness* is found in the Biblical statement (*Exodus*): “Put off thy shoes from thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is Holy Ground.” This is a hint about the essentially spiritual nature of everything, including the dust under our feet, and therefore of the awareness of life pulsating everywhere. “Everything is afire with the spark of divinity.” This is awakening to become conscious of the divine presence, not only within us but

also in the hearts of all fellow creatures. The Soul of man is that undying consciousness in us, clothed in the familiar garment of “personality” which grows and dies. Are we aware that we have undertaken a long pilgrimage through many lives, while we learn important lessons out of each life's experience?

We cannot afford to ignore the inner voice or whisperings, which sometimes guide us to take the right step or sound a warning asking us to be extra careful when the soul is subtly under a trial or temptation.

Awareness therefore is the prime condition and measure of spirituality. The other obligation emerging from the former is a sensitive response to the *needs* of other souls. Are we sensitive enough to feel the secret sorrows of those we “accidentally” meet in this life, or do we prefer to ignore the woes of others because otherwise it could become an added burden to our own already painful journey? Mr. Crosbie reminds us to always keep in mind that we are a part of the great chain of beings and have the self-same goal, toward which the whole stream of life moves. (*Universal Theosophy*, p. 76)

“A lay chela is a man of the world who affirms his desire to become wise in spiritual things,” writes H.P.B. If one has constituted oneself a *Sadhak* (seeker) of wisdom, rather than of powers, one becomes aware of the *call of duty* at the very station at which one finds oneself. “Duty is a Royal Talisman.” A true talisman is a magic medallion that protects. When we become conscious of our duty to the self, to the nearest fellow beings and to those whose dire needs are greater than ours, the seeker in us ought to respond without hesitation. Duties in daily life, so long as they remain as part of our own household, open up unsuspected opportunities for unfoldment of power and wisdom, which we will need when we have to overcome greater and more demanding tests and trials. Those of us who fail at this earlier householder stage, have scant chance to proceed much further on the way. It is after many lives of “call to duty” well responded that one really enters upon the

Path that leads one to become a self-regenerated man.

One last word by way of encouragement to us from W. Q. Judge:

Take courage and be patient; the light is shining in your heart, and if you will go on, you will find it there and it will be brighter far than you can now imagine.

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THE truth is that what the best poets, the greatest writers, bring back from their travels in the realm of fancy is as nothing beside the treasures accumulated by their predecessors. Many others have reaped the same field, it is they who bind the sheaves. When one feels with intensity, intelligence is unnecessary: one has more influence than the cleverest logicians. Even the logicians do nothing more perhaps than express in well-balanced syllogisms the flights of the prophets who are supposed to be lacking in intelligence. Genius owes ninety-nine hundredths to others. Does it, for instance, invent its language? The alphabet it uses? What would its thoughts be without words? What would words be without the letters which enable us to represent them easily? We do not think enough, my dear friends, about the men of genius who conceived the idea of representing sounds by signs. Yet it was they who rendered possible the dizzy mental gymnastics of the Western World. And those who gradually created speech? Did they not furnish us with the very tissue of our arguments? Grammatical constructions govern the habits of the mind. I was wrong in saying ninety-nine hundredths Genius owes to others—I should have said nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths.

—ANATOLE FRANCE

## THE THREE GUNAS—SATTVA, RAJAS, TAMAS

Shun ignorance, and likewise shun illusion. Avert thy face from world deceptions; mistrust thy senses, they are false. But within thy body—the shrine of thy sensations—seek in the Impersonal for the “Eternal Man”; and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha.

—*The Voice of the Silence*

WHEN a child is born, its lower mind is already firmly entrenched in the capsule of the body and continues to make its abode therein till death comes to effect a separation. From the first moment of its entry, it is wedged in and surrounded by the essences, properties and qualities of matter and as it advances in consciousness it tends to identify itself more and more with the name and form of its birth. True, that as the child advances in age a large measure of consciousness becomes possible, and with the advent of the higher mind moral values become perceptible. But even then the egoistic inclinations of the man tend to overshadow morality and leave him a strange being who remains intensely personal. Until he can shake off the stupor into which matter has precipitated him, the man will continue to think that he is the body and that the body is he. So long as his thoughts run in that direction, his bondage to matter, environment and circumstances must remain complete.

Large masses of men are thus caught up by ignorance, and the apathy which is one of the characteristics of matter prevents any movement forward. Born as slaves to matter, they are content to remain in meek bondage, too indolent to think, too benighted to see beyond their broken lamps. They fade out at death, lost in the void of nothingness which their very ignorance has conjured up for them. They do not think they have a mission to carry out nor that their life's sojourn had been planned for progress towards an ever enlarging individuality.

The Wisdom of the Ancients teaches us that the soul in the body

(called *Kshetrajna*) is the owner, harvester and labourer of the field of his body (*Kshetra*). He who tends not his field, produces no crop and gathers no harvest, becomes untrue to his mission, and his incarnation comes to be written off as a failure.

In general, the purpose of any incarnation is to provide to the lower mind an entry into a human form. From then onwards, it has to busy itself in working through that body for attracting molecules and atoms of such purity as can provide a channel for the higher mind (the higher Ego) to come and work through it. That which prevents such an advent is indolence on the one hand and turbulence on the other, both of which are inherent in the various strata of matter. Before it can even think of ways and means to invoke the higher mind to come and stay with it, the lower mind has to understand how the essences of matter can help or mar its efforts; how, itself remaining master and manipulator, it can control and blend the qualities to suit its own exalted purpose.

Matter evinces three qualities or *gunas* which separately or in combination produce varying results. The names of these qualities (the Sanskrit is used since there are no English equivalents) are: *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. They yield six combinations which are *Sattva-Rajas*; *Sattva-Tamas*; *Rajas-Sattva*; *Rajas-Tamas*; *Tamas-Sattva*; *Tamas-Rajas*. The seventh stage is where the three qualities are so balanced that they remain in a perfect state of equipoise. Just as today the purity of the four castes as distinct and separate no longer exists, so too with the *gunas*. No one quality manifests with the other two completely absent. However, to understand the effect of the combinations, it is important to know the ideal characteristic of each, unmixed and undiluted by the presence and action of the other two.

*Sattva* represents purity, brightness and well-being. When a man is established in it, its light streams forth from all the gateways of the body. However, with all its knowledge and luminosity it does not liberate the Soul. It binds and restricts its freedom through the knowledge and the delight it provides. The chain may be enchanting

and of rarest gold, but it is nonetheless a chain. It fetters and it binds.

*Rajas* represents passion—a lust and thirst for things and a clinging frantically to life. It moves the man to scheme for the satisfaction of his appetites. It is the producer of anger, greed and covetousness. The man in whom *Rajas* predominates rushes out to do, to do. It is true that he abhors lassitude, but he is no searcher after truth and purity. On the contrary, if it suits his purpose, he will in order to secure his ends assume a mask of purity and proclaim himself a votary of truth.

*Tamas* represents the inert and stupefied condition that is brought on by ignorance. Such a state beclouds discrimination. Vicious persons, those who worship the elementals and the ghosts of dead men fall in the category of those in whom *Tamas* predominates. The doors and windows of the Soul are barred and no light comes.

The indwelling soul, knowing himself to be the owner and master of his field, has to plan his work upon it with care and caution. He has to test and weigh the advantages as also the limitations of the soil which he has inherited from previous births. The science and the art of fertilizing, tilling, harvesting and garnering as also the toil and labour involved have all to be provided by the man himself. For his field, he alone is the *Kshetrajna*. He has to adapt his activity according to the seasons that affect his field and also to the other seasons or cycles that affect him personally. Besides learning to perform the proper functions at the right time, he has to protect his crop from the scorching sun and the depredation of birds. He has also to guard his moral nature and protect it against infiltration by the undesirable elements that seek entry. The farming of land is not to be undertaken by hit-and-miss methods. Skills have to be generated to meet droughts and floods while yet other skills are to be used against pests and weeds. A mere cataloguing of dos and don'ts, a listing of virtues, will always remain an exercise of academic interest till the mind grasps their value and desires their possession.

When the allotted span of life is over, the soul quits the field and then its harvest is assessed. It is by this assessment that future incarnations are determined. In fact, the indwelling but now liberated Ego will on return gravitate to that environment and attract that matter which will enable it to pick up the threads from where they were left off at the close of the last incarnation.

The characteristics of matter, as they force their presence upon the indwelling spirit, mould it in time into the nature of either a god or a demon such as are portrayed for us in the sixteenth chapter of the *Gita*. These effects are brought about by the reaction of the soul to outside stimuli. The sum total of the man's motives as they meet the on-rush of events moulds his thinking and makes of him either a being of light or a thing of darkness. Admittedly, there must be varying shades and overtones of light and darkness, but they are only intermediate states which after a period, long or short, during which man oscillates between them, must ultimately fall off, making him gravitate to one of the two poles of light and darkness. Man cannot for ever remain in a state of flux. Precipitation and separation must follow upon a mixing together of uncongenial elements.

Science looks at matter in one way, metaphysics in another. The scientist breaks it up from its denser to its finer forms, and in so doing releases the forces that reside in each distinct stratum of matter. He does not concern himself with the essence and quality that exudes from matter, nor with the moral and psychic effects which flow from a too intimate affinity with matter. The metaphysician views matter as an agent that can colour life, making it dull or bright, dogmatic and superstitious or transcendental and luminous.

Every possible circumstance has its *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic* quality. Of the three, *Sattva* becomes desirable since it is of the nature of light and purity, and also because it is only the metaphysical aspect of any experience that can enrich the Soul. The student has therefore to apply to each circumstance the

touchstone of *Sattva*. The vital factors in any human life are: Faith, Fortitude, Charity, Food, Austerities, Sacrifice, Renunciation, Speech, Knowledge, Worship, Intellect and Happiness. Each of these can present any one of the three aspects of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, depending on which *guna* predominates the motive and the action. The man is expected to be firmly fixed in *Sattva* and from the eminence so obtained to handle each experience and distil from it its bouquet.

It is only when man is sufficiently familiar with these three qualities and can discriminate between them that he is able to adapt his plastic potency to the ways of matter and thus control it. But he has to realize that though *Sattva* can undoubtedly bring bliss, it cannot bring ultimate realization nor even a freedom from the bondage of matter. At its highest, it still represents a conflict, a taking up of arms against the undesirable, for, as explained in the *Gita* (XIV, 10), it is only when the qualities of *Rajas* and *tamas* are overcome that *Sattva* can prevail. This overcoming of one or the other *guna* is a continuous process so long as the human consciousness remains chained to matter. In this life, there are battles always. The Soul of man must be unfettered, his desires free, but that which bestows freedom is not to be found in the qualities, *Sattva* included.

The only possible way by which a man can rise above them is by viewing them as separate and distinct from himself. If he can weigh, test and experiment with them, if he can remain unaffected by the forms, shapes, forces and powers which these qualities throw up, then is he liberated. But the liberation is no mere negation of involvement. It is a positive grasping of a higher power with which to subdue and tame the lower forces. The forces of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* could be made to remain in equilibrium. To the ordinary man, indolence, turbulence and calmness are contraries; for any one of these to prevail, the other two must be suspended or eliminated. If the forces of indolence, turbulence and calmness can be so arranged as to neutralize each other, there must arise a

serenity and a peace which is different from the indolent stupor of *Kama* or the enforced calmness of *Sattva*. Then, it is not the victory of one over the other two. It is a condition to which each three contribute by cessation of action. In yet another sense, it is the renunciation by the man of the fruits of these qualities.

As early as in the second chapter of the *Gita* (verse 45) Krishna advises Arjuna to be free from the qualities. To the average man, it would appear that the light of truth and purity obtainable in *Sattva* should be the consummation of all effort. Where virtue presides and light streams forth from the gateways of the body, can there be room for further progress? The answer is that beyond *Sattva* lie states where knowledge comes of itself, where serenity is not limited by conditions and where the lower mind basks in the light of its higher counterpart. Arjuna is made to ask Krishna:

What are the characteristic marks by which the man may be known, O Master, who hath surpassed the three qualities? What is his course of life, and what are the means by which he overcometh the qualities?

And Krishna answers:

He, O son of Pandu, who doth not hate these qualities—illumination, action, and delusion—when they appear, nor longeth for them when they disappear; who, like one who is of no party, sitteth as one unconcerned about the three qualities and undisturbed by them; who being persuaded that the qualities exist, is moved not by them; who is of equal mind in pain and pleasure, self-centred, to whom a lump of earth, a stone, or gold are as one; who is of equal mind with those who love or dislike, constant, the same whether blamed or praised; equally minded in honour and disgrace, and the same toward friendly or unfriendly side, engaging only in necessary actions, such an one hath surmounted the qualities.

## UNDERSTANDING PRACTICAL OCCULTISM

### II

NOW we come to the next step in practical occultism: Granted there is one Matter from which all these bodies have sprung; granted there is one Intelligence from which all these minds have sprung; granted there is one Supreme whose action we call Law—granted all that, how comes this vast variety? If there is but One Essence it follows that the minutest portion of that One Essence has in it the potentialities of any other portion, has in it all the potentialities of the whole. Let us revert to a physical illustration: One drop of water has in it all the potentialities that exist in the whole ocean, that exist in the entire waters of our globe. Granted the power to grow, with the whole universe for soil and nourishment, what sets limits to the growth of anything? Nothing in the world but that being's ignorance, or its knowlege. We can do anything if we know how to do it. Having done it and reaped the consequences, we realize in some cases that although we had the power, it were wiser not to have used it; and that in some of the things we did *not* do, it were wiser that we had.

Knowledge is available in the universe, and just as the presence of one drop of water compels the immediate perception of an ocean of water, so one single perception of Truth by any being compels, through that eyelet-hole of Truth, the perception of the infinite ocean of Knowledge. Just think of the countless things we do not know and that we need to know. We know we *could* know them, yet we do not make the effort to learn them. We rely on somebody else learning them for us.

The race, then, is physically lazy, spiritually blind, intellectually indolent. Why? Because it has been taught to live in, to think about, to feed, to rely on, the psychic nature. We are not lazy in gratifying our desires if we have the wherewithal to do so. We are not lazy in seeking that wherewithal if we lack it. In most of our actions, the

motive power generally is—desire.

So, then, the difference in beings does not lie in the difference of their Source. All are from the same Source. It does not lie in the difference of the law under which each being becomes what he is. It lies, for the beings below man, as also for man himself, in their ignorance, and our ignorance is quite different from theirs. The creatures in the lower kingdoms have no moral nature, yet the principle of desire is their stimulus to action. Man does have a moral nature, an intellectual nature, yet he allows his desires to guide him. It is well known that one can so manipulate the vegetable kingdom that it will yield an enormous plant and no fruit, so with man's nature. We have delivered our souls in pawn to the enormous augmentation of a principle which belongs to the kingdoms below us and not to us at all. To recognize that is practical occultism.

Nature is forever throwing the individual back on himself to teach him the lesson of his own responsibility. When a man acknowledges his divinity, not as an endowment but as an inherency; when he acknowledges his equality before the law of his own being with any other being; when he knows that he has but to sow, and as he sows, so shall he reap—when a man knows those things he becomes his own God. He is ready to choose for himself instead of having some book, some authority, some sect, some party, some politician, some *desire* do his choosing for him. He is ready to act in accordance with his own choice of what is duty, of what is right; and having acted, to abide the consequence, fearing no god or devil, knowing there is not a being anywhere in all the cosmos who can make him reap what he did not sow, who can keep him from reaping what he did sow. Then he sees that the differences are not differences in substance or in essence; they are differences in states, conditions, limitations, degrees of intelligence and non-intelligence.

What does the word “Spirit” mean? The highest state of the One Substance. What does “hell” mean? The lowest state of the One Substance. What does “desire” mean? An intermediate state

of the One Substance. What does “intelligence” mean? The next state to Spirit—but it is all the One Substance. Our bodies have not the intelligence that our senses have. Our senses have not the intelligence that our desires have. Our desires have not the intelligence that our reason has. Our reason has not the intelligence that our moral sense, our spiritual sense—our intuition—has. If there is but One Substance then a spiritual being is a being who dwells in amity with the whole of Nature because he knows he is identical with it; who dwells in unity with the One Life regardless of the forms that the One Life may inhabit. The result is that such a being may have a body, but all his actions on earth are spiritual actions. He has senses, but the use of his senses is a spiritual use. He has a mind, but the use of his mind is a spiritual one.

There being One Substance, there being One Law, all beings are from time to time on the plane of Spirit—the plane of clear perception, the perception of the unity of all, the fundamental identity of all. Now suppose a being acts, or thinks, or feels, for a *part*? That is a cause. What happens instantly? He is off the plane of Spirit. That is the effect. Apply fire to ice, what happens to ice? Off the plane of ice, on the plane of water. Apply fire to water, what happens to water? Off the plane of water, on the plane of steam. Apply more fire—off the plane of steam, on the plane of vapour. All the time one and the same thing. What gets a being off the plane of Spirit? Separative action, partial action; the non-perception of the all, the momentary forgetfulness of the unity of the One Life. Once off the plane of Spirit, what does he see? He sees only that part which in his mind's eye takes the place of the whole. What else could he see? How could a man who has lost his discrimination know what is the right side up and what is upside down; what is the real Key to the Scriptures and what a skeleton key? The answer is, he can't. One who is off the plane of Spirit does not know it. He is on the plane of a *part* and does not know it. He keeps acting in accordance with his preference, his partiality, and pretty soon he is off the second plane, on to the third, and so

on down, down, down, down, till he reaches the lowest plane of all—the plane of the mythical Satan, in the heart of every one of us. What is a devil? A devil is a spiritual being who has become constitutionally incapable of thinking of anybody but himself. What is a god? A god is a being who has become constitutionally incapable of thinking of himself, of acting for himself. Once a person begins acting on a narrower and narrower plane, he reaches at last that point where he says: “Me, first, last and all the time. What do *I* want? What can *I* have? What will become of *me*?”

Our intellectual and psychic nature has been developed out of all proportion to our moral progress. The moral nature is the balance principle of the seven. When a physical structure is built at ever so slight a cant, when it rises to that height where the centre of gravity falls outside the base line, down comes the structure and great is the fall. So with our civilization. Has it not built a veritable Tower of Babel? Have we not come to that very point that the graphic parable tells about in the race that preceded ours?

Practical occultism is the study of God *in* Nature, not outside of Nature; the study of God in ourselves, not some place else; the assumption of responsibility, not irresponsibility. An outside God is an irresponsible being; the indwelling God is a God of responsibility. We cannot reform the world save and except by reforming ourselves. We cannot reform ourselves by praying, by psychic invocations, or by rites and ceremonies; these only result in making us lose such vestigial remnants of the spiritual nature that were there.

We need to promulgate the only gospel there is—the gospel that man is inherently divine; that he has to sow and has to reap the consequences of his sowing. He must sow with his eyes wide open, responsibly, and know that in future he will reap as he *now* sows. To teach men the unity of the One Life; to teach men the law of Karma—sowing and reaping; to teach men the divinity in themselves; to teach men that any and every one of us may become like unto a Buddha or a Christ; that every hell is of our own making,

every woe and sorrow of our own producing; that we must turn our divine power upwards and make the physical, the psychic and the intellectual subservient to the divine man—that is our allotment.

That is the only practical occultism there is. All that any man can do for another is to set these things before him for his consideration. That is teaching by precept. And the other method is to teach by example, by oneself leading the Life. As a man does that, he begins to find out that there are other moods and tenses of the Holy *Verbum* than are writ in the grammar of our actions; that the Elder Brothers live and move and have Their being in this very world of ours; that there is such a thing as rapport with the spiritual side of our nature, just as definite, just as sure, as our rapport with the physical side of Nature. There is nothing psychic about it; it comes from the perception of the One Life, the perception of the divinity in all things, the perception of the divinity which is oneself, and then action upon a divine basis. In the words of Sri Krishna:

He, O Arjuna, who by the similitude found in himself seeth but one essence in all things, whether they be evil or good, is considered to be the most excellent devotee. (*Bhagavad-Gita*, VI, 32)

(Concluded)

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THE truths and mysteries of occultism constitute, indeed, a body of the highest spiritual importance, at once profound and practical for the world at large. Yet, it is not as a mere addition to the tangled mass of theory or speculation in the world of science that they are being given to you, but for their practical bearing on the interests of mankind.

—MASTER K.H.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

**Question:** Is inquisitiveness healthy? How does one deal with over-inquisitiveness?

**Answer:** According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, “Inquisitive” means, unduly curious and prying as well as seeking for knowledge and inquiring. In *Sanskrit*, the former is termed *Kutuhal*, and the latter, *Jignasa*. *Jignasa* or what is termed as quest for knowledge is essential, among other things, for a spiritual aspirant. As Krishna says: “Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions and by humility” (*Gita*, IV). *Jignasu* are the searchers for truth. “Strong search” indicates cultivating thirst—ardent desire—for knowledge, or extreme inquisitiveness. There is the story of a young man who went to Socrates and said, “I want knowledge.” Socrates asked, “How badly do you want it?” The man replied, “Oh! I must have it.” Then Socrates took the young man to the beach and they went into the water, till it came up to their necks. Socrates pushed the man under water. After ferocious struggle, when the man surfaced, Socrates asked, “What did you want most, under water?” The man said, “Air! I wanted air.” “Well,” said Socrates, “When you want knowledge, as you wanted air under water, you will get it.” But too much intellectual knowledge amounts to head learning or *panditya*. After explaining His Universal Divine Perfections, Shri Krishna tells Arjuna, “But what, O Arjuna, hast thou to do with so much knowledge as this?” (*Gita*, X). Even in spiritual discipline we may invite trouble, by going into forbidden realms or trying out practices, prematurely, merely out of curiosity to see what happens. Pandora was sent

with a sealed box to Epimetheus, who introduced her into human society. Though advised not to open the box, she opened it out of curiosity, releasing into the world its dire contents of evils, including every kind of sickness. It is rightly said that it is foolish to *try out* poison, just to see what happens! In *Zanoni*, the neophyte Glyndon was instructed not to open two vases, but he opened them out of curiosity and let loose the “Dweller of the Threshold,” which he was ill-prepared to deal with. Mr. Judge explains that opening of the vases is like the approach of an aspirant to the secret recesses of his own nature.

At times we obtain this knowledge by asking questions, but it is important that we do not become prying, do not ask embarrassing questions, or ask merely to satisfy our curiosity. Mr. Judge says, “Do not ask a question unless you intend to listen to the answer and inquire into its value.” We must ask ourselves, “Why do we want to know about another’s troubles?” Is it so that we could reflect upon it and find a solution or is it to update our databank and gossip about it to others? It is quite harmless and often useful to find out a hundred different things by way of general knowledge—the “why,” “what” and “how” of things. But, when it comes to another’s personal life—be it sickness, financial trouble, food habits, lifestyle, relationships—it is clearly outside our province, and unless the other person volunteers to speak about it, we have no business to go prying. Cats are extremely curious creatures and hence can often be seen climbing high and narrow places, inviting injury or even death. Hence, it is said, “Curiosity killed the cat.” Like the proverbial cat, some people invite trouble when they meddle with affairs that do not concern them. Mr. Judge advises us to stay off the affairs of others and mind our own business. Thus:

Construe the words of the *Gita* about one’s duty to mean that you have nothing to do in the smallest particular with other people’s fancies, tales, facts, or other matters, as you will have enough to do to look out for your own duty....In all such things

I never meddle, but say to myself it is none of my affair at all, and wait till it *comes to me*—and thank God if it never arrives!  
(*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

Mr. Judge points out the futility of crowding our minds with useless information. What is not worth remembering is not worth reading. Elsewhere, he writes:

What a petty lot of matter we spend time on, when so much is transitory. After a hundred years what will be the use of all this? Better that a hundred years hence a principle of freedom and an impulse of work should have been established. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

As for checking over-inquisitiveness in another, we might show our reluctance in answering questions and make only short, evasive, replies. If the person still persists, we might have to tell him point-blank, gently but firmly, that the issue does not concern him.

The same applies to checking inquisitiveness in children. It is healthy up to a certain limit, and their questions must be answered, but there are areas in which it is quite proper for the parents to refuse to satisfy the inquisitiveness of the children till they are of right age.

**Question:** It is believed by some that since God orders our life, whatever happens must be right. Is this a right attitude—believing that as God is just and merciful, he also knows best what is good for us?

**Answer:** Mr. Crosbie writes: “Have no fear of the ocean of Life; it will sustain you. I often think of the passage, ‘All things work together for good for him who loves the Lord.’” Mr. Judge suggests that we must replace the word, “Lord,” by “Law.” There is a fallacy in thinking that God decides our fate, circumstances and events of life. If we mean by “God,” the all-seeing Law of Karma which works justly and impartially, bringing back to us the results of our own doing, then again we need to examine the attitude carefully.

To say that God (or Law) is just and hence, there cannot be a misshapen day, so that, instead of complaining or grumbling there must be acceptance or resignation—that is the correct attitude. We might even go a step further and say, “This is not only what I deserved, but what in fact I desired.” This sort of acceptance is what Mr. Crosbie recommends, when he says, “Kicking against the pricks hurts only the one who kicks; moreover, the pricks seem to enjoy it, for, being kicked, they keep coming back.” This is an attitude of supreme surrender, of unswerving faith in the Law of Karma—an inward stance necessary to cultivate for every true spiritual aspirant. It is only then that we will not resort to any prayers or propitiatory ceremonies to deviate the course of the Law and dodge the karmic consequences. It is total acceptance that “my own comes back to me.”

However, “acceptance” should not be construed to be passivity and helplessness. If we believe that God has ordered what befalls us and hence God will set it right, we are mistaken. We need to ask, “Can I change the situation?” There is this beautiful prayer: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” If we are able to change the situation, we must do all in our power. We are not expected to remain poor, handicapped, ignorant, weak, oppressed, or whatever be our plight. We can use the situation as raw material and extract the necessary lessons. It might consist in learning the lessons of fortitude and sympathy or detachment and patience, and so on.

A proverb says: “God reaches us good things, by our own hands.” But to say, “God orders our lives,” and “we are in God’s hands,” is to say that we are mere puppets whose string-puller is an outside God! We can say with certainty that God is an Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Eternal Reality, whose presence is felt through the working of a just and impartial Law.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Homer's masterpiece, *Odyssey*, is a tale of a hero, Odysseus, supposed to have ruled some 3,000 years ago. It is an account of his meeting with 12 mythical adventures, on his journey homeward to Ithaca after the Trojan War. In *Odysseus Unbound*, Robert Bittlestone, a management consultant by profession, "argues that a peninsula on the island of Cephalonia [off Greece's western coast] was once a separate land—Ithaca, the kingdom of Homer's Odysseus some 3,000 years ago. He believes that the sea channel dividing the two lands was filled in by successive earthquakes and landslides, creating a peninsula of Paliki, as it is known today," writes Fergus M. Bordewich (*Smithsonian*, April 2006). He finds corroboration in Strabo's *Geography*—the most important source for ancient geographical knowledge—which mentions that Cephalonia had been, at times, two islands, and that the channel separating Cephalonia from its present-day peninsula had gradually become filled. Bittlestone believes that most events described in the *Odyssey* may well have taken place and that telltale landmarks can be found on Cephalonia's Paliki peninsula. However, he observes that Odysseus' fantastic adventures among magical figures—the sea monster Scylla, the man-eating whirlpool Charybdis, or the enchantress Circe—may be ascribed to poetical imagination. Gregory Nagy, director of the Centre for Hellenic Studies in Washington, D.C., remarks that he is completely convinced that Paliki was Ithaca in second millennium B.C., but the poem, is not reportage and should not be treated as a road map for real events. Bittlestone is convinced that just like Troy and Sparta, Ithaca is a real place, though Odysseus may not have been a real person. There might have been a Bronze Age chieftain around whom these stories grew. "It [*Odyssey*] is one of the greatest poems in all literature, rich with psychological insight into the stresses of abandonment, jealousy, pride and shame," writes Bordewich.

Prof. Schliemann proved the existence of the city of Troy, which

other writers had thought was purely mythical. However, H.P.B. was of the opinion that the Trojan War as an historical event took place nearer 6000 to 5000 B.C. (*S.D.*, II, 437 fn.). We may infer that Odysseus' reign must have been around the same time and not, as is supposed, 3000 years ago. The tales that Homer told have reference to events which go back thousands upon thousands of years and there are some common features between Homer's *Iliad* and *Ramayana*. The stories of the heroes who fell before Thebes or under the walls of Troy belong to the Fourth Race (*S.D.*, II, 271). Regarding the Isle of Ogygia, where dwelt Goddess Calypso, daughter of Atlas, H.P.B. points out that it was very distant from Greece, and right in the middle of the ocean, and can thus be identified with Atlantis (*S.D.*, II, 769 fn.). Further:

All the "fables" of Greece were built on historical facts, if that history had only passed unadulterated by myths to posterity. The "one-eyed" Cyclopes, the giants fabled as the sons of *Caelus* and *Terra*—three in number, according to Hesiod—were the last three sub-races of the Lemurians, the "one-eye" referring to the Wisdom eye; for the two front eyes were fully developed as physical organs only in the beginning of the Fourth Race. The allegory of Ulysses, whose companions were devoured while the king of Ithaca was saved by putting out with a fire-brand the eye of Polyphemus, is based upon the psycho-physiological atrophy of the "third" eye. Ulysses belongs to the cycle of the heroes of the Fourth Race, and, though a "sage" in the sight of the latter, must have been a profligate in the opinion of the pastoral Cyclopes. His adventure with the latter—a savage gigantic race, the antithesis of cultured civilization in the *Odyssey*—is an allegorical record of the gradual passage from the Cyclopean civilization of stone and colossal buildings to the more sensual and physical culture of the Atlanteans, which finally caused the last of the Third Race to lose their all-penetrating *spiritual* eye. (*S.D.*, II, 769-70)

Homeric epics need to be interpreted symbolically, like

*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Thomas Taylor, a Platonist, in his long essay on “The Wanderings of Ulysses [Odysseus]” brings out the spiritual significance of these adventures. The adventures symbolize the soul’s journey through the temptations of earthly life and its gradual ascent until it reaches its true spiritual home, the higher principles of its own being. The deeper significance of the personal names of people and of places is hidden in their etymological meaning. As for Odysseus’ passage between the two rocks—Scylla and Charybdis—Taylor explains: “By these two rocks the poet seems to signify the passion of anger and desire, and their concomitants that compress human life on both sides; and which everyone must experience who proceeds, like Ulysses, in a regular manner to an intellectual state of existence.” He observes that anger, deep-seated in our nature, can erupt, unexpectedly, and can be shunned but not fought, but more dangerous still is desire.

Fuller explanation on the symbolic meaning of various adventures is to be found in the article “The Wanderings of Ulysses” (*The Theosophical Movement*, Vol. 24, March 1954).

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Feminists in particular are loud in asserting the woman’s right to become pregnant at will, and to be at liberty to make sex preference of the foetus by resorting to abortion and other means. In the article, “Women versus Girls,” certain questions on women’s rights are raised. These include her right to select the sex of her progeny and termination of pregnancy in case ultrasound tests reveal she is carrying a female foetus. But how about the birthright of the girl-child—be it a foetus—to survive and to grow as a human being? asks Pamela Philipose. (*The Indian Express*, April 5, 2006)

The article refers to surveys and researches conducted regarding male-female ratio in developing countries like India. They show a trend favouring a *male child*. It is approved on the grounds that it is necessary for an agricultural society where male power is needed.

In olden times, this preference was influenced by the need for strong males in a militant set-up. It seems human behaviour is motivated more by community needs than by what is morally upright.

The recent *Lancet* study reports that India has lost ten million girls over the last twenty years. And this horrendous fact of human callousness has gone unnoticed! However, it seems to be contradicted by the National Family Health Survey-2 (1998-99), which suggests that among educated men and women the preference is not against the female child. Now whom shall we believe? Modern education in India has not helped to reduce the prejudice against the girl-child. The fact is that exposure to modern developments and opportunities affords increased incentive to women to choose their progeny or to terminate pregnancy by medical intervention in which some selfish practitioners collaborate. The *Lancet* study states: “Women with higher levels of education—class X and beyond—report double the number of missing girls as compared to illiterate mothers.”

Where lies the remedy? It is suggested that efforts should be made to improve the social status of young women through better educational and employment opportunities. There should be better healthcare facilities and efforts toward legal and economic equality. To arouse the social conscience we need greater involvement of the enlightened media.

The efforts of the existing Theosophical Movement, with its chief object of ameliorating the physical, and more particularly, the *moral* condition of humanity, through knowledge of the dignity of the human being and his worth, have never been relaxed among sincere students, individually and in an organized way.

Referring to the duty of a Theosophist, H.P.B. states that it “will lie in the direction of forming public opinion,” by setting a personal example, with a view to ultimate social emancipation of the underprivileged. “Every Theosophist, therefore, is bound to do his utmost to help on, by all the means in his power, every wise and well-considered social effort which has for its object the amelioration

of the condition of the poor” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 233). It includes the weak, such as the helpless, unborn child.

A sustained effort at presenting facts of social aberrations and the remedy that Theosophy offers could pave the way to reducing improper and iniquitous choices made by the educated, in particular, who should know better.

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It is argued by some that Thinking is not as useful a human activity as it is made out to be. Thought is what makes humans human, offers hope in our darkest hours that our species will somehow calculate the way forward to a brighter tomorrow. How could we discredit thought? A team of researchers in the Netherlands chose a group of typical Dutch shoppers and tested them to see how they made their buying decisions. These people were split into two groups—one group was given detailed description of four cars, and given four minutes to make their choice. The other group was asked to spend four minutes doing anagram puzzles in Dutch, to distract their conscious minds. The researchers found that “conscious thinkers were better able to make the best choice among simple products, whereas unconscious thinkers were better able to make the best choice among complex products,” writes Bruno Maddox (*Discover*, May 2006). It is felt that we are better off leaving life’s more involved decisions to the unconscious—“that vast silent Siberia of gray matter,” unknown till the 19th century. There always have been those who have spoken about the benefits of not thinking too hard. The power of mindless thoughts has always had its devotees. Archimedes came up with simultaneous theories of density and buoyancy while bathing in a bathtub. Sir Isaac Newton owes his discovery of gravitation to the same power of mindless thought, and so also, Samuel Coleridge received inspiration for “Kubla Khan” during sleep. What should

be done to activate the unconscious mind and receive solution to our problems? It is recognized that conscious mind will still have a role in our lives, though its role will be subordinate to unconscious mind which will help us make discoveries and produce great literary works.

The “conscious” and “unconscious” mind mentioned above, seem to refer to what in theosophical parlance would be termed, “lower” and “higher” mind. Reasoning is not the highest activity that human mind is capable of. H.P.B. refers to the “tardy processes of ratiocination,” where, if the premise is wrong, the conclusion will also be wrong. But there is the other aspect of mind, which is intuitional, and it does not depend upon brain or reason. Intuition is called the faculty of the soul. It comes into operation while solving an anagram. “Hunch,” “gut feeling,” “sixth sense,” “voice of conscience,” are all variations of intuition. Intuition is far superior to reason, although it never contradicts reason. Poets, writers, artists, have now and then flashes of intuition. To understand intuition, we are required to accept the dual nature of mind—lower and higher.

This “Mind”...or rather its lower reflection, which whenever it disconnects itself, for the time being, with *kama* [passions and desires], becomes the guide of highest mental faculties, and is the organ of free-will in physical man. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

When a poet, a scientist or an artist gets flashes of intuition, his mind is, temporarily, receptive and porous to the influences from his higher nature. There is a temporary conjunction of *manas* with *buddhi* when one gets a flash of intuition, as then the mind becomes, omniscient, temporarily. When the mind is not completely receptive, we experience what is known as *hunch*, which is partial reception on the part of *manas*. How does one activate the unconscious mind? In other words, how does one develop intuition? Mr. Judge answers:

First of all by giving it exercise, and second by not using it for purely personal ends. Exercise means that it must be followed through mistakes and bruises until from sincere attempts at use it comes to its own strength....We should add the study of the works of those who in the past have trodden this path and found out what is the real and what is not. They say the Self is the only reality. They say that the brain must be given larger views of life, as by study of the doctrine of reincarnation, since that gives a limitless field to the possibilities in store. We must not only be unselfish, but must do all the duties that Karma has given us, and this intuition will point out the road of duty and the true path of life. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 191)

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THE recognition and careful observation of non-personal psychical factors entails and leads to a sacrifice of the ego—not in the form of an abolition, but in the form of a renunciation of its supremacy. It is no longer possible always to say: I want, I decide, I do, and so on, because it is evident that things happen to me, which are decided for me, and that factors other than the conscious “I” do or think in me. The ego is the vehicle for these other factors and it is responsible for them; but their roots are not in it but in the larger psyche. This is an attitude comparable to that of St. Paul when he says (Gal., ii, 20): “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”; and it is certainly an attitude which can be called religious. It is, in a way, a kind of death of the ego and is often represented in dreams. This entails a deliberate renunciation of the hitherto dominating position of the ego, the conscious person as I know myself to be.

—TONI WOLFF