

## 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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### TO HAVE OR TO BE?

*TO HAVE or to Be?* is a book written by psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, in 1976, in which he differentiates between “having” and “being.” He comes to the conclusion that “*having and being are two fundamental modes of experience, the respective strengths of which determine the difference between the characters of individuals.*” The “having” mode concentrates on material possessions, power and aggression, while the “being” mode is based on love and the pleasure of sharing. He observes that our modern society has become materialistic, and prefers “having” to “being,” so much so that our identity is determined by our possessions. We hold on to things for our identity; the things we buy and possess, is used as proof of our existence, and that is one of the reasons why our consumer behaviour is so out of control. When we lose some of our possessions, or when clothes, cars, or jewellery we possessed go out of style, or when we have lost our youthful charm, then we, as “havers,” are lost. We cease to exist. We value ourselves and others according to possessions and possessive qualities such as, beauty, knowledge, skills, abilities, etc.

The word “identity” is derived from the Latin *idem ficare*, means “to make the same as ‘I.’” Thus, our body, feelings or our possessions are not “I,” to begin with. We tend to equate them or associate them with “I.” As we grow, we tend to derive our sense of self from what we are not. An American philosopher, Daniel Cowan, points out

that in describing a hole in a piece of wood, we may say that it is a round, brown, smooth hole and thus describe it in terms of colour, shape and texture of the wood that surrounds the hole. This is because the qualities of the hole are much more abstract so that it is easier to describe the qualities of the wood than the gaseous air that fills the hole. So also, we tend to derive our identity from what surrounds our true Self, *i.e.*, our body, ideas, feelings, education, etc. This derived sense of self could be extremely fragile, requiring maintenance, nurturing and defending. For instance, when we derive our sense of identity from our interaction with others, we may work towards getting approval from others and avoiding criticism. To bolster the sense of identity we gather possessions. Our identity is often measured in terms of houses, cars, television sets, furniture and paintings. We fear physical death because it implies separation from everything that we depend upon for a sense of self.

An article in *The Guardian* points out that even well-paid people, the upper-middle class, can suffer bouts of misery when they are surrounded by the rich. Keeping up with the Joneses hurts, but it is not always a case of envy. Even when the person finds himself in the top one per cent of the population, financially, he might still be unhappy, because he is always sizing himself up locally, by making a comparison with his colleagues, his relatives and his neighbours. Such comparisons keep people struggling materially and emotionally. Research shows that such constant comparisons harm our mental health. (*Sunday Times of India*, May 14, 2017)

The alternative mode is the “being” mode, which is not dependent on what we *have* but rather depends upon what we *are*. It is an individual’s tendency to grow, to love and advance towards self-realization. The person in a “being” mode is not *dependent* on his possessions for his identity. In every mode of life, people should ponder more on “being” nature than the “having” nature, because everyone is mortal, and we do not find anyone taking with him, after death, money, houses, land, power, or fame. The reason being, the only “possessions” which are transferred to the life after death,

are the inner nature and the character of the person.

And yet, almost all of our time and energy is spent on accumulating wealth, property, gadgets, or in trying to acquire name and fame. There is the beautiful story by Leo Tolstoy, *How much land does a man need?* It is about a man who had insatiable desire for possessing larger and larger areas of land. His greed leads him to a village where the elder tells him that as much land as he can cover by walking, from morning till sunset, will be his, with the condition that he should return to the original spot by sunset. The greedy man tries to cover a very large area, with the result that he gets breathless by sunset and dies of exhaustion as he reaches the original spot. Ironically, the villagers bury him by digging a patch of land, just long enough to hold his body, *i.e.*, seven feet! Some of the ambitious “achievers” of our day fall in the same category. Even Alexander the Great, the great conqueror, could not take with him, after death, any of his conquests. Someone has rightly written, to the effect: What did Alexander bring with him? What did he take with him after death? As can be seen, only his two empty hands extended outside his tomb. The Bible says, “As he had come naked from his mother’s womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labour that he can carry in his hand.” (*Ecclesiastes*, 5:15)

We can apply “having” and “being” mode to our intellectual, psychic and spiritual possessions. When we “own” many books, or even when we read and reflect upon them, we are in the “having” mode. Many of us are possessors of intellectual wealth. But so long as that knowledge has not been applied, has not made us better human beings, has not been used to help others, we do not enter the “being” mode. Whether it is knowledge, skills, powers or virtues, till they are welded into the fabric of one’s being, they remain mere possessions.

If a person ardently desires to achieve something and keeps its fires burning, he will, in time, achieve whatever he desired. Thus, we see that one person works to acquire wealth, another works to

acquire robust health, and still another works and succeeds in acquiring academic knowledge, and so on. Theosophy teaches that the results of these efforts will be left here at death, and when the Soul returns to earth it will be hampered in its further progress by too much expenditure of energy on such worldly pursuits. The Soul has garnered no harvest during its earthly existence which is congenial to its nature. It is important to know what it is that the “Ego” carries with itself at death.

In order to get the answer we must consider what happens to man after death. Theosophy teaches that the death of the physical body marks the “first death,” but the process of death continues in *kama loka*, wherein there is separation of the astral body, desire nature and lower mind from the higher trinity of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* or the Real Man, or Ego which goes to *devachan*, *swarga* or paradise, after the separation. This is termed “second death.” After the dissociation of the three higher elements, the astral body, desire nature and the lower mind integrate with each other to form an entity, called *Kama rupa* or the *Desire body*. As a bee gathers honey from the flower, the Ego collects from the personality, the nectar of spiritual qualities, which includes love and sympathy, love for the good, true and the beautiful. If a person had pursued abstract and ideal things such as music, painting, poetry, mathematics, for its own sake, and not for any worldly benefit then these also become part of the Ego. All that has become part of one’s being is taken by the Ego to *Devachan*, for final assimilation.

The personality can carry into *Devachan* only that which is of the nature of the True, the Good and the Beautiful; false things, evil things, ugly things are discarded by the Soul. But that is not all, even the worldly and personal, thoughts, feelings, desires and actions do not become part of the reincarnating Ego. If we abstained from vices and carefully avoided over-eating and over-sleeping merely to become a first-rate athlete, or to become a much sought-after bachelor, we have wasted the opportunity provided by our life. Temptation was resisted for achieving worldly ends, and hence no

lasting good is achieved.

There are cases where discipline and austerities are undertaken for a purely personal advancement in the spiritual life. The highest aspiration is to acquire liberation for oneself alone. Though, in this case, it is not the worldly, perishable things which are pursued and worshipped, the goal is not the attainment of the highest. Hence, once the energies which plunged the soul into bliss, may be for immensity of years, is exhausted, the Ego is forced to take birth again.

Even ethics and virtues practiced mechanically, or for the sake of one’s spiritual progress, fail to mould the character of the person. These virtues must be practiced to the hilt, and must be used in controlling and guiding our reactions to poverty, hardships, pain, estrangement and personal injustice. Such a practice can enrich the Soul and give it additional strength in the next incarnation to undertake a larger service and greater sacrifice. When adverse circumstances are encountered, they can be turned to use by applying the appropriate ethical precept to the unwelcome events. Thus, the soul can build up its luggage for the future life, because the mundane was momentarily touched by the eternal. It can be seen that a far greater generation and conservation of energy must result when one endeavours, in the light of ethical precepts, to guide other human being on the right path. Ethics, when linked to knowledge and the desire to help, have the power to transform. The effort expended in achieving anything that is not worthy of being part of the Ego, does not disappear but survives as tendencies or attributes or *Skandhas*, which mould one’s future personalities.

Lord Buddha taught that an individual who possesses two qualities goes to heaven: Upright character and upright belief. Upright belief is that belief which shows itself in character, and acts itself out in our conduct with others, in our daily behaviour. We must aim at cultivating that belief and character which are capable of bringing us peace and joy so that our conscience is satisfied.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT RAINING STONES

THERE WAS a time we were living in the Guest House. [Sri Aurobindo lived in the Guest House (41 rue Francois Martin) between 1913 and September 1922. The incident related by the Mother here occurred in 1921, sometime in the middle of December]. Sri Aurobindo lived on the first floor, in the room right at the end which is now the meditation room of the children's boarding. We had a cook called Vatel. This cook was rather bad-tempered and did not like being reproved about his work. Moreover, he was in contact with some Musalman, who had, it seems, magical powers—they had a book of magic and the ability to practice magic. One day, this cook had done something very bad and had been scolded—it was Datta who had scolded him—and he was furious. He had threatened us, saying, “You will see, you will be compelled to leave this house.” We had taken no notice of it.

Two or three days later, I think, someone came and told me that stones had fallen in the courtyard—a few stones, three or four: bits of brick. We wondered who was throwing stones from the next house. We did exactly what we forbid children to do: we went round on the walls and roofs to see if we could find someone or the stones or something—we found nothing.

As the day declined, the number of stones increased. The next day, there were still more. They started striking especially the door of the kitchen, and one of them struck Datta's arm as she was going across the courtyard. The interest was growing.... And the stones began falling in several directions at the same time, in places where there were neither doors nor windows. I must tell you that this Vatel had informed us that he was ill and for the last two days—since the stones had started falling—he had not come. But he had left with us his under-cook, a young boy of about thirteen or fourteen, quite fat, somewhat lifeless and a little quiet, perhaps a little stupid. And we noticed that when this boy moved around, wherever he went the

stones increased. The young men who were there—Amrita among them—shut the boy up in a room, with all the doors and windows closed; they started making experiments like the spiritists: “Close all the doors, close all the windows.” And there was the boy sitting there inside, and the stones began falling, with all the doors and windows closed! And more and more fell, and finally the boy was wounded in the leg. Then the boys began warning us, for it was perhaps time to tell us that the thing was taking pretty serious proportions. I understood immediately what the matter was.

I must tell you that we had made an attempt earlier to exhaust all possibilities of an ordinary, physical explanation. We had called in the police, informed them there was somebody throwing stones at us. He had a loaded pistol and stood waiting there in the courtyard, but the stones kept falling. So, the policeman said, “It is not worthwhile my staying here, I know what it is, it is Vatel who has done this against you, I am going.”

It was after this that we made the experiment of shutting up the boy, and the stones began to fall in the closed room, and I was informed that the boy had been wounded. Then I said, “All right, send the boy out of the house immediately. Send him to another house, anywhere, and let him be looked after, but do not keep him here, and then, that is all. Keep quiet and do not be afraid.” I was in the room with Sri Aurobindo and I thought, “We will see what it is.” I went into meditation and gave a little call. I said, “Let us see, who is throwing stones at us now? You must come and tell us who is throwing stones.”...I saw three little entities of the vital, those small entities which have no strength and just enough consciousness confined to one action—it is nothing at all; but these entities are at the service of people who practice magic. When people practice magic, they order them to come and they are compelled to obey. There are signs, there are words. So, they came, they were frightened—they were terribly frightened! I said, “But why do you fling stones like that! What does it mean, this bad joke?” They replied, “We are compelled, we are compelled.... It is not our fault, we have

been ordered to do it, it is not our fault.”

I really felt so much like laughing but still I kept a serious face and told them, “Well you must stop this, you understand!” Then they told me, “Don’t you want to keep us? We shall do all that you ask.” “Ah!” I thought, “let us see, this is perhaps going to be interesting.” I said to them, “But what can you do?”—“We know how to throw stones.”—“That does not interest me at all, I do not want to throw stones at anyone...but could you perchance bring me flowers? Can you bring me some roses?” Then they looked at one another in great dismay and answered, “No, we are not made for that, we don’t know how to do it.” I said, “I do not need you, go away, and take care, especially never to come back, for otherwise it will be disastrous!” They ran away and never came back.

There was one thing I had noticed: it was only at the level of the roof that the stones were seen—from the roof downwards, we saw the stones; just till the roof, above it there were no stones. This meant that it was like an automatic formation. In the air nothing could be seen; they materialized in the atmosphere of the house and fell.

And to complete the movement, the next morning—all this happened in the evening—I came down to pay a visit to the kitchen—there were pillars in the kitchen—and upon one of the pillars I found some signs with numbers as though made with a bit of charcoal, very roughly drawn—I do not remember the sign now—and also words in Tamil. Then I rubbed out everything carefully and made an invocation, and so it was finished, the comedy was over.

However, not quite. Vatel’s daughter was *ayah* in the house, the maid-servant. She came early in the afternoon in a state of intense fright saying, “My father is in the hospital, he is dying; this morning something happened to him; suddenly he felt very ill and he is dying.” I knew what it was. I went to Sri Aurobindo and said to him, “You know, Vatel is in the hospital, he is dying.” Then Sri Aurobindo looked at me, he smiled: “Oh, just for a few stones!”

That very evening Vatel was cured. But he never started anything

again. *How could the stones be seen?* That is what is remarkable. There are beings that have the power of dematerialising and rematerialising objects. These were quite ordinary pieces of bricks, but these pieces materialised only in the field where the magic acted. The magic was practiced for this house, especially for its courtyard, and the action of vital forces worked only there. That was why when I sent away the boy and he went to another house, not a single stone hit him anymore. The magical formation was made especially for this house, and the stones materialized in the courtyard. And as it was something specially directed against Datta, she was hit on her arm.

There was yet something else....Ah, yes! We came to know later that Vatel had gone to a magician who is very well-known here, and he had said that he wanted definitely to make us leave that house—I do not know why. He asked the magician to make stones fall there. The magician told him, “But that is the house Sri Aurobindo lives in! Ah! no, I am not going to meddle in this business.” Then Vatel insisted and promised him a little more money. The magician said, “Well, look here; we are going to make a rule: in a circle of twenty-five metres around Sri Aurobindo, the stones will not fall. Always there will have to be twenty-five metres’ distance between the stones and Sri Aurobindo.” And he arranged his order of magic in this way. And that is why never did a single stone come anywhere near us, never.

Naturally, those who do that must have a vital force. A vital force is necessary—a little mental force also—but quite a strong vital power to control these little entities. And these people rule them precisely through fear, for they have the power to dissolve them, so these entities fear this very much. But upon all these formations, all these entities, it is enough to put simply one drop of the true, pure light, which is the supreme light of construction—you put one drop upon them: they dissolve as though there had been nothing at all there. And yet this is not a force of destruction; it is a force of construction, but it is so alien to their nature that they disappear.



[Taken and abridged from *Stories told by the Mother* (Part II).  
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*The Theosophist* magazine, for August 1881, mentions a letter received by H.P.B. in which the writer cites several instances, in which the stones appear to have been guided by unseen hands, but no one was ever hurt, though the stones were sometimes the size of an egg, and continued falling near certain individuals for a period of two weeks.

Several accounts were given of the phenomenal feats of the remarkable Mohammedan sorcerer, Hassan Khan, having power over some of the elemental spirits. The phenomena produced by him included falling of bricks and sand-showers. H.P.B. remarks that this class of phenomena are not due to the agency of disembodied human spirits, but “they went to prove the existence of prankish nature-elementals. The *Jinnat* or *Jinn* of the Oriental demonology are of this class, as the reader of the *Arabian Nights* will remember. They can be made subservient to one who has learned the secret of their subjugation by occult means. Only those who would believe that we consider them as beings of any sort—least of all *intelligent* beings—will be very much mistaken.” (*The Theosophist*, May 1882)

An ordinary magician has power over these elementals. It should be possible for anyone who might stumble upon the secret of communicating with them to command and use these elementals, as can be seen in the story of Aladdin and his magic lamp. A person had to merely rub the lamp and a Djinn would appear, ready to do any task he was asked.

We are given the assurance that no matter how dangerous, powerful or malignant these genii may be, they have no power in the presence of a single ray of God, *i.e.*, the Divine Principle in man. (*S.D.*, I, 294-95 and fn.)

## STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA QUALIFICATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP—II

THERE ARE two types of knowledge: the lower knowledge, which is already known by the man, is *Jnata*, and the higher knowledge which is to be known by man, is *Jneyam*. That is why we have the pair of *Jnata-Jneyam*. *Jnana* is the knowledge which is to enable us to get the knowledge of the Father in Heaven. We have one more term in this comparison with knowledge, and that is the Sanskrit expression—*Jnana-Gamyain*, that which is going to be obtained through knowledge. It refers to the real aim or goal, which is attained through the knowledge of “the Father in Heaven” and the Higher Self in Man. That goal is the very aggregate and collectivity of Immortal Ones, of Living Perfected Men, or the Great *Mahatmas*.

What is *Jneyam*? That which is to be known: he is the Owner and the Higher Self in each one of us. Krishna describes to us *Jneyam* from the universal point of view in verse 13, saying, “I will now tell thee what is *Jneyam*, that which is to be known, from knowing which, a man enjoys immortality.” Then follows a description which enables one to identify that *Jneyam*, as the Absolute or *Parabrahmam*. Krishna says it cannot be called either Being or Non-Being, that it is beginningless and endless. That it is devoid of faculties, devoid of attributes, and yet it is reflected by all beings, by all creatures. It has heads and eyes and ears in all directions. It seems afar off and yet is very near, it is the necessary background for every manifestation, it is the innermost essence of manifested things, and that is why, Krishna says, “In the hearts of all it ever resideth.” It is this Principle which shows us the unity and the interdependence of all manifested beings, which remains for us to be known if we want to unite ourselves with the very essence of our own Higher Self. Having thus given a wonderful representation of the *Parabrahmam*, Krishna proceeds to give the explanation of the dual nature, the two-fold principle of all manifested life.

He calls these two principles *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. He says that

*Purusha* is the Individual Spirit, which when it incarnates into Matter (*Prakriti*), gets involved through the qualities inherent in Nature, and thereby it is born again and again. This *Purusha* is born sometimes in good wombs and sometimes in evil wombs, which shows how far even the delusion which arises from Matter entangles this *Purusha*. *Prakriti* refers to *Mulaprakriti*, or the Lower nature of Krishna. *Purusha* refers to *Daiviprakriti*, the Higher nature of Krishna, and it is *Fohat*, Energy, the vitalising Principle of all things. There is that which is above *Mulaprakriti* and *Daiviprakriti*, or above matter and energy, and that Krishna describes as *Para-purusha*, or above the *Purusha*—which is incarnated in the body and gets entangled in matter.

The Over Soul, *Para-Purusha*, or the Higher Principle of our Being is not active in ordinary humanity, as Mr. Judge explains in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. He explains that of the Divine, Higher Trinity of Man's constitution, only a portion, only a ray of the Highest Principle in that Divine Trinity, incarnates in present humanity, *i.e.*, the Incarnated Soul, the *Purusha* which has come into the body. The Higher Self simply shines upon man but does not incarnate, *i.e.*, it is not active in man. What the disciple must do is to make that *Para-Purusha* active in his own physical body. What this *Para-Purusha* is in a disciple or a man who has united himself with this Higher Principle, is made clear in verse 23. Krishna describes this *Para-Purusha* by giving those other names, which enable us to see how it functions in a perfected man. These other names of *Para-Purusha* have been translated by Mr. Judge as, the Spirit in the Body, *Maheswara*, the Great Lord, the Spectator, the admonisher, the sustainer, the enjoyer, and also the *Paramatma*, the highest soul. That this Great Spirit in the Body is not the ordinary *Purusha* is made clear in a succeeding verse when Krishna explains that this *Para-Purusha* is not affected when it is in the body, either by the actions or by the non-actions, that the man is to be accounted for. It is through this union of man with *Para-Purusha* that a disciple is technically constituted. This union alone makes of him an immortal

being, because when he thus succeeds in uniting himself with *Para-Purusha* it means that he has attained the knowledge of that which is to be known, or *Jneyam*.

If man may thus become an immortal being, it stands to reason that there are those who have become immortal beings. The Great *Mahatmas*, the Self-consciously immortal Men are not destroyed at the time of general dissolution, nor are they affected at the time of the beginning of new field of evolution, which will be seen in the Fourteenth Discourse. We have four items in the First Fundamental of *The Secret Doctrine*. The Absolute of the First Fundamental of *The Secret Doctrine* is called *Parabrahm* in the *Gita*. The other three aspects of the First Fundamental are: Consciousness or Divine Ideation, Eternal Substance, and the link between Consciousness and Matter, which is known as *Fohat* or Energy. In terms of the terminology used for the study of the *Gita*, the three factors are: *Mulaprakriti*, *Daiviprakriti* or *Purusha*, the animating Principle, and Krishna Himself. As explained earlier, *Mulaprakriti* and *Daiviprakriti* are the lower and the higher natures of Krishna, and that the higher principle was Krishna himself—above, distinct and superior to both the material essence and the energizing principle of that matter. It remains for us to understand the dual aspect of the three principles, the dual aspect of Krishna's own nature—Krishna as Divine Ideation, as Consciousness, as Spirit, which is spoken of in the First Fundamental of *The Secret Doctrine* as a universal, Omnipresent principle.

Whatever the state of consciousness of the being, the object, or the creature, Krishna is present there as that consciousness. Consciousness is present everywhere—wherever there is matter, wherever there are manifested objects. But there is the other aspect of Krishna, which is Consciousness, which has become Immortal Self-Consciousness, through its long pilgrimage with the help of *Prakriti* or matter, and *Purusha* or energy, and this other aspect of Krishna, H.P.B. refers to as Absolute Wisdom, the Open Eye of *Dangma*, the primeval Buddha, the Planetary Spirit, which strikes

the key-note at the beginning of any manifestation, and so on. All these names are simply different terms to designate the Great Lodge of Immortal, Self-conscious Human Beings, those who have become the active cerebrum of the Universe. So Krishna as Spirit is present in the heart of every human being, and in every object and creature in the manifested universe. But Krishna as the Great Lodge of *Mahatmas* is not present in all beings and all objects, but only in those human beings who have become the devotees and the servants of the Great Lodge of Masters. It is when Krishna the soul in the body, recognizes the existence of this Great Lodge of Masters and beings, to dedicate its life and its energies to the acquisition of the knowledge about those Great Ones and to the service, that a disciple has been born, and that disciple is on the road to true immortality.

He realizes and he learns to know *Jneyam*, that which is to be known, and which gives him the idea of the essence of all things, and he recognizes that aspect of *Jneyam*, that which is to be known, the goal to be attained, and that goal is the great Lodge, the finding of the Living Masters. What is *Jnana*? *Jnana* is Higher Knowledge. It is that aspect of knowledge which enables man, through certain practices, to arrive at the understanding of the First Fundamental, and thereby the finding of the cerebrum of the Universe, the Lodge of Masters, the Absolute Wisdom. *Jnana*, the Spiritual Wisdom is described in verse 11, which is very important for the ethical application of the metaphysical facts we have been considering. For, it is the *Jnana* that is Wisdom, which applied in our lives, is going to lead to the realization of the unity of all things, and the presence of the Living Masters in the world.

For the acquirement of Wisdom, Krishna gives a very simple list of qualifications, virtues and ethical qualities to be applied in our daily life. We erroneously equate spiritual life with the performance of certain extraordinary feats, the placing of ourselves in extraordinary circumstances, but spiritual life is nothing of the kind.

(To be concluded)

## SAKTI—SOME REFLECTIONS

### IV

KRIYASAKTI is the highest power of thought, which makes of man a creator, and it lies latent within each one of us, but only in a few has it been called to life and developed. It remains dormant in 999,999 men out of a million, and gets atrophied. This creative potency is described as “the mysterious *power of thought* which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy. The ancients held that any idea will manifest itself *externally*, if one’s attention (and Will) is deeply concentrated upon it.” *The Secret Doctrine* teaches that the first race of humanity was “self-born,” and is described as the shadows of the shadows of the Lords, *i.e.*, the Lunar *Pitris* created men out of their own divine essence. It is called *chhaya*-birth, or primeval mode of sexless creation, where the First Race *oozed out* of the bodies of the *Pitris*. The Second Race is said to be “sweat-born” race. It was produced “by budding and expansion; the a-sexual (*form*) from the sexless *shadow*.”

The Second Race of humanity consisted of pure beings, who were constantly plunged in an abstract contemplation, were intellectually inactive and produced the third race. Since it was not a conscious act, their sons, the third race are collectively called “the Sons of *Passive Yoga*.” *The Secret Doctrine* teaches that in the first portion of the third race incarnated the “Sons of Wisdom” and produced by *Kriyasakti*, a progeny called the “Sons of Will and Yoga.” It was a *conscious act* of Will. The race thus produced immaculately has been described as the “ancestors” (the *spiritual* forefathers) of all the subsequent and present Arhats, or *Mahatmas*.

In the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, “I am born but through my own *maya*, the mystic power of self-ideation, the eternal thought in the eternal mind.” Mr. Judge comments in the footnote that in the *Varaha Upanishad* it is stated that “the whole of the universe is evolved through *Sankalpa* [thought or ideation] alone;



it is only through *Sankalpa* that the universe retains its appearance.”

We are what we think, is a truism. Thoughts are the seeds of Karma. Karmically, thought or intent is more responsible and dynamic than an act. Thus, for instance, a man may perform a charitable act, but if he does not *think* charitably and is doing the act just for the sake of gain or glory, it is his thoughts that will determine the result for him. As soon as a thought leaves the brain, it combines with a unit of life energy called an elemental and forms an *entity*. This “entity” gets its character from us, depending upon the quality of the thought—good, bad or indifferent. *We create, with every thought, a demon or an angel.* To think angrily or with hate about another is like sending on an invisible plane a tiny man with a stick to beat that person. The length of life of this “entity” depends upon the intensity of the thought. It is said that when a person, who normally harbours good and noble thoughts, suddenly gives way to base thoughts and feelings, the life span of such thoughts is longer.

These thoughts, good and bad, not only help or hinder their creator, but are impressed in an invisible register called *astral light*, forming a common pool of thoughts. Each one of us attracts from this pool, the thoughts that are consubstantial with our nature. Pollution affects us, but also, the way we handle our cars affects the surroundings. Gandhiji describes the tremendous power of thought, thus: “I believe, and my belief has been tested repeatedly, that a thought deliberately thought and controlled is a power greater than speech or writing and any day greater than steam which is husbanded and controlled. We see the latter every day carrying incredible weights even across steep precipices. Thought power overcomes much greater obstacles and easily carries greater weights.”

Since we are all interconnected on the invisible plane, we are continually helping or hindering others in building their character, not only by our actions, but also by our thoughts—for good or ill. By not resisting the temptation to take bribe or tell a lie, or by allowing a material or sensual thought to enter the mind, we are giving an impulse to some weak person with similar tendency to likewise

succumb to these temptations. The converse is also true. Every attempt to overcome vices in us sends out an impulse for good that strengthens another individual who may be fighting similar weaknesses.

In *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, H.P.B. describes some of the occult arts, and one of them is *Guhya-Vidya*. It is “knowledge of the mystic powers residing in Sound (Ether), hence in the *Mantras* (chanted prayers or incantations) and depending on the rhythm and melody used; in other words, a magical performance based on Knowledge of the forces of Nature and their correlation.” The *Secret Doctrine* describes *Mantrika-Shakti* as “the force or power of letters, speech or music. The *Mantra Shastra* has for its subject-matter this force in all its manifestations. . . . The influence of melody is one of its ordinary manifestations” (*S.D.*, II, 293). In *Vernal Blooms* we are told that a single letter can be used mantrically by one who knows how to pronounce it. The effect produced by any *mantram* is determined by the numbers, syllables, and intonation of the sacred metre. For instance, *Aum* can be pronounced as one, two or three syllable word. When it is pronounced with right intonation it becomes an invocation, an affirmation and a benediction. Manu in his laws ordains: “A Brahmin, at the beginning and end of a lesson on the Vedas, must always pronounce the syllable OM, for unless OM precedes, his learning will slip away from him, and unless it follows, nothing will be long retained.” When a *mantram* is pronounced slowly and in a certain rhythm, one effect is produced; if pronounced quickly and in another rhythm, there is a different result, awakening and attracting good or evil spirits.

Mr. Judge writes: “A *mantram* is a collection of words which when sounded in speech, induce certain vibrations not only in the air, but also in the finer ether, thereby producing certain effects.” There are many men in Germany, Austria, Italy and Ireland who can bring about extraordinary effects on horses, cattle, and the like, by peculiar sounds uttered in a certain way. To a large extent the creative and destructive power of a *mantram* or spoken word stems

from sound. H.P.B. says:

We say and maintain that SOUND, for one thing, is a tremendous Occult power; that it is a stupendous force, of which the electricity generated by a million of Niagaras could never counteract the smallest potentiality when directed with *occult knowledge*. Sound may be produced of such a nature that the pyramid of Cheops would be raised in the air, or that a dying man, nay, one at his last breath, would be revived and filled with new energy and vigour. (*S.D.*, I, 555)

Music is defined as the combination and modulation of sounds and is known to have singular power, especially, over nervous diseases. In *Isis Unveiled*, mention is made of the harmonica, an instrument composed of five tumblers, filled with, water, wine, oil, etc. Sound is produced by rubbing the edges of these tumblers. Sound has an attractive property, so it draws out the disease and the two kinds of vibrations blend together and disappear in space. Mesmer is supposed to have used a harmonica to cure diseases such as insanity and epilepsy.

In his book, “The Science of stotras and Mantras,” Swami Shri Savitanand writes that sound can create shapes. He mentions the case of a woman who played an instrument called “eidophone” to demonstrate the formation of impressions and shapes on a curtain placed in front and the sand below, only through sound. If one wishes to create a specific shape, one must use the correct sound pattern/combination with specific number of vibrations. More specifically, the composition of the *Atharvashirsha* (collection of *mantrams* addressed to Lord Ganesha) is such that if one recites it with absolutely correct and clear articulations and a sincere heart, then waves created by these sounds will slowly form an image of Lord Ganesha.

The concept of *raga* seems to be peculiar to the Indian Classical music. A *raga* uses a series of five or more musical notes upon which melody is constructed. The same book points out that various

*ragas* in Indian Classical music are known to affect different parts of the body, and help in curing diseases. Thus, for instance, *Darabari raga* stimulates blood circulation in the brain. It also eliminates any malfunction in this part of the body. A variation of this *raga*, namely, the *Ashavari Darbari raga* cures headaches. When used appropriately, it can even cure a person of chronic, *i.e.*, long-standing headaches. For the insomniacs, *Kedar raga* is the key, writes Swami Savitanand.

*Kundalini Sakti* is the power of life. It is a power known only to those who practice concentration and Yoga. *Kundalini* is the power or energy which is said to lie at the base of the spine in *Muladhar chakra*. Once awakened, this energy rises, breaking through the *chakras*, causing various levels of realization and obtaining of occult powers. In *Hatha Yoga* there are various preparatory practices of *asanas* and *pranayamas* before the awakening of *Kundalini*. *Kundalini* is described in *The Voice of the Silence* as “World Mother.” *Buddhi* as a vehicle of *Atma* is a passive principle. However, when *Buddhi* is activated it gives rise to one of the mystic yogic powers, an electro-spiritual force called *Kundalini*, a creative power which when aroused into action can *as easily kill as it can create*. It is the Power, which rises into the sixth, the middle region, the place between the eyes (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 10 fn.). It is very easy to get tempted to awaken this *sakti* through various practices even before attaining inward purification. When one attempts it prematurely, without a proper guide, without inner purification, it is bound to result in ruining of psychic health, losing of psychic balance, besides the danger of falling into mediumship. Since astral, inner man is inextricably connected with the physical man, as explained by Mr. Judge, any disturbance in the astral body and *pranic* currents are bound to produce deleterious effects on the physical. There is no short-cut to self-realization. The emphasis of Theosophy is on living the altruistic life. As the *Voice of the Silence* says, “To live to benefit mankind is the first step, to practice the six glorious [transcendental, divine] virtues is the second.”

In the Sixth *Adhyaya* of *Jnaneshwari*, we are given the description of the powers acquired by the Yogi in whom *Kundalini Sakti* has been awakened. The Yogi becomes *Kechara* or “the “Walker of the Sky,” and the body of the Yogi becomes as one formed of the wind. This refers to “astral” travel. Astral travel denotes the astral body or the *double* leaving the physical body to travel in the astral plane. People, who strive towards perfection in concentration, and follow rigorous discipline of mental and moral nature, can *consciously and voluntarily*, withdraw their astral (inner) man from the outer man (physical body). The Yogi acquires the power of clairvoyance. True clairvoyance is also called seership and a true clairvoyant is called a “seer,” who can “see things visible and invisible...at any distance and time with his spiritual or inner sight or perceptions” (*The Theosophical Glossary*). Thus, “He (the Yogi) beholds the things beyond the seas and stars; he hears the language of the Devas and comprehends it, and perceives what is passing in the mind of an ant.”

All the *saktis* or spiritual powers lie latent in every man, but only those who are ready to pay the price of discipline and self-conquest can hope to develop these powers. Man himself is the Alchemist, who in the crucible of Right Knowledge transmutes the iron of his lower nature into the gold of the higher. Man himself is the Astrologer, who casts his horoscope by the right exercise of Will. “A wise man rules his stars; a fool obeys them.” So long as we are identified with the personality, we will remain poor, weak, miserable sinners. Hence, says the *Voice of the Silence*, “Knowest thou of Self the powers, O thou perceiver of external shadows? If thou dost not—then art thou lost.” At our present stage it is the mind with which we are mostly concerned, and we must free the mind from *Kama* or desire principle. This can be achieved by making our feelings and our desires universal in scope, and by living for others. Nothing must be done which hurts any other creature, for every thing or being is a part of us and of the All.

(Concluded)

## THOUGHTS ON THEOSOPHICAL MEETINGS

THEOSOPHICAL meetings have an import which is often lost sight of in the consideration of minor details. Thus, a great chance of doing service is too often lost at a time when it is most readily available. For Theosophical meetings are no idle gatherings where gossip goes the rounds. They are not conclaves for the mental satisfaction of highly trained intellects; nor do they provide a platform which can be used for personal glorification. They are certainly not congregations for emotional satisfaction. Their distinctive mark is impersonality; and because these meetings do not feed the lower emotions, they become invested with an atmosphere which is peculiarly their own, and which cannot be found in any other association of men.

What, then, is the purpose of Theosophical Meetings? To the hasty thinker the immediate answer which suggests itself is: The propagation of Theosophy. This is no doubt correct; but the ostensible—though it be true—often veils the inner vital and motivating aspects and should not on that account be permitted to carry us away from the fundamental principles that govern in such matters.

The truth of the matter is that, when certain conditions are fulfilled at the meetings, a higher force is drawn upon, and the nobler part of the nature of those who attend is quickened and refreshed. It is this influx from on high to which Jesus referred when he said: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” This gathering in His Name is not achieved by the mere repetition of “Jesus, Jesus.” It is the establishing of an inner condition, the creation of a particular atmosphere that for the time being connects us to spiritual realms. When H.P.B. said: “Where thought can pass they can come,” she referred to the particular condition and atmosphere which alone can form the channel for the passing of thought. A thread of glass cannot conduct the electric fluid, but a copper wire can. Each student has to find out for himself

those particular wires within him which act as conductors for spiritual influences.

What, then, constitutes the barrier to the passage of thought? What force obstructs the flow of these spiritual influences from on high? Our philosophy teaches that the greatest barrier to their influx is disunity. A group of men which is united by the common bond of “similarity of aim, purpose and teaching” is the chief desideratum. When this unity is attained, a divine atmosphere overspreads the group, and the nobler part of each one’s nature is aroused and exercised. The speaker on the occasion may not be a student learned in the intricacies of abstruse metaphysics. Yet, because a spiritual sympathy prevails, a higher force is drawn upon and the speaker’s words convey a meaning which is deeper and wider than is apparent on the surface. The atmosphere created by the common unity of divine purpose transcends the bars of our materialism and allows us to breathe even for a short time the air of a fuller and fresher life.

But this is not all. The impersonal, pure atmosphere thus created is felt by the student on the platform if his mind and heart are open to it and he has not memorized his remarks. He senses this spiritual unity and, inspired by its mounting impact, he finds new ideas crowding for expression—finds, too, that for an appreciable moment he has access to hoards of knowledge from which he can freely give out what best suits his listeners’ needs. This bond of sympathy between the speaker and his audience is a very real one. How often has not a student, present as a listener, found that his own wandering mind seems to have impinged on that of the speaker and made the latter stop midway as though stopped or retarded by some palpable obstruction?

It is when the bond between the platform worker and his audience is recognized that we realize the heavy onus cast upon the sincere student-listener. Albeit unknown and unrecognized, his silent yet unremitting efforts contribute to the sustaining of the tone of the meeting. Is he failing in the radiation of a feeling of Brotherhood? Does he feel antagonistic to the speaker? Is he bored? Does he feel

that in the fitness of things, he or someone else whom he prefers, should have been the speaker? By harbouring such thoughts he may cast a mental cloud upon the whole meeting and turn away all spiritual assistance that would otherwise have streamed in from the higher invisible realms. Though he may not know it, he has obstructed the lines of communication and has not really understood the import of gathering together in a spirit of devotion. If he entertains any such feeling, he not only robs himself, but also prevents others from assimilating that which they might otherwise have assimilated.

Yet each student finds that sooner or later some such undesirable feeling does assail him. What, then, is he to do? Shall he cut the Gordian knot by remaining absent so that the harm, if any, will be limited to himself alone? It seems logical to do so. But it is the logic of the lower mind that under the semblance of self-immolation seeks but to feed its own desires. Wherein, then, lies the fallacy of this position? To answer this question we shall have to turn to one more hidden yet profound aspect of Theosophical meetings.

When a student’s presence becomes regular, he invests these meetings with a part of himself—a magnetism that is substantially his. Therefore, it but follows that the magnetism of any meeting is the combined result of the magnetic emanations of all the regular students. They pour—each individually—a part of their life-force into the meetings, so that, if they are absent, the absence produces a magnetic gap which translates itself into a lowering of the tone of the meeting. The absence does not mitigate the ill effect of the student’s wrong attitude; it enhances it. True, the student gives a portion of himself; but while doing he also receives a share of that beneficent force which he helps to build up. It resides in him and must remain in his safe-keeping until he brings it to the next meeting either refined or tainted by his thoughts, words and deeds.

The opportunity thus afforded for service is unique; for at all meetings, though he is only a part of the audience, a student may yet be able to contribute impersonally a quota of force which may make all the difference to the tone of the meeting. When he is present



as a listener, does he have in the background of his consciousness the thought of Spiritual Brotherhood? If he has, he is an active participant in the meeting. When immersed in conjoint study, does he realize that by dwelling on high ideals he helps to purify the collective mind of the meeting? If he does, he becomes a conscious worker in a noble cause. When sitting among his brothers, does he feel that they have all gathered together in the name of the Great Ones, making it possible for them to shed their beneficent influence? If such be his attitude, he is assisting in an endeavour of a very high order. For him the audience is the world and the speaker but a channel through whom must flow the benign influence of the Great Ones to whose bidding he has devoted his life.

The aspiration to create such a channel of communication gathers strength in a brotherhood of students who are engaged in the selfsame task. U.L.T. centres exist so that the selfless, the altruistic and the divine within the student can have a chance to grow. It is in such Lodges that the effort goes on in silence and secrecy which would in future years turn the student into a disciple.

From this it follows that attendance at Lodge meetings becomes for the true student an act of offering and an intake of spirituality. Sitting for an hour on a chair is no longer irksome; listening to a mediocre exposition no longer a chore; for, at those very moments the dynamo of his Higher Mind is generating currents of spiritual energy. Sitting mute, the very mediocre exposition reveals new angles of insight which may be lost even on the expounding student. When such devoted students forgather at Lodge meetings, their joint efforts (we can call these “study”) carried on in an unselfish endeavour bear fruit, and the whole assemblage, including the chance outsider, feels the benign influence. The area of influence of such soul-stirring Lodge widens. It touches more souls to flame.

To bring one’s offering to the Lodge, whole days and weeks of silent preparation have to be dedicated. When a student takes his seat at Lodge meetings, does he consciously feel grateful to those whose sacrifice founded and maintained the Lodge? Has he studied

and practiced the technique of silent, impersonal service such as is rendered by the silent and co-operative listener? Has he woven the clothing of his mind with such material as would make it porous to spiritual influences? Before attending any meeting, has he deliberately sat down and planned his thoughts, actions and behaviour which for that meeting at least would help the cause of Masters? These are but a few of the many considerations which must weigh with the student of knowledge. The very effort at achieving all this may bring about the transition from studentship to discipleship.

Each is expected to bring that which he is capable of and no more. If no offering is brought, the student is welcome still. The burden of his deficit must be shared by the more fortunate brothers. The departure from duty by any student is a matter between himself and his Higher Self. His return back to the path of duty may be expedited or retarded by the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of his brothers in knowledge. What offerings can the humble student prepare in the intervals between meetings? A healthy body and a clean mind; hands, eyes and mouths that run not into mischief; a resilient mind that can be brought to attention in an instant of time; the power to thin out, if not to scatter, mental fogs; the understanding of the sacredness of duty, especially at the moment of performance—these are some of the soul-exercises which, if performed in ordinary life, can contribute to the spiritual effectiveness of any Lodge.

*“In the fields of Theosophy none is held to weed out a larger plot of ground than his strength and capacity will permit him....Even the simple presence amidst you of a well-intentioned and sympathizing individual may help you magnetically. You are the free volunteer workers on the field of Truth, and as such must leave no obstruction on the paths leading to that field”* wrote a Master of Wisdom.

## 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 it right understanding that spiritual development requires “cutting out” the lower principles, or crushing out the personality? Or, does it involve *transmutation* of lower aspects?

**Answer:** Perfect human development involves perfection of human nature so that “human man” can become divine man, and there is a perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human. “Not only is man more than an animal because there is a god in him, but he is more than a god because there is the animal in him.” Spiritual progress depends upon right relation of these two forces—animal and divine. We have allowed the animal to usurp the place of the god. Once we allow the god to rule the animal, we will be in possession of great force and power hitherto unknown to us, says *Through the Gates of Gold*.

The process of human development is from within, without. All growth is only an *unfolding* of what is locked up within, as potential. That, which makes one person a great individual and another a silly person is the capability of the brain and body to transmit and give expression to the light of the *Inner man* within, writes H.P.B. The physical body is an instrument, while the Ego is the performing artist. She points out that even the great Violinist Paganini cannot bring out the melody if the violin is broken or if the strings are strung too loose or, too tight. The instruments of the Ego are the body and the brain. The lower principles, namely, physical body, astral body, *prana* (life energy) and *Kama-manas* or lower mind, constitute personal or animal man. These constitute grosser and subtler sheaths of the soul, the real man. “These sheaths are necessary if the Soul is to know or act,” writes Mr. Judge. Spiritual

evolution involves purification of these sheaths or *upadhis*, such that they can reflect the light within, like the alabaster vase.

In the article, “Personal and Impersonal God,” T. Subba Row gives a beautiful analogy. He asks us to consider a bright light placed in the centre with a curtain around it. The nature of the light that penetrates through the curtain and becomes visible to the person standing outside depends upon the nature of the curtain. If several such curtains are thus successively placed around the light, it will have to penetrate through all of them; and the person standing outside will only perceive as much light as is *not* intercepted by all the curtains. The central light becomes dimmer and dimmer as curtain after curtain is placed before the observer; and as curtain after curtain is removed the light becomes brighter and brighter until it reaches its natural brilliancy. Likewise, the light of wisdom and powers, inherent in man, is limited and modified by various *upadhis*, so that the action or influence of these various *upadhis* must be controlled.

Purifying the “sheaths” involves the control of mind and purification of thoughts and desires. A little reflection shows that all that we are is made up of our thoughts and is founded on our thoughts. Since thought precedes desire, purification of thoughts leads to purification of desire. It is very important to purify desires. We are told that both Will and Desire are absolute creators, and man makes himself in the image of his desires, and he has to create himself in the likeness of the Divine, through his Will. We need to purify the desire and make “Will” the ruler. Our desire must be only for the purely abstract, devoid of the tinge of “self,” *i.e.*, we must cease to desire things of matter and so also, power, knowledge, love, happiness, etc. In other words we have to *set our heart on the Divine*, and see in THAT our guide, friend, asylum, witness, etc.

The automatism of the body itself is owing to thoughts. To make the body pure and tractable, we have to concentrate on purifying thoughts. If we proceed along the right lines, and inculcate the right motive, right ideation and right imagination we can change the quality of *prana* and make purer quality of *prana* to flow into us.

The perfection of human nature hinges around mind control and thought purification. It is only through daily meditation that one can acquire the power of concentrating one's mind and will. It also aids in making our brain-consciousness receptive so that impressions from the Divine can reach it and can be retained.

Simultaneously with the purifying of the instruments we need to overcome *self-identifying attachment* with these instruments. *The Voice of the Silence* says, "The Self of Matter and the SELF of Spirit can never meet. One of the twain must disappear; there is no place for both." Saint Kabir has sung: "*Jab mein tha tab hari nahi, ab hari hai, mein nahi; Sab andhiyara mit gaya, jab Deepak dekhye maahi,*" i.e., "When 'I' (lower, personal) was, then Hari (God) was not; but now God is, and 'I' am not; All darkness (illusions) dissolved, when I saw the light (illumination) within." Mr. Judge suggests the following meditation:

Here is advice given by many Adepts: every day and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake—think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain, or astral man, but that you are THAT, and "THAT" is the Supreme Soul....By persistence in this, by submitting your daily thoughts each night to the judgement of your Higher Self, you will at last gain light. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

**Question:** What are the boons (*vardan*), curses (*shraap*) and mitigation of curses (*Ushraap*) that we hear being given by *rishis* and sages, gods and goddesses, which change the life of a person for better or worse? Are these in accordance with the law of Karma?

**Answer:** A boon is generally defined as an utterance which confers on another benefit, help or blessings. A curse, on the other hand, is an offensive word or phrase used to express anger. In the context of mythological stories, a curse is a solemn utterance intended to invoke a supernatural power to inflict harm or punishment on someone. Even ordinary people bless and curse. In many cases, these words carry the power to bring about the good and ill that was intended by

the speaker. However, it is said about a curse that if the person cursed is protected by his spiritual integrity, it boomerangs and returns to harm the one who uttered the curse. Blessings as well as curses are creative powers of speech. Aphorism 36, in *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, mentions that when the Yogi is firmly established in the practice of truth, his words become so potent that whatever he says comes to realization. Like all other powers, speech can be used constructively or destructively. Constructive or Creative speech which ever blesses is that of the sages and seers. How is it that we do not possess this power? It is because the creative power of speech is also dependent upon heart feeling and the quality of thoughts. Mr. Judge observes: "Words are things....Upon the lower plane of social intercourse they are things, but soulless and dead because that convention in which they have their birth has made abortions of them. But when we step away from that conventionality they become alive in proportion to the reality of the thought—and its purity—that is behind them." In other words, very frequently, if not always, we use words like "thank you," "sorry," "all the best," etc., only as a matter of convention. These words should be spoken meaningfully, backed by intense and pure emotions.

In *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Puranas*, we find that a person receives a boon from a god or goddess, or at times from a holy person, only after rigorous austerities or performance of a good deed. In fact, in the mythological stories severe penance is performed precisely to achieve some desired object. Boons and curses are in accordance with the law of Karma. Devdutt Pattanaik is of the view that stories of boons and curses are meant to explain the philosophy of Karma, of merit and demerit. When something good is done, one obtains a boon, or earns merit, while doing wrong or harm invites curse and demerit.

All gods and goddesses are agents of Karmic and Cosmic laws and they cannot contravene the Law. Thus, no boon can be granted by contravening the law. A boon is granted on account of the past merit of the devotee or due to mortification undertaken by him in

that particular life. Moreover, the one who receives the boon becomes karmically responsible for the misuse of the special skill, faculty or powers endowed on him by way of the boon. It is interesting to note that never is boon of immortality granted to any devotee, because it just does not fit in the framework of the universe. All that is born must die.

We have as an example, the story of Hiranyakasipu, the Daitya king, who is said to have been slain by Vishnu in his *Narasimha Avatar*. The legend goes that Hiranyakasipu performed severe penance for many years, and Lord Brahma, pleased by his penance, granted a boon that would make him *as good as immortal*. He was granted the boon that he cannot be killed by man or beast, by devil or god, by night or day, with steel or stone or wood, inside or outside the house. This promise was kept. As Vishnu, in the form of half-man and half-lion, laid hold of the Daitya king by the thighs with his teeth and tore him up the middle, sitting on the threshold of the house, at twilight.

When a sage or a yogi gives a curse, he loses the merit or spiritual energy gained through many years of austerities (*tapasya*). There is no such thing as righteous anger. In the *Abhijnanasakuntalam*, written by Kalidasa, when the maiden Shakuntala failed to welcome *rishi* Durvasa as a guest, because she was daydreaming about her lover, Dushyanta, he cursed her that her lover would forget her. Horrified, Shakuntala's companions managed to mollify Durvasa, who mitigated the curse (*Ushraap*), saying that Dushyanta would remember Shakuntala when he sees the ring he had given her as a token of their love. It was Shakuntala's karma which brought on her this suffering. When king Dasarath mistakenly killed Shravan, the only child of a blind couple, they cursed him that he would die pining for his son. We find that King Dasaratha died, unable to bear the sorrow of separation from his son Rama, whom he had sent to the forest in exile for fourteen years, in order to keep his promise.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Is capital punishment justified? Recently, the Supreme Court of India pronounced the verdict that four convicts of the Nirbhaya case, who raped and then murdered a young girl on December 16, 2012, will be hanged. It is true that such a crime cannot be condoned, but then capital punishment is not a permanent solution to stopping heinous crimes. "Capital punishment is as fundamentally wrong as a cure for crime as charity is wrong as a cure for poverty," said Henry Ford. Capital punishment is not in sync with the civilized society. Any civilized society is against the death rap because somewhere someone's death—even if that person happens to be an "incorrigible" criminal—leaves a void and demeans the entire human race. When someone is executed, all the doors of reformation are slammed. Criminology has come to the conclusion that there are certain individuals that cannot be reformed and therefore for the wellness of a larger group of people they must be executed. To hang or not is the dilemma which involves all human beings, because "every human being is a part of a bigger design. The loss of one life impacts all lives—because we are all interconnected and human existence is not isolated or discrete. It is easy to execute a person but difficult to avoid the far-reaching ramifications of such an act," writes Sumit Paul. He quotes Albert Camus who said, "When we put someone before the firing squad and execute him furtively, we unwittingly script our own end." We all need to introspect and ask ourselves why we show an inclination towards something savage, writes Paul.

Kishore Asthana is of the view that death penalty is not much of a deterrent because human nature is such that "we do not think of the consequences if the immediate action is motivated by conditioning, psychopathic leanings, acute greed or vengeance." He thinks that if the death penalty is replaced with rigorous imprisonment without parole, till the criminal's natural death, then that would be far more heinous punishment. (*The Speaking Tree*,



*Sunday Times of India*, May 14, 2017)

H.P.B. writes: “Human Law may use *restrictive* not *punitive* measures; but a man who, believing in Karma, still revenges himself and refuses to forgive every injury, thereby rendering good for evil, is a criminal and only hurts himself.” When Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Kasab was hanged, a Mumbai-based lawyer, Yug Chaudhry, had pertinently remarked, “Bereft of mercy, our society would be impoverished and inhuman, for mercy is quintessentially a human quality, not found elsewhere in the natural world....Mercy tempers justice, makes it less exacting, more humane.”

There is no such thing as separateness because we are all united on the inner planes of our being. We cannot isolate ourselves from the wicked and foolish people, because the world that we live in today is of our own making. “Remember that the sin and shame of the world are your sin and shame; for you are a part of it; your Karma is inextricably interwoven with the great Karma,” teaches *Light on the Path*.

The occult reason why Theosophy is against Capital Punishment is that an executed criminal though physically dead, is astrally alive. He is filled with feeling of hatred towards society and all those who were responsible for his trial and execution; as also strong feelings of revenge. He can inject thoughts of crime into the minds of sensitive and mentally weak people and incite them to commit crime. That is why we hear of cases where a crime is suddenly committed by weak persons who appear to be carried away by some outside force. While in the body, a criminal is able to influence only a few, but after death, living in the astral body, his area of influence is unlimited.

What is the best method of reforming the criminals? Rehabilitation, imprisonment and religious rehabilitation programmes have been considered to be better alternatives to hanging. Unfortunately, prisons, which seek to improve the character of prisoners, tend to degrade it instead, as they lack empathy. No lasting reform can be achieved unless human nature is changed.

We do not fully understand what consciousness is. We can say that we are conscious, but can we say the same of a dog, a cat, a tool-making crow, an octopus or a worm? There is no distinctive pattern of brain activity that indicates consciousness. Biologists are hunting for the first conscious beings, and are trying to find out the origin of consciousness. But that is proving to be difficult because “consciousness does not leave any fossil record,” says Anil Seth, a neuroscientist at the University of Sussex, UK. So they are trying to infer its evolutionary history by comparing animals alive today, and working back to what their common ancestor might have been able to do.

There are some obvious signs of consciousness. For instance, Chimpanzees recognize themselves in the mirror. When rats push the wrong lever and therefore fail to get the food, they look regretfully at the lever they should have pushed. In these cases we can infer some sort of awareness of self, of what might have been, which is similar to human kind of consciousness. But this cannot be the sole criterion and hence a broader benchmark must be considered. We, human beings, see colours, feel aches and pains, smell coffee, etc. Thus, “consciousness looks like it is largely about perception and emotion: it is not about thought or higher, more human capacities,” says Jesse Prinz, a philosopher at the CUNY Graduate Centre in New York. Such basic components of conscious experience may be discerned even in animals that lack our mental sophistication and brainpower.

Much of our conscious experience consists of perceiving shades of feeling, such as, sounds are pleasing or annoying, or objects are scary or comforting, etc. These evaluations play a crucial role in guiding our behaviour. The evolutionary biologist, Bjorn Grinde, at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health at Oslo, believes that the awareness that something good or bad is happening to me may represent the dawn of consciousness. He says that mammals, birds and reptiles all show signs of emotional responses when handled, while fish and amphibians do not. Many researchers are of the view

that it is harder to discern signs of emotion in animals like fish, and therefore, they propose that an animal is conscious if it experiences the world subjectively. This captures the distinctive “me, here, now” element of our own experience.

Researchers have identified ten signs of consciousness in animals, which include, besides those already mentioned, heart races in stressful situation, has many dopamine receptors in its brain to sense reward, has the ability to focus attention, sensitivity to anaesthetics, and displaying unlimited associative learning.

Evolutionary biologist Eva Jablonka at the University of Tel Aviv, Israel, suspects that consciousness evolved in early vertebrates and early arthropods during the Cambrian explosion, about 540 million years ago. On the whole, it is felt that it is not easy to find a dividing line between species that possess consciousness and those that do not, because “there is not just single way of being conscious. The animal kingdom is going to be suffused with other kinds of minds and other kinds of consciousness,” says Seth. There is no doubt that human consciousness is special, but it is becoming clear that the rudiments of consciousness are all around us, writes Bob Holmes. (*New Scientist*, May 13, 2017)

“Everything in the Universe, throughout all its kingdoms, is CONSCIOUS: *i.e.*, endowed with a consciousness of its own kind and on its own plane of perception. We men must remember that because we do not perceive any signs—which we can recognise—of consciousness, say, in stones, we have no right to say that *no consciousness exists there*,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 274)

In the article, “Kosmic Mind,” H.P.B. shows how several physiologists go so far as to accept that there is *free will* and *consciousness* in the simplest protoplasms. For instance, L. Cienkowsky, mentions that when a unicellular organism, Amoeba, was observed hunting for its food, it was seen to be carefully avoiding all other kinds of plants, and moving towards and feeding on a certain variety of *Spirogyra*. Cienkowsky writes: “The way of acting of these monads during their search for and reception of food,

is so amazing that one is almost inclined to see in them *consciously acting beings*!”

At the root of every being of every grade, of every form, there is one reality, Spirit or consciousness. The Spirit is the same in all but its expression differs in accordance with the degree of progress. A stone or a crystal is a spiritual something with psychic nature. Crystals have their own sympathies and antipathies, their own attractions. We might say that in the mineral kingdom consciousness manifests as psychic intelligence. In the plant kingdom it manifests as sensation, and in the animal kingdom as instinct. Man alone possesses *self-consciousness* and therefore self-awareness.

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A mother’s intuition may well be regarded as a spiritual gift. It is perhaps just a small part of that entire spiritual experience of motherhood. Intuition, gut feeling or Sixth sense is knowing something with certainty, but not be able to explain how you know it. It appears that all of us have the gift of intuition but very few of us care to follow it through and reap the benefit. However, even doctors and scientists acknowledge that mothers are highly intuitive. Mothers intuitively know when their children are in trouble and have been often known to insist that something was wrong with their child’s health despite an all clear from doctors. In an online survey, 96 per cent mothers admitted that they have had intuitions that turned out to be right about their children’s welfare.

“I believe a mother is intuitive because she is inextricably linked to her child as a result of the birth connection. When she gave birth to the child, it is only the physical link that gets severed with the umbilical cord. In every other way she stays connected and responsible for the welfare and upbringing of the little life she has brought into the world. That is what gives her the strength, depths of love, sympathy, forgiveness and understanding that mothers are known for. A mother’s love for her children comes closest to the

definition of divine love. Perhaps it is the purity and strength of this affection that allows her to tap into the Universal Spirit that enables her to have strong intuitions about her children. The selflessness of her feelings perhaps allows her to have a Sixth sense about her children,” writes Vinita Dawra Nangia.

The author believes that no advice is greater than the one given by one’s instinct, about one’s children. Mothers learn to be better humans through the experience of motherhood, writes Vinita Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, May 14, 2017)

Intuition is direct cognition of truth in all things. It is the highest spiritual faculty in man but lies dormant as long as man remains in bondage to the senses and the mind. Dr. Eric Berne rightly observes that any professional can become “intuitive” about his own business. We might say that when there is genuine concern for another person, one may intuitively know what is troubling that person, and also intuitively know the best way of helping him. Likewise, intuition comes into play when we are reading the scriptures, which hide inner meaning, not conveyed by the words.

Development of the intuitive faculty is a gradual process. We may begin by putting all the moral questions to our inner self and wait for an answer. We will make mistakes in the beginning. We may not get right and definite answer, but when one lives the life of purity and altruism, in thought, word and deed, one is able to purify the sheaths of the soul, and the inner light is able to shine into the brain-mind. We are asked to give to our brain-mind, a larger view of life, by considering universal doctrines such as Karma and re-birth. When we fulfil the duties of life, which are ours under Karma, the mind is drawn nearer to the divine. So also, Mr. Judge suggests that if we are urged from within to visit a sick person, or moved to help a suffering person, or prompted to turn the corner, then we must obey the impulse at once. When we learn to respond to every prompting of the Divine within we are aided in the development of intuitive faculty.

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