

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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### RAJA AND HATHA YOGA

YOGA is defined as “the practice of meditation as a means of leading to spiritual liberation. Psycho-spiritual powers are attained thereby, and induced ecstatic states lead to the clear and correct perception of the eternal truths, in both the visible and invisible universe” (*The Theosophical Glossary*). In the Preface to his rendering of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras Mr. Judge mentions that the Yoga system is divided into two principal parts—Hatha and Raja Yoga. Hatha Yoga was promoted and practised by Matsendra Nath and Goraksha Nath and their followers, as also by many sects of ascetics in India. This system deals principally with the physiological part of man with a view to establish his health and train his will. The Sanskrit term “*hatha*” refers to the use of persistence or force, and Hatha Yoga is translated by the Monier-Williams dictionary as a kind of forced Yoga or abstract meditation, forcing the mind to withdraw from external objects; performed with much self torture, such as standing on one leg, holding up the arms, inhaling smoke with the head inverted, and so on. Hatha Yoga was intended for those whose worldly desires are not pacified or uprooted, says Shri Shankaracharya. “On the other hand, the Raja Yogis try to control the mind itself by following the rules laid down by the greatest of Adepts,” writes Mr. Judge. Thus:

Patanjali’s rules compel the student not only to acquire a right knowledge of what is and what is not real, but also to practice all virtues, and while results in the way of psychic

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development are not so immediately seen as in the case of the successful practitioner of Hatha Yoga, it [Raja Yoga] is infinitely safer and is certainly spiritual, which Hatha Yoga is not.... In Hatha Yoga practice...the result is psychic development at the delay or expense of the spiritual nature. (*The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, p. ix)

It is a very debatable point whether it is wise or desirable to popularize yogic exercises. If yogic exercises are confined to the simple *asanas*, then little harm can ensue. But the matter does not stop there. In *Letters That Have Helped Me* Mr. Judge gives a strong warning to a correspondent “to give up all yoga practices, which in almost all cases have disastrous results unless guided by a competent teacher.” In an article that appeared in *Sunday Times of India* (June 24, 2007), Sharmila Ganesan writes that cases of disturbing injuries caused by wrong Yoga practices are on the rise as there is a severe shortage of good teachers. There have been instances of people performing the “Kapalbhati” a breathing process, over a hundred times at a stretch, which may result in giddiness and even diarrhoea. Mr. Judge writes that the one indulging in these practices must ensure, “(a) complete knowledge of correctives to be applied when changes take place; and (b) the possession of a thoroughly competent guide to point out errors, to restrain endeavour and to indicate danger, as well as to cure troubles that ensue....It is well known that the postures, even when ignorantly used, bring on physiological changes in the body, with great nervous derangements” (*The Vahan*, January 1892). Fate of some of those who rushed into this region despite warning has been described in the theosophical history: some developed consumption and died, some became almost idiotic. One committed suicide, while another became a black magician.

Hatha Yoga is only concerned with the development of the physical and psychic faculties. Raja Yoga, on the contrary is concerned with the development of the higher spiritual faculties. H.P.B. points out that the soul has potentially the qualities of omniscience and omnipotence, and the object of Yoga Vidya is to

develop them fully. A gradual development of the mental and physical occult faculties is the method used by the true adept in studying the Raja Yoga. Contrasting the nine degrees of initiation of Raja Yoga with the “*Ashta Siddhis*,” minor eight degrees of Hatha Yoga, H.P.B. says that “in knowledge and powers, the latter stand in the same proportion to the former as rudiments of Arithmetic to the highest degrees of mathematics.”

The position regarding possession of powers is very clear in Raja-Yoga tradition. First of all, there is no “conferring” of the powers from the *Guru* to the *chela*. An Adept writes: “The educating of the faculty of hearing occult sounds would be not at all the easy matter you imagine. It was never done to any one of us, for the iron rule is that what powers one gets he must himself acquire, and when acquired and ready for use, the powers lie dumb and dormant in their potentiality like the wheels in a music box, and only then it is easy to wind the key and start them.” The master can wind the key and thus start the machinery, but he can also refuse to give the necessary impulse because he can clearly see the motive and the level of readiness of the disciple. If complete purity is lacking the powers might be used to bring harm to another, or there could always be the danger of personal disaster and retardation of true progress.

In Hatha Yoga, powers begin to develop fairly early even before one purifies one’s lower nature. Here lies the danger because then one might be tempted to use these powers selfishly and fall into black magic. There is the story of a *sadhu* (*fakir*) who had powers but had no control over his anger. As he meditated under a tree, the shit of the sparrow dropped on his head. He looked in anger at the bird, and the bird got burnt and killed. Later, he went begging for alms and stood at the door of a woman, who was busy with her household work and hence was late in bringing him food. He looked at her in anger, but the woman was pious and said that she was not the sparrow who could be burnt by his gaze! In *The Theosophist* for August 1882, H.P.B. writes that “the Hatha-Yogi either becomes a sorcerer, or learns practically nothing; or more frequently yet, kills

himself by such an unjudicious practice.”

The Hatha-Yogic practice of *Pranayama*, all too often taken by aspirants to be Yoga, in the sense of “suppression of the breath,” is strongly warned against in our Teachings as being dangerous to health and even to life. The breath of one in deep meditation is observably different from his rate of breathing in ordinary waking life. Thus, it is the state of meditation that produces quiet, rhythmic breathing, not the other way about. Patanjali, in fact, says that it is “when the mind has become thoroughly identified with the boundlessness of space” that “there should succeed regulation of the breath, in exhalation, inhalation and retention,” which regulation, he observes, “is further restricted by conditions of time, place and number,” no particulars of which are given (Book II, Aphorisms 47, 49-50). Patanjali also mentions “a special variety of breath regulation,” by means of which “the obscuration of the mind resulting from the influence of the body is removed. And thus the mind becomes prepared for acts of attention” (Book II, Aphorisms 51-53). Mr. Judge explains that this refers to the governance of the breath by the mind “so as to control its direction to and consequent influence upon certain centres of nerve perception within the human body for the production of physiological, followed by psychical effects.” And hence the need to differentiate between the “will breath,” as opposed to “lung breath.” The pranic currents in the astral body reveal themselves as incoming and outgoing breaths. Thus, *Prana* has come to be associated with the physical breath, and for the man of superficial knowledge, *Pranayama* consists of “*Puraka*,” or inspiration, “*Rechaka*,” or expiration, and “*Kumbhaka*” or retention of the breath between these two movements. H.P.B. warns in the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, to “beware of taking the exoteric works on Yoga literally. They all require a key.” The system of inhalations and exhalations practised in Yoga bring about the change in polarity of the body, due to both physiological and psychological alterations. In his work, *Aparokshanubhuti*, (verses 118-120), Shri Shankaracharya writes:

The control of all life-forces by realizing naught but Brahman in all things...

The negation of the universe is the outgoing breath. The thought “I am Brahman itself” is called the incoming breath.

The permanence of that thought thereafter is the restrained breath. This is the pranayama for the wise, while the pressing of the nose is only for the unknowing.

The Raja-Yoga tradition emphasises purification of motive and altruistic life so as to prepare oneself for right use of powers that will unfold at the subsequent stage of development. The “will” that is developed through various Yoga practice is not “spiritual will.” The latter is developed through true unselfishness in the person who has a sincere desire to be guided and assisted by his Higher Self, who is ready to suffer and enjoy all that the Higher Self has in store by way of discipline and experience. Above all, “spiritual will” is developed by sinking or paralyzing the personal self.

The word “Yoga” is derived from the Sanskrit “*Yuj*,” meaning union. True Yoga is supposed to bring about the union of Higher (Divine) and lower (personal) nature in man. To achieve this, one has to rigidly observe integrity of purpose and purity of intention in his desires and actions throughout life. To keep his passions and animal propensities in entire subjection is the vow he has to make at the very threshold of the sacred science of Yoga. Raja-Yoga is described in the *Bhagavad-Gita* as Kingly Science and Kingly Knowledge. It is true Occultism, and to attain to it, altruism must be made the aim of life. The first great proposition which Raja Yoga lays down is that, as there is no higher being than the Spiritual Ruler within ourselves, which is the possessor of all powers and faculties, the method of the true Yogi is to look within himself for that inner Lord and to let him govern his life. This is the real meaning of “constant mediation,” which the *Gita*, the book of Yoga *par excellence*, enjoins us to practise.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

### THE LESSON OF THE POLISHED DIAMOND

DILIP had always known that some day he would be summoned to go on a pilgrimage to a certain shrine where dwelt a great sage. And when he did so, he must take a gift with him, whatever seemed to him most precious, fair and worthy. Dilip gave much thought to this gift, for he deemed it well to be prepared in advance, even though he was only a boy when his old teacher first spoke of it to him and had a boy's confidence that there was plenty of time ahead of him. It struck him that the sooner he kept his eyes open for it, the better, especially as the summons might come without warning.

He was actually approaching his eighteenth year when at last he had a happy idea. He was the proud possessor of an uncut diamond which had come to him in some mysterious way in his infancy. He was never clear as to who had given it to him, therefore had indulged a childish fancy that it had come into the world along with him, from whatever strange sphere had once been home to them both. But it was certainly his great treasure and as such seemed the right choice for his gift. "I will learn," he said to himself, "how to cut and polish it, so that, although at present it looks a mere dull crystal, it will be a flashing jewel when I lay it at the feet of the great Sage."

This task he began immediately and soon realized that it was going to be a long one, for he was unskilled and clumsy, and was endeavouring to practise a fine art. He made mistakes and lost patience—even hope sometimes—and was more than once misled through listening to wrong advice or following some theory he chanced to read of in some book that professed to be written by an expert. But he persevered, for he had set his heart on taking the diamond, and the diamond only, as his gift to the Sage. Besides, he knew it *was* a jewel. Its native lustre must shine forth eventually.

Time passed, and Dilip worked on his diamond, never neglecting it amid the work and pleasures of his life. It was his constant preoccupation, but a secret one. He did not choose to speak of it to

any. In due course his teacher, then his parents in their turn, cast off the body and departed, and Dilip himself was a boy no longer but a middle-aged man when the sudden summons came to make his pilgrimage. Fortunately, the diamond was ready. It was a pure, perfect gem, its facets reflecting all the colours of the spectrum. Yet Dilip would fain have done more to it. "It is never quite the diamond of my dreams," said he. But he had to obey the call and seek the shrine. He could only hope his gift would find acceptance.

The Sage received him with gentle courtesy. As he knelt humbly offering his treasure, Dilip had the curious impression that the same light shone steadily in those deep eyes as sometimes flickered fitfully in the diamond. The Sage gazed long at the radiant jewel and Dilip wondered what feature of it pleased him most—its purity, its brilliance, or simply its beauty. He wondered also if any traces of his past mishandling of it were still visible. He felt remorse for them even yet.

"You wonder what I see," the Sage said quietly, apparently reading Dilip's thoughts. "I see long years of patient work, done with devotion and carefulness. Done, too, in privacy, in all modesty, drawing no man's attention to it. Brilliance and value, Dilip, are assuredly before me. But I tell you what I *see*."

Dilip's heart leapt up gladly. "Then my gift," he said in a low voice, "is acceptable. I scarce dared hope....But what else could I bring, sir? This only was most precious to me."

"And to me. You chose well," replied the Sage. "Would that every soul might be 'as firm and pure as flaming diamond.' Have you the will to help them to become so? Shall I lay the further task upon you, Dilip?"

"Let that be my reward!" cried Dilip eagerly.

"So be it!" quoth the Sage, smiling gravely. "I entrust you with a message, then, to carry along the world's trodden ways to all who are too ignorant, too careless, too blind to recognize a jewel when it lies hidden in mire or clay. One such—" his eyes rested upon the diamond—"you yourself have saved, so that now it shines in beauty.

Help those others to do likewise, Dilip. Use your insight and experience in their service. But above all give this message—not from me, a mere humble fellow-worker, but from those great Alchemists of the Spirit who would have every atom, yea, every grain of dust, attain its purest state.” With uplifted hand the Sage delivered his injunction, and Dilip stored up the words in his heart that he might pass them on faithfully. “Make hard thy Soul against the snares of *self*; deserve for it the name of the Diamond-Soul.”

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In *The Voice of the Silence*, the disciple is told that there is wisdom and light in the world, poured in by the great beings. But clouds of intellectuality and too much preoccupation with the affairs of the mundane world prevents that light from reaching us. However, it does reach us, whenever the conditions are right. The disciple is asked to make his flesh passive, his head cool and his soul as firm and pure as flaming diamond. Few objects can display the brilliance and beauty of light like a well cut and polished diamond. A pure diamond reflects light, can withstand great pressure, and does not break down easily. So also, the one aspiring to reach wisdom must so train himself that he does not buckle under the difficulties and adversities of life. He must be of adamantine will. The word “adamant” comes from the Greek *adamas*, meaning “unconquerable” or “indomitable.” The word *adamas* was used by the old Greeks to mean hard metals and stones. Later, *adamas* became corrupted into *adamant*, *diamant* and diamond. Every temptation, every adversity and every painful situation could be used as raw material, which when used properly, by learning the necessary lesson, brings to the surface the hidden good qualities and hidden potentialities. When a diamond sparkles we see different colours, and that is what makes it so beautiful and worth so much. The sparkles of a diamond represent various qualities required to be developed by a spiritual aspirant. Even at a simple level, we need

all three: goodness, strength and wisdom. For instance, when we see a drowning man, we might feel sorry, we might be strong enough to swim, but if we do not know how to swim, we will not be able to rescue him. On the other hand, a kind-hearted but weak person, who might know swimming, would feel equally helpless in rescuing a drowning man.

The mind immersed only in worldly concerns, in gratification of desires, is like a diamond buried deep in the earth, and will be unable to reflect the light of wisdom. With constancy and strength of mind the aspirant must strive to achieve the purity of clear ideation. In embodying the powers attributed to the diamond, he becomes like one, his whole mind and heart cool and fixed in reflection. Comparing the polished diamond with the disciple, Mr. Judge writes, “In just the same way as a polished diamond shows the work which gives it value and brilliancy, so the man who has gone through probation and teaching under the Adepts carries upon his person the ineffaceable marks” (*Echoes from the Orient*, p. 37). In other words, there are ineffaceable marks in the aura of the Adept for those (clairvoyants) who are able to see them, showing his advancement on the Path. Likewise, an Adept can see how far progressed a particular person is, by looking at his aura. If a person has progressed only three steps on the Path there will be three marks in his aura. It is no use pretending that he has progressed four steps, because if he had indeed advanced to the higher step there would be a corresponding mark in his aura, as these grow with being’s development. Hence, it is impossible to fool an Adept and extract from him occult information or secrets pertaining to higher degree of initiation by obtaining signs and passwords out of a book.

Multiple angles and facets of a diamond might represent many twists and turns on the spiritual path. They might also represent the multi-faceted mind which is able to respond to various aspects of truth. A diamond in the forehead of an idol or picture of a deity represents the pure symbolic light of soul wisdom.

## WHAT CONSTITUTES A LODGE?

IT IS only proper that students, now and then, reflect upon the function, purpose and nature of the U.L.T. [United Lodge of Theosophists]. It is said that four walls do not make for a home. A home is made up of individuals who have something in common and who share a deep and intense bond. The same is true of a “lodge,” or a centre of U.L.T., which is made up of a group of individuals that have something in common, and have a feeling of belonging. An associate of the lodge must feel that he “belongs” to the lodge, and that feeling can arise only when he accepts others, and is, in turn, accepted by others, unconditionally. That feeling of belonging arises also when he responds to the philosophy. The common bond is not only of love but also of “similarity of aim, purpose and teaching.” It is only when a person appreciates that the philosophy, though it sounds lofty, is practicable, and that when practised it does bring about inner transformation in the practitioner, though it may not be perceptible, and he would be enthused to find out ways and means of taking across these teachings to others. It is then that the associate does not feel disheartened when people do not respond, or even when audience at the lodge meetings steadily dwindles, perhaps because the cycle is downward. When there is a feeling of belonging, the same enthusiasm, devotion and dedication is kept up even during the downward cycle of the centre.

A Lodge is made up of all those people who adhere to certain principles. But those who work for theosophy would do well to ask, now and then, are we doing it the “right way”? Are we following the original program? The original program is to allow the lodge to flourish on its own moral worth. Let us give the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation, which form the sure and logical basis for the practice of ethics. Are we giving out the teachings as recorded in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and W. Q. Judge, or are we giving our own opinion in the name of Theosophy? Are we having reverence for the founders, recognizing the true position of H.P.B.

and W. Q. Judge in the *guruparampara* chain, of which no link is unimportant? Where that reverence is lacking, that lodge would be an empty shell, instead of being a living, breathing centre. All the true student-aspirants are linked to the Great Lodge of Adepts by aspiration, by service and by following the Masters’ program as nearly as they know. We are promised that all sincere students are surrounded by an “invisible escort.” The more “impersonal” the efforts, greater is the help that could be extended by those who watch and protect every centre. Let the student ask himself if he keeps in the background and allows only the philosophy to come forth. In the olden days, there used to be an advertisement for Gramophone, which said: “The Gramophone you do not hear, you only hear the music,” thereby implying that there is absolutely no extra sound going to be added from the instrument itself, so that all you can hear is pure music. In the same way, when one works impersonally, all that gets conveyed is, Theosophy pure and simple.

A Lodge is a gathering place where thought, study and mutual service are shared; where we realize that we cannot progress in isolation. Though individual study is important, an individual is not able to appreciate all the aspects of Truth, and in that each one can help the other to see Truth from different angles. A lodge is like a *Sangha* or Spiritual community, where one grows not by his own efforts alone, but is helped in understanding and application of the teachings. There is “mutual service.” The student-aspirant, at times, is almost tempted to give up the moral discipline, and at some other times he may find all that has to do with Theosophy, irksome. It is then that others help him by lending moral support. Among those belonging to a *Sangha* there exists *Kalyan Mitrata* or Spiritual Friendship, so also, Co-disciples or co-students share a special bond. The family bonds or bonds of friendship get exhausted in a few incarnations, but not so with the co-disciples. A Master of Wisdom says, “Are you so blind as to think that, it is the first time you have contacted Theosophy?” It is a continuation of old karma and our conduct with the co-disciples will determine whether in subsequent

incarnations, we will struggle on alone or in harmony with other disciples—with their support and help.

The Lodge is a visible basis or focus, which helps to bring like-minded people together, who want to work for Theosophy and through it for humanity. In the sense of visible basis, it is the voluntary association of students, who have come together to study and apply theosophy pure and simple. Who are these associates? At a simple level, they are those who have signed the associate card. From the card which the Associate signs, it is assumed that he or she is in *sympathy* with the purposes of the Lodge, *i.e.*, is in agreement with them, feels for them. Feeling is the mainspring of action; it is an impelling force demanding expression. The would-be Associate's better nature is touched and the resolve is made in the silence of the heart to do *something*. That resolve must be fed and must grow if it is to bear fruit, and that process is, *from within, outwards*. Each one signing that clause resolves in his heart to offer his services, to make himself responsible for executing faithfully whatever portion of work that may fall under his care. The thought, the feeling and the urge for action must come from within the individual himself, not from outside. To sign the Associate card, thus recording one's *sympathy* for the purposes of the Lodge and one's resolve to become a part of it, is to quicken all that is best and highest in one's nature, which must be fed and nurtured through the very means which the U.L.T. recommends. But to belittle the covenant, to whittle it away by the thought, perhaps, that we do not have to do anything unless and until *we* decide, and so put off active participation in the work for the Cause, is to create a void in the inner nature, which will make response to higher things more difficult in the future.

The Cause needs student-servers who will make in their hearts the resolve to serve because they see the need, and so offer themselves. Just what we have and are, here and now, can be used in the service of the Cause, and such sacrificial service spells death to selfish tendencies in the fullness of time.

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

### THE DOWNWARD COURSE—II

6. *A blade of kusa grass wrongly handled cuts the hand; asceticism wrongly practised leads downward, to hell. (311)*

7. *An act carelessly done, a vow badly kept, wavering obedience to discipline—all this will bear no sweet fruit. (312)*

8. *If anything is to be done let a man attack it unflinchingly. A lax ascetic scatters more and more the dust of his passions. (313)*

9. *An evil deed is better left undone—it causes suffering; a good deed is better done—it causes no suffering. (314)*

10. *Guard thyself like a frontier town well guarded, within and without. Do not let a moment glide by; for they who let slip an opportune moment grieve when in hell. (315)*

THESE VERSES seem to emphasize the need for deliberation and earnestness on the part of would-be disciple. A vow once taken is said to be binding for life and beyond. It is a solemn act which must not be undertaken lightly or with any ulterior motive. H.P.B. wrote that work for Theosophy forms the entrance to the Inner life. But none can enter there save the man himself in the highest and truest spirit of Brotherhood, and any other attempt at entrance will either be futile or he will lie blasted at the threshold. It is an occult law which cannot be fooled or caused to be deviated. The pretender fools no one but himself.

The disciple has to obtain mastery over his body, senses, faults and pain, writes H.P.B. But, ascetic practices alone are insufficient to make of a man a spiritual being. Extreme ascetic practices can even kill a person. When the Buddha was emaciated with extreme asceticism, he heard the dancing girls singing thus: "The string o'erstretched breaks, and the music flies; The string o'erslack is dumb, and music dies; Tune us the sitar neither low nor high." Realizing his mistake, the Buddha said:

I strain too much this string of life, belike,  
 Meaning to make such music as shall save.  
 Mine eyes are dim now that they see the truth,  
 My strength is waned now that my need is most.

When an ascetic sits for meditation, he prepares his seat that is firm, neither too high nor too low. It is made of kusa grass and covered with a skin and a cloth. Kusa grass is considered sacred, perhaps because it has occult and magnetic properties which would enable the ascetic to retain pure magnetic atmosphere, conducive to meditation. But if the kusa grass is not handled properly, it can cut the hand. Likewise, if asceticism is practised wrongly, it can ruin the man, physically and psychically. This is because ascetic practices enable a man to develop self-control and powerful will. But if he lacks inward purity in terms of right motive and altruism, he may misuse them for selfish purposes. Also, with such practices, he begins to develop certain psychic powers such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, mind reading, etc. These are often mistaken for spiritual progress by ordinary man. And when these powers are used for benefiting oneself or for harming another person, it becomes black magic, even if it is unconscious. Having strayed from the true path, it becomes more and more difficult for this man to return to the right path.

Each one of us has certain duties to perform—duties to our family, to our friends, to the society, to the nation and to ourselves. They have not been imposed upon us by some outside god or authority. They are the result of our own actions in this or some previous life. We may find our duties to be irksome and boring, but this is a debt which, if left unpaid during life, would leave us spiritually insolvent and morally bankrupt in our next incarnation, writes H.P.B. Duty is considered to be a Royal Talisman which can protect us from harm. It is through performance of every duty to the best of our ability that we can progress. Our circumstances and surroundings are exactly in accordance with our karma and they contain lessons that are needed for our further development. By neglecting our duties we

miss the opportunity to learn the lessons. The law of Karma would then place us in similar situation in this or some future life to afford us the opportunity. Then there are duties which fall upon us as a result of our deliberate choices such as marriage, business deal, discipleship, etc. These are the duties which we have chosen of our own free will. Once accepted, we must try to fulfill them unflinchingly. A slipshod job may require us to do it again. At times, it may even have some grave consequences. Imagine a nurse administering a wrong drug to the patient or a garage mechanic failing to fix the car breaks properly, or a clerk adding an extra zero to some important figure. It can create havoc and even endanger the life of the person or the company. For spiritual progress, one is expected to perform every duty belonging to one's station in life, carefully and cheerfully, as if our life depended on it. One must throw oneself, heart and soul, in performance of accepted duties. Having accepted the discipline, there is no going back. Constant watchfulness and mindfulness alone can save the disciple from committing any mistake. The disciple becomes far more responsible for his acts of omission and commission than an ordinary man. "Vigilance is the path to Life Eternal. Thoughtlessness is the path to death," says the Buddha. In *The Voice of the Silence*, we find similar warning: "The smallest wave of longing or regret for Maya's gifts illusive... a thought as fleeting as the lightning flash will make thee thy three prizes forfeit—the prizes thou hast won."

11. *They who feel shame when there is no cause for shame and they who feel no shame when they ought to be ashamed—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines. (316)*

12. *They who fear when there is no cause for fear and they who do not fear when they ought to fear—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines. (317)*

13. *They who discern evil where there is no evil and they who see nothing evil in what is evil—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines. (318)*

14. *They who discern evil as evil and what is not evil as not evil enter the good path, following the true doctrine.*  
(319)

Each one of us has a philosophy of life which influences our thoughts, feelings, actions and our choices. This philosophy is a combination of what we may have learnt from our family, from education, from religion, from society, or from prominent personalities. Our range of perception is governed by the ideas we hold in regard to ourselves, our nature, and the life about us. The reason why we fail to understand our own true nature is because of our false ideas, false conceptions of life, false ideals. It is man's false conceptions of life that prevent him from knowing the truth. He is then afraid or ashamed when in reality there is no need to be afraid or ashamed. We tend to judge things based on our limited ideas and start seeing evil where there is no evil; or we may fail to see evil in what is evil. Clinicians of our time are still encountering warped psyches influenced by distorted conceptions of sin.

Some people feel ashamed of their poverty and suffer from inferiority complex. Some people feel ashamed that they do not have expensive house or car, or when they are not able to take their children abroad for vacation, or buy expensive clothes, or go frequently to hotels. They are ashamed if they fail to match their neighbour in pomp and show at their own son's wedding. A person of humble means is sometimes ashamed to decline an offer of drug or drink feeling that he is not in step with modern society. There is also the fear of isolation if one does not join others in taking bribe or distorting profit figure. There is also a fear of god's wrath if one fails to perform certain rituals and ceremonies prescribed by the religion. They say that if you do not perform *Shraddha* ceremony, the soul of your ancestors will wander restlessly for a long time in the nether world. There is also the fear that if one did not have a boy-child, the family line would perish and there would be no one to perform the last rites and post-mortem ceremonies which alone could ensure one's safe journey to heaven. People's idea of what is

evil or sinful is often warped. In olden days, it was considered sinful to marry a widow, to touch an untouchable, a *Sudra*, a person from lowly caste.

This shows the need for questioning our own religion, our own value system, and our own beliefs about right and wrong even if our religion forbids such questioning or considers it a blasphemy, because if our conceptions are wrong, so will be our perceptions and so will be our actions.

Teachings of the Great Ones tend to get distorted after their departure from the scene because of misunderstanding, misinterpretations, misconceptions, interpolations by the later day followers who take up the responsibility of transmitting the teachings to the later day humanity. Further, the teachings are distorted or diluted by priests and pundits because they desire to maintain control over the masses and make them do what they want out of the fear of their fate after death. Moreover, people accept things blindly out of false fear or respect. "Evil" is not to be feared, but *understood*, which can only be accomplished by going beyond traditional categories of Right and Wrong.

It takes a lot of courage to question one's religion, question the society, question the conventions and customs and the categorical morality which lays down hard and fast rules as to what is right and what is wrong. And it is this "categorical morality" preached by religions which "holds man back" from making true progress, says *Light on the Path*. We are content to go by the conventional "right" and "wrong" preached by religion without applying our own discrimination or *viveka*. Good and evil are relative and "it takes a very wise man to do good works without danger of doing incalculable harm." The best judge and the best guide is the SELF within which speaks to us softly as the voice of conscience, and begins to speak to us in no uncertain terms as we act according to its behest.

*(Concluded)*

## THE STUFF OF GREATNESS

### I

WHY do we need to identify the elements of which greatness is formed? The fact is that we can readily recognize and acknowledge anything that at once strikes us as great, formidable, awe-inspiring, mystical and even romantic! Even the primitive minds would prostrate before their chosen leader from among the strongest and the wise, and even his challenger is grudgingly admired or accepted! This is the stuff of the human heart, the spontaneous worship of greatness, be it a huge Banyan tree, a gigantic rock, the vastness of the ocean, or the grandeur of the canyon, even a large lizard or a fascinating serpent, or thunder and lightning that threatens. But hero-worship of the strong and remarkable character is equally the most primitive and positive tendency in us.

People consider their chosen god to be always the supremely powerful and benevolent figure or their idol that compels submission, as these represent power, beauty, goodness, etc. However, as men advance in knowledge, experience and maturity, their object of admiration and worship may shift towards much more adorable and refined forms of “icon,” worthy of veneration. The impressions left by the mythical adventures and exploits of our heroes, such as, Hercules and Ulysses, leave their impressive images for long, for their valour, magical powers and virtues. From childhood we are prone to idealize our parents, and can sense some visiting person’s pleasing mien. Hence, the fairy-tales, myths and legends leave fascinating impact on everyone’s minds and stir up the need to emulate even when they stir up larger than life imagery, and a far-fetched possibility to a rational mind. Man is therefore a born hero-worshipper. And this very trait makes of him a hero in the making.

It is an interesting study to inquire what constitutes greatness itself that compels our attention. The philosophical and psychological study of greatness can become a rewarding exercise. Indeed, it is easier to recognize great works or the remarkable effects of

someone’s labour and contribution to human thought and general progress. But few of us can identify the subtle qualities that make for greatness. It requires the development of the sensitive mind to recognize the very essence behind the type of excellence. For instance, it needs an experienced jeweller to identify and value the real worth of a precious jewel, the rest of us merely admire and covet! A truly great combatant detects the needed skills and valour of his equal opponent, and may inwardly salute him, being glad to have met his worthy match! Because there is already in us something of the great, latent or cultivated, that can respond to the true, the good, and the beautiful in others. It is said that “we are ourselves worthy, when we adore the worthy.” John Drinkwater puts it thus:

When the high heart we magnify  
And the sure vision celebrate  
And worship greatness passing by  
Ourselves are great.

One of the means of developing character, along with intelligence and knowledge, employed in honourable Asia was, and still is, the use of “*danta-katha*” or oral transmission, by the roaming singers or bards, of the adventures and exploits of legendary heroes of royal and martial gallantry, and in moral, spiritual and cultural exploits. The one key for the guidance of the seeker of greatness is given by poet Milton: “What is strength without the double share of Wisdom?” That also means that the guiding principle in true greatness is the “inner genius,” that overshadows the outer.

The “art of appreciation” plays an important role in developing excellence. As Sir Thomas Brown writes: “Praise is a debt we owe to the virtues of others.” On the other hand, to ignore a praiseworthy act or an idea is to fail in our duty. Psychology points out that for some of the inner drives that move us onward and also for the strength of our character, we owe to the examples and precepts of others to a certain extent. A person’s character is revealed not only by the way he describes the good or the weak side of others, but

also by giving cold reception to the excellence in others. Out of conceit, indifference, or ignorance, a man may under-rate or he may be slow to acknowledge another's worthy accomplishments. It requires certain humility and magnanimity, besides the sensitive awareness to value the praiseworthy traits even in an adversary!

Voltaire had said: "By appreciation we make excellence in others our own property." For, next to greatness itself comes one's large-hearted capacity to value it and to rejoice in the gifts of the mind and heart in fellow-human beings. It is a natural law that we attract and imbibe the qualities we adore when we happily value another's moral and mental gifts. But when we dwell with some intensity on the great deeds of moral or physical valour and the acts of sacrifice, they leave the lasting impression in our nature. We attract what we love. The psychological law is that we gradually become that which we often think of—good or evil. Mr. Judge encourages student-aspirants to dwell, intensely and often, on the awe-inspiring "image of the Master," the Great Soul, as ideal, and as a living power in one's heart, especially during meditation. He says, "to meditate on the Higher Self is difficult. Seek, then, the bridge—the Masters."

It is good to keep alive the image of one's chosen ideal, whose life-works have aroused inspiration and encouragement in us. The elevating influences are like what the poet Longfellow calls the "footprints," left to us by the Great Ones. Some of these influences are present in their living words which we may treasure as their precious legacy. It is for us to be on the lookout for those sacred "footprints." In fact, in the East, even the physical foot-wear (*paduka*) of a holy personage are considered to be sacred relics. To expressly idealize the adorable virtues and great gifts embodied by the Great Ones of the age, is almost an act of worship. In some Indian homes there is the practice of recalling and chanting the virtues of what are called the "seven immortals," who symbolize certain high ideals and powers. Their immortality is not mere deathlessness, but immortalizing of a divine principle they stood for and upheld, in the face of adversity.

Surprisingly, some of these are remembered in spite of their rare act of flawed behaviour, such as, transgressing time-honoured rules of warfare, etc. This is perhaps reminder to us of the possibility of lapse even after mastering certain height of greatness of character! The seven immortals and their remarkable qualities are: (1) Aswatthama—the mighty warrior, who suffered for disregarding martial rules. (2) King Bali—a mighty demon king who took care of the well-being and prosperity of his people. It is said that he was trying to trap Laxmi and get her to his kingdom from Vaikuntha, in order to bring prosperity exclusively to *his kingdom*. (3) Vyasa—a sage, of great erudition and wisdom. (4) Hanuman—the son of wind, *vayuputra*, who exemplified selfless devotion. (5) Vibhisana—the brother of King Ravana, is known for his righteous conduct and conviction of truth. (6) Kripacharya—the great ancient teacher, known for his impartiality. (7) Parshurama, a great warrior, who hated the *kshatriyas* and annihilated them. Whatever be the form of veneration of the high souls, the practice is supposed to invite the blessings on the worshipper. *The Dhammapada* also declares, "He who pays homage to those who are worthy of homage... the Fearless and Peaceful Ones, his merit cannot be measured by any."

A nation which fails to preserve its own inspiring legends and the memorable contribution of these great pioneers, founding fathers, reformers, missionaries, and also their acts of selfless philanthropy, and likewise, the family which soon forgets its noble and illustrious sires, are not only forfeiting their own precious legacy, but are in the danger of final decline. By not recording and recalling their past glorious civilizations and culture, nations have enfeebled the spirit of enthusiasm and valour in the people. This could well be one of the reasons for the fall of civilizations, *viz.*, failure to remember and emulate the high souls, who had made it possible for the people to achieve such high mark of civilization.

(To be concluded)

## THE TRUE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT

DICTIONARIES generally define science as a systematic and formulated knowledge; pursuit of this or principles regulating such pursuit. It also refers to organized body of knowledge that has been accumulated on a subject. Science, being knowledge resting on reason, experience, evidence and proof, obviously excludes beliefs not based on these criteria. True scientific spirit then is the spirit of quest of knowledge of truth in all things. Truth is the ultimate object of science.

The basic proposition of modern science is that the natural world is the “objective reality” independent of the observer, and that true knowledge is the knowledge of it obtained by the scientific method, consisting of *objective* observation of facts free from *subjective* bias, analysis, experimentation, and inferring of general laws from particular instances. Universal truth of theorems are thus sought to be arrived at, and their validity demonstrated by their applicability and, by that means, to predict events. The scientific method is denominated “Logical Empiricism.”

While many a mystery of the processes and laws of physical nature has thus been unravelled by the Inductive sciences, and wonderful results are obtained, scientists nevertheless admit that their method has failed to arrive at a unified system of knowledge about the world *as it is, in reality*, as hoped for—a unified science that would at once grasp one single universal principle, which would harmonize separately acquired individual observations in one synthetic whole. The reason for failure is not far to seek: it lies in their basic assumption of the nature of reality and the limitation of inductive logic. Their own discoveries have demonstrated to them that their basic assumption of an objective world independent of subjective self or consciousness is not true. The theory of relativity and quantum physics, as also their researches in “cognitive psychology,” have conclusively proved that observation of “facts” is inalienably bound up with, and influenced by, the mind of the

observer, and has called into question the possibility of pure objective perception. It is admitted that subjective assumptions and theories held could colour the facts observed and give special meaning to them. The “facts” which conform to and are supportive of the predetermined theory and foundational assumptions are admitted, and those of the opposite kind are over-looked and discarded as anomalous, and other facts are created to corroborate the prevailing theories. Thus, observations are theory-dependent. The disciples of each branch of science are trained how to see and what to see and thus interpret the world in terms of their respective theoretical models. Scientists therefore do not see the world *as it is, in reality*, but see it as affected by their belief system.

Relativity and limitation of inductive science is summed up by the great physicist, David Bohm, who says that science is a communicative action within an unbroken wholeness that is infinite in its qualitative and quantitative depth and complexity; that the laws and theories formulated by each branch of science, in relation to the disciplinary matrix specific to each, is valid only within that domain, and possibly false beyond it, *and that, therefore, no theory can be regarded as absolute because of the infinite depth of the unbroken ground.*

Truth then, according to the admission of leading lights of science, is the “Unbroken wholeness that is infinite” which includes both the subjective self and objective world as one continuum constituting the whole, and that the empirical and inductive methods cannot comprehend the same. True knowledge then can only be the knowledge of both the perceiving consciousness and objects of perception, or, Spirit and Matter, dual aspects of One Absolute Reality, and that self or consciousness is the key to it.

Basis of knowledge must therefore subsist in man himself, in his essential being, the Self. Plato enunciated this truism in *The Phaedo*: “Men, when interrogated, if they are but interrogated properly, will speak about everything *as it is*. At the same time they could never

do this, unless science and reason resided in their nature.” This is a fundamental teaching of Occult Science. A science that denies or ignores mind and soul to be independent of matter must necessarily be amoral and biased, and unable by that very deficiency to arrive at Truth. Proper interrogation that Plato speaks of is the process of freeing the mind through dialectical reasoning from erroneous ideas and biases, which act as a thick veil that hides reality from us, in order to let the innate knowledge—light of the *rational* Soul, *Nous*—in us to shine forth, giving rise to right perception of existing things. This process is essentially ethical and contemplative. Morality and science can never be separated. Says H.P.B.: “It is not, therefore, ‘knowledge,’ as ordinarily understood, that the occultist works for, but it comes to him as a matter of course, in consequence of his having removed the veil which screens true knowledge from his view” (*H.P.B. Series No. 27*, p. 38). The “Veil” is called in Eastern philosophy *Maya*. It is the illusion produced by the limitation of the senses, and the mind wedded to them, which prevent our perception of Reality which is One, which alone is true knowledge. Once the *Maya* is overcome, knowledge of things *as they are* shines forth.

Occultists say that the daring explorer of Truth must transcend the narrow limitations of sense and transfer his consciousness to higher planes of being, into the region of *noumena* and the sphere of primal causes. To effect this, he must develop faculties which are dormant in the average man of the world at the present stage of human progress (*S.D.*, I, 477-78). Forces of Nature that science studies are not final causes of the visible phenomena but are themselves the effects of primary causes, which are hidden, with which Occultists deal, tracing these latter to the primal Eternal Cause—the intellectual and divine Nature, the Soul and Spirit, the synthesis and the seventh principle of the manifested Cosmos.

The root of every form, as of every atom, is that seventh principle, the One Reality; but in its manifested or phenomenal aspect—collectively constituting six principles of the cosmic body—is illusive because transient, appearing as real only to the conception of

personal, human consciousness—*Maya* of the senses. All that is perceived and known by senses corresponding to each of the six principles—the physical being the grossest and the most transient in the scale of six—is *relatively real*. The Secret Doctrine teaches that only when we have reached the absolute consciousness, blended our own with the Seventh Principle, of which the six principles are the six manifesting aspects, shall we be free from the delusion produced by *Maya*, and attain to true knowledge.

Truth then is of two kinds—relative truth, *Samvritti Satya*, and Absolute Truth, *Paramartha Satya*. Teachers say that anyone can acquire relative truth on earth by a study of one or several aspects of the numerous differentiated rays of the Sun of Absolute Truth, as they pass through space, using one’s perceptive faculties, as modern science does. But, says H.P.B. :

To reach the Sun of Truth we must work in dead earnest for the development of our higher nature. We know that by paralysing gradually within ourselves the appetites of the lower personality, and thereby deadening the voice of the purely physiological mind...the animal in us may make room for the spiritual. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 17*, pp. 2-3)

Such Initiated Adepts are the only true scientists; the uninitiated, however learned, can only be empiricists; the latter ever keep shifting from one theoretical model to another, each full of missing links and unbridgeable gaps in the chain of their theories, unable to arrive at Absolute Truth; the former, having blended their consciousness with Universal Consciousness, there remains for them no gaps or missing links in their complete and all-embracing philosophy. Of this ancient Occult Philosophy and its methods, Mr. Judge says:

It regards Nature as one complete whole, and so the student of occultism may stand at either point of observation. He may from the stand-point of Nature’s wholeness and completeness follow the process of segregation and differentiation to the minutest atom conditioned in space and time; or, from the phenomenal display of the atom, he

may reach forward and upward till the atom becomes an integral part of cosmos, involved in the universal harmony of creation. The modern scientist may do this incidentally or empirically, but the occultist does it systematically and habitually, and hence philosophically. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 3*, pp. 9-10)

As long as science proceeds from demonstrated particulars to universals, it cannot cross the barrier that hedges off the world of *noumena*—the world of the primal causes—from that of the physical senses and the mind, and thus will be unable to solve the mystery of being. Opposite is the Platonic method—that of the Occultists—of proceeding from the Universal Principles and descending into particulars. The Platonic system is a complete synthesis that grasps universals by a law that compasses the whole domain of matter—visible and invisible—and sees no unsolved mystery anywhere. Complete synthesis, which is the synthesis of the higher faculties of man, has been in possession of the great Sages from the remotest antiquity. It takes humility, a love of Truth and an open mind for the modern scientist, whose sole object is or ought to be to reach Truth, to seriously study the system of spiritual psychology, cosmology and philosophy of the Ancient Science, and bring about a reform in their philosophy and methods.

True scientific spirit then is unconditional love of and an uncompromising adherence to Truth for its own sake; a physical and moral courage and conviction which is ever ready and willing to make any sacrifice, even of one's life or reputation or long held cherished beliefs, in order to realize it; a complete freedom from all bias and prejudices; a just and an open mind that readily admits, impartially considers and fearlessly investigates ideas or propositions or phenomena which may be presented, even if they are diametrically opposed to those one is devoted to, in order to extract what truth they may contain and thus extend the horizon of knowledge; and finally, an unselfish love of and devotion to Humanity.

## 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:** What is the explanation of the passage in the Eighth chapter of the *Gita*, in which Shri Krishna says: “The Fire, the Flame, the day, the bright fortnight, six months of northward journey of Sun (or *Uttarayana*), dying in these conditions, Yogis go to the Brahman, never to return. But those who depart in Smoke, Night, the dark fortnight, the six months of southward journey of the sun (or *Dakshinayana*), they go to the region of the moon and return”?

**Answer:** The *Sloka* describes, symbolically, the conditions in which the soul departing from the body will go to a particular region (or state after death). H.P.B. explains that the devotees are divided into two classes: Those who will reach *Nirvana* while on Earth like Buddha and others. They may enter the *Nirvana*, taking the path of liberation or they may refuse to enter. In either case, they will not be born again in this *Maha-kalpa* or the age of *Brahama*. H.P.B. says that “Fire, Flame, bright fortnight, northward journey of the sun,” is symbolic of the Highest and Absolute Deity. Only the person who dies in absolute purity goes to Brahman and has right to *Moksha* or *Nirvana*. “Smoke, night, dark fortnight” are symbolical of matter and darkness of ignorance. Thus others dying in the state of incomplete purification, must necessarily be reborn.

Mr. Crosbie explains in *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, that Yogis are those who strive to obtain union with the Higher Self. Those who are striving will not achieve it in one life, and so long as they are still struggling they are subject to rebirth. The conditions described in the *sloka* do not apply to those who are still attached to material existence. In their case some other conditions apply. The

ancient sages have pointed out that the Souls do not depart from the body in the same way. There are seven great *plexi* which govern seven other minor *plexi*. These are the channels through which influences are given and received. Each channel is related to seven divisions of the system (which probably refers to Solar system). Thus depending upon the predominant idea in the life, what is called the line of life's meditation, there would be departure from one of the seven channels, and the soul would be led to appropriate region or realm of freedom or bondage. In order to reach the highest place the person must be free from desire of enjoying the merits of austerities, sacrifices and charity, wherein one enjoys heavenly bliss for immensity of years, and then is forced to take birth again. To reach this highest place one must be a man of meditation, with the highest motive to benefit humanity in thought and action, and this must be sustained through many lives.

After the death of the body, the surviving entity passes through various states. In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 132) H.P.B. mentions that according to *Visishtadwaita*, the one who reaches *Moksha* enjoys the bliss in a place called *Paramapadha*, where the *Muktas* are never again subject to the qualities either of matter or Karma, and they do not have to be reborn on earth. But if they choose, for the sake of doing good to the world, they may incarnate on Earth. It further points out that the way to *Paramapadha* is called *Devayana*. It is described as path in which the *Jiva* goes from the heart of the body, to the *Brahmarandra* in the crown of the head, traversing the *Sushumna*, a nerve which connects the heart with the *Brahmarandra*. Then, the *Jiva* breaks through *Brahmarandra* and goes to the region of the Sun (*Suryamandala*) through the solar Rays and ultimately reaches *Paramapadha*.

The Hindu philosophy speaks of two paths, *Devayana* and *Pitriyana*. The former is the path of "no return." The "Path of Return" is called the "Path of Ancestor," *Pitriyana*, and is considered to be presided over by Moon, which represents the world of matter. Mr. Crosbie mentions that the seven *plexi* are related to seven regions or

realms to which the soul goes after death, depending upon what thoughts were predominant. One way of understanding this connection is by taking into account the association of each *chakra* or plexus with certain emotions and inner state. Thus, for instance, in exoteric literature, *Muladhar chakra* (sacral-coccygeal plexus) is said to be associated with urge for survival, sexuality and sensuality; *Swadhisthan chakra* (sacral plexus) with pursuit for pleasure; *Ajna*, (or "Brow chakra"), with desire for transcendence and intuition, and so on. The Hindu philosophy speaks of 14 *Lokas* of which 7 are divine regions and 7 are infernal regions. *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 321) mentions that *Bhu*, *Bhuvar*, *Swara*, *Mahar*, *Jana*, *Tapo* and *Satya Loka* are various paradises, and they are to be attained by increasing religious merits. *Satya Loka* is the abode of the *Nirvanees*. Likewise, there are various degrees of hell or *Kamaloka*. Mr. Judge points out that taking into account the variety of human character and nature, as also the last thoughts and life thoughts of people at the time of death, and also the manner of death, *Kama Loka* is an infinitely varied sphere. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 107)

**Question:** In what sequence the evolution in the "Human Kingdom" takes place, in the ascending order, till one becomes a Perfected Being?

**Answer:** Theosophy teaches that after the mind of man was activated, evolution in the human kingdom has been by self-induced and self-devised ways and means checked by Karma. We then need to consider the stages of growth from ordinary human being to a perfected human being. Spiritual development is a slow process. Once the process of change begins, we begin to see transformation at physical, mental, emotional and moral levels. There is a gradual shift from being self-centred to being more and more caring and selfless, which forms the core of real progress. A very rough outline of it is given by Janki C., who points out that in the first stage, we are in the Age of Innocence, when like a child we expect to be loved and taken care of. In the next, the Age of Disillusionment, facing the reality of life, many become cynical and atheistic. This is

followed by the Age of Responsibility, when the seeker begins to take charge of his life. He takes a step higher in the next stage, the Age of Keeperhood, when instead of wanting others to share his pain, he wishes to relieve the pain of others. The Age of Enlightenment is far beyond that of “Keeperhood,” when love becomes universal and there is complete identification with other beings. It is the culmination of spiritual growth, the state of self-realization. (*The Times of India*, July 21, 2008)

In the *Mahayana* Buddhist text, *The Voice of the Silence*, we are given four stages of spiritual perfection, beginning with *Srottapatti*, “he who has entered the stream” that leads to the *Nirvanic* ocean. This is the first Path. The second is *Sakridagamin*, he who will receive birth only once more.” The third is called *Anagamin*, “he who will be reincarnated no more,” unless he so desires in order to help mankind. The fourth is known as *Rahat* or *Arhat*. This is the highest. An *Arhat* sees *Nirvana* during his life. (p. 50 fn.)

In Raja Yoga tradition it is explained that there are many sorts of chelas. There are lay chelas and probationary ones. There are those who are trying to fit themselves to be even lay chelas. “A Lay Chela is but a man of the world who affirms his desire to become wise in spiritual things.” Next, one becomes a Lay chela on probation, then an accepted chela on probation, and finally, an accepted chela. As to probationary chelas there is a rule that they have to *invariably* go through at least seven years of trials. These “trials” are not fixed tests but they are tests of chela’s attitude to various events and circumstances precipitating in his life. At the end of this period he may be accepted or rejected. Mr. Judge points out that Chelas or disciples are of many grades, and some of the Adepts are themselves the chelas of higher Adepts. A chela becomes an Adept. The word Adept signifies proficiency in a particular field. A *Mahatma* is not only an Adept but much more. A *Mahatma* is a perfected being, one who has attained to the state where time and space are no obstacles to sight, to action, to knowledge or to consciousness.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

How does population grow? As per records and estimates, the population of the world has been growing continuously since the middle of the 14th century, when it stood at around 370 million. Thereafter, the global population reached four billion in 1974, five billion in 1987, and six billion in 1999. A human being is a soul in the human body, and hence seven billion people on earth today, implies that there are that many human souls on this planet. Thus, the questions arise: Is the number of souls infinite? If the number of souls is finite, how does one account for the steady rise in the population? When the world begins, all souls do not come down to earth from the soul world. Each soul appears in this world like an actor appearing on stage in a play at his appointed time. Human soul today is in an advanced stage of spiritual decay, which thinks and acts with the belief that it is a mortal body with all its wants, needs and limitations. This is why we see population growth mostly in physical terms, as an increase in the number of living human bodies. Since the number of souls is finite, population growth will also stop after a point. In a play all the actors have to come on stage, so also, all the human souls have to take birth on the earth. Once here, the souls are reborn with those who came down *first*, taking the maximum number of births, and those who came later having fewer births. Once here, no soul can return home before the cycle reaches its end, when the world undergoes renewal by the forces of nature and returns to its pristine state. The duration of one cycle of the eternal world drama is 5,000 years. As the new cycle begins, the souls begin to come down once again to earth, to play their eternal roles once more. (*Purity*, May 2013)

In the theosophical context always the question asked is that *in a given cycle of existence*, if there is rebirth, how does one account for “population explosion”? The Church father Tertullian argued that if there is rebirth where did all the *extra people* come from? In other words, if 50 people died then only 50 people should be reborn.

Instead of that if 100 or 200 people were born, then we have to believe that for every new baby born a new soul was created. Dr. Ian Stevenson engaged in reincarnation researches points out that we have only rough estimates of the number of human beings who have lived on earth since the origin of man. Mr. Judge points out that although the number of Egos (souls) belonging to our earth is definite, no one knows what that quantity is, or what is the total capacity of the earth in sustaining them. Moreover, we are not being kept informed of every fluctuation in the population. He mentions that statistics of the people that are born every year is mainly maintained in the Western countries and that too is not perfect. There are large number of people destroyed in famine, floods, earthquakes and tsunamis, but we do not have the exact figure of the same.

We do not know the number of Egos waiting to be born. A Master of Wisdom says that since the total number of Egos is vast, although the number that dies may be small, there would be sufficient number of egos waiting to be born. We are given the analogy of a hall in the town. At any given time the number of people in the hall is finite, but people are added from the greater population of the town outside. Hence, the number of people in the hall fluctuates, as there is constant supply of people from the town. We may compare our earth to the hall in the town, and the state after death, which is called *Swarga* or paradise or *devachan* to the town. We are told that the time for which each ego remains in *devachan* varies. All the Egos in *devachan* do not take birth at the same time or at the same interval of time. It is stated that whenever there is great number of deaths caused by wars, pestilence, famine or earthquakes, it is followed by “baby boom,” *i.e.*, there is rush of souls to incarnate, either in the same place or in some other place or race. It is also stated that the “intermission” between two lives was very much longer in the earlier days than it is now. Hence, in earlier times, there would be greater number of souls in *devachan* waiting to be born than on earth. In the recent centuries the case is reversed, hence, greater number of egos takes birth, with only few egos remaining in *devachan*. We

need not worry about “population explosion,” because there seems to be some intelligent regulatory factor in the birth of human beings preventing extraordinary excesses. It has been observed in the case of the fruit flies that their population shot up at an exponential rate, but then levelled off.

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It appears that the seemingly random connections that cause us to declare “it’s a small world” can be used to explain everything from globalization to the epidemic spread of diseases. As a social phenomenon, it is familiar enough. We often find that we have surprising connections with apparent strangers—say, a colleague in common, or a friend of a friend. It is called the “Small World Effect,” and understanding its complications is now a major area of research in such fields as economics, medicine and marketing. When a Chinese academic arrived in Hong Kong in February 2003 he brought with him SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) virus. As those he infected in Hong Kong, travelled by air to Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore and Canada, through the Small World Effect, they spread the virus in these widely-separated places within few days, and then further to still more remote places such as Europe and Australia.

It was only in the 1950s that researchers began to probe its roots. At the University of Chicago, mathematician turned social scientist Anatol Rapoport and his colleagues created an artificial society, a “network” of individual people, each with random link to others. It was “random” links which turned a huge population into a “small world.” On the other hand, in a *regular* network, people and objects are linked in a regular way, for example, a person knows only his next-door neighbour. In such a case, it would take many steps to link a person in one “neighbourhood” to anyone else.

In 1967, a young sociology professor at Harvard University, Stanley Milgram, wanted to gauge how many people we have as friends, or friends of friends. To find out, he posted packages to 100

people in Nebraska and Kansas and asked them to post these on to a “target” person in Massachusetts, whose address was not given, but only his name and other personal details were given. Milgram asked the recipients to post the packet to anyone they knew on first-name terms, who might have a better chance of being able to deliver the packet. The outcome was stunning, as the packets reached the “target” person after just five re-postings. When the experiment was repeated a few years later, it was found that everyone in the USA could be reached *via* just five re-postings. Based on this discovery, American playwright John Guare named his play, *Six Degrees of Separation*, in which one of the characters says: “Everybody on this planet is separated by only six other people. Six degrees of separation.”

The way birds move in perfect synchrony is being suggested as an example of the Small World Effect, wherein if the lead bird changes his direction, it can rapidly spread to, *via* a few random connections, to distant “sub-leaders” who pass the direction changes to their neighbours. In August 2003, sagging power-lines touching trees tripped circuit breakers that left 50 million people without power across eight US states, and through small world effect, Canada’s air and traffic networks were thrown into chaos. Within days of 9/11 attack in 2001, businesses ranging from local restaurants to national airlines had filed for bankruptcy, writes Robert Matthews, a science journalist. (*BBC Knowledge*, June 2013)

The Small World Effect has philosophical and spiritual basis and implications, which works in the invisible world as “law of sympathy” and interdependence. A Master of Wisdom writes, “Nature has linked all parts of her Empire together by subtle threads of magnetic sympathy, and there is a mutual correlation even between a star and a man.” We are interconnected on the inner plane. One person’s unhappiness pollutes not only his own inner being and of those around him, but also the collective psyche of which he is an inseparable part. Further, any negative inner state is contagious: Through the law of resonance, it triggers and feeds latent negativity

in others.

Humanity as a whole is the stem that grows from the spiritual root. If we hurt the stem, every shoot and leaf will suffer, and so it is with mankind. Any injury to the plant will affect the whole course of its future growth and development, just as a cut in the finger may make the whole body suffer and react on the entire nervous system. Every physical action has its moral and everlasting effect. If we hurt a person, his pain and suffering is not restricted to him but spreads and affects his neighbours and also people of other nations, *in good time*.

H.P.B. points out that we are like cells in the body. One unhealthy cell may affect the whole body. There is no such thing as separateness. It is an occult law, “No man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way, no one can sin, nor suffer the effects of the sin, alone.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 201)

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Women all over the world seem to be carrying the psychological burden of beauty. It is extremely difficult to escape the beauty trap in today’s world, with models staring out of magazines and sexualized images of teen icons that are hard to live up to, but difficult to ignore. Phoebe Baker Hyde, 38, a cultural anthropology major at an Ivy League college, tossed her cosmetics into the bin for 13 months, after trying hard to achieve perfect weight and look in the post pregnancy period. She has written about her experience in the book *The Beauty Experiment*. In an interview with Shikha Shah she confesses that what made her give up cosmetics for 13 long months was the realization that empowerment does not come from having an amazing wardrobe. We must not confuse self-confidence with looking great outside. She achieved this by concentrating on things other than beauty. She put herself on a “magazine diet,” by

refraining from buying celebrity/glamour magazines, and instead began to appreciate the real world all around her. She realized that taking care of her basic health contributed to her “inner beauty.” “When I am healthy, well-rested and mentally in balance, I am kinder and more compassionate to myself and others, wiser about my actions and choices, even more generous and less fearful,” says Hyde. We all have the biological urge to be liked, and appear attractive to others because humans are social animals and reproduce sexually. But when men and women have crazy fixation with having a very specific, culturally-mandated kind of beauty, they often experience nervousness and insecurity, says Hyde. (*Times Life!* [*Sunday Times of India*], May 26, 2013)

We live in the world which goes by “appearances.” Too much importance is being given to outer look than to the inner nature and moral values. An ugly exterior often hides a noble soul. Our self-worth is generally measured by others, and also ourselves, on the basis of derived sense of “self.” There are experiences in life that open our eyes to the fact that our identity runs deeper than our appearance, our achievements, our ideas or feelings. Whether we are seeking for true beauty or lasting happiness, we need to go beyond the physical. We are in the “transition state,” when *Kama* or desire principle is predominant. We ought to show greater development of mind and lesser involvement with our desires and passions, by now. Instead what do we find? We find that there is too much preoccupation with the development of personality; too much importance is being given to physical appearance, and acquiring of name, fame, position and power. In all the modes of living, gratification of senses is esteemed the highest good. There is greater sensuality in our art and literature. The beauty of form is evanescent. As Walter De la Mare writes: “But beauty vanishes; beauty passes; however rare—rare it be.” It is inward beauty we must strive to acquire, by leading a morally pure life.