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IS PSYCHISM DANGEROUS?	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	9
THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME	
LOUIS PASTEUR—FATHER OF MICROBIOLOGY—I	16
A DAUNTLESS FIGHTER	22
THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE	23
FRAGMENT ONE—V	
THE TRIADIC HEART DOCTRINE	29
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	34

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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IS PSYCHISM DANGEROUS?

TO answer this question, we first need to know the meaning of “psychic” and “psychism.” Theosophy teaches that there are three aspects of the mind. When the mind is even temporarily aligned to spiritual nature or *Atma-Buddhi*, it becomes a seat of spiritual consciousness, intuitive perception, and discrimination. It is called *Buddhi-manas*. Then there is the mind *per se*, or the reasoning mind. It is that aspect of the mind which allows us to reason from premises to conclusions. The third aspect of the mind is *Kama-manas*, or the lower mind. It refers to the mind entangled in *Kama* or passions and desires. It is this *Kama-manas* that comes into operation in our day-to-day life, and is related to “psychic” and “psychism.”

However, these terms are often associated with people dabbling in hypnotism, mental healing, past life regression, aura cleansing, aura reading, chakra balancing, crystal gazing, colour therapy, etc. Some of them are known in present times as “alternative therapies.” Today, we have a large number of people well-versed in these therapies and an equally large number who resort to alternative therapies, even for trifling problems. H.P.B. makes a special mention of Christian Science, Mind Cure, Metaphysical Healing, Spiritual Healing, etc., and cautions that “whenever the healer interferes—consciously or unconsciously—with the free mental action of the person he treats, it is—Black Magic.” (*Five Messages*, p. 25)

When a hypnotizer helps the subject to overcome his habit of stealing or drinking by suggestion, it prevents the subject from

making further bad Karma due to these habits, but there is no merit in it for the subject. In other words, hypnotism can only suppress the habit, which will return in the same or in a future life until it is overcome by the individual by his power of Will. Hence, H.P.B. says that there would have been an addition to the good Karma of the subject had he made a personal effort to reform of his own free will, which would involve great mental and physical struggle. When one chooses the discipline of one's own free will, it becomes part of one's moral fabric. It survives death, and the Ego is reborn with that tendency strengthened.

Take another example. There was a lady who had to take care of her bedridden husband. She went to a past-life regressor to find out what she did to deserve this kind of fate. After undergoing past-life regression, she learns from the regressor that in one particular life, this person, who is now her husband, had taken care of her when she was bedridden or paralytic. Knowing this, she was reconciled and willing to take care of her husband! The situation hardly warranted undergoing past-life regression; all that one is required to do is to cultivate complete faith in the working of the Law of Karma and "accept the woes of birth."

H.P.B. wrote that the year 1898 marked the completion of 5000 years of the Kali-yuga and also the time when the equinox entered the sign of Aquarius, "when psychologists will have some extra work to do, and the psychic idiosyncrasies of man will enter on a great change." Mr. Crosbie suggests that the change in idiosyncrasies of people mainly refers to the *susceptibility to suggestion*, good, bad, and indifferent. He seems to suggest that mankind has become suggestible. Just like a hypnotizer uses suggestion, which the subject follows because his free will is paralyzed, so also, without using their own reason or intuition, people seem to follow the suggestions of the so-called modern-day Messiahs—the so-called spiritual teachers and saviours. This is the time, when more than ever, we should be using our thinking faculty and discriminating good from bad or right from wrong. Jesus cautioned, "Take heed lest no man lead you astray,

IS PSYCHISM DANGEROUS?

for many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and shall lead many astray." (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 151)

Psychism is dangerous because many people are allured by the powers of clairvoyance, clairaudience, mind-reading, etc. Clairvoyance is "clear seeing." There are seven distinct planes of matter, of which the physical is one. True Clairvoyance is being able to see clearly on all these planes and being able to see things happening at a distance. We know that there is an element of illusion or error even in observations made on the physical plane, using physical eyes and physical instruments. Hence, in scientific experiments, a "correction factor" is added to such observations to obtain correct results. Likewise, "clear seeing" is equally difficult when one sees on the astral plane with astral senses, without proper training. Hence, Mr. Judge points out that there are very few cases of genuine clairvoyance that could be relied on. The cultivation of psychic senses is more difficult than any physical gymnastics. True Clairvoyance involves the ability to see as well as to *interpret* correctly what is seen on the astral plane.

Attempts to cultivate clairvoyant faculty, which may involve gazing into coffee cups, or the white of the Egg, or a glass of water, or shining objects in which pictures or images from the astral light get reflected, without proper training of the mind and senses, slowly but surely, lead to passivity, almost beyond recall. The will of the person, says Mr. Judge, is gradually overpowered, and they are under the control of demons and evil elemental spirits. A person who dabbles in the astral realm begins to live on the astral plane; he hears and sees things of that plane *without his control* and eventually becomes a medium.

To be a medium means to be attuned to the impressions in the astral light. Seeing in the astral light is done through the astral senses. The astral senses of the medium are accustomed to seeing images and pictures in the astral light, but the mind, or the Ego, is not yet trained to interpret them correctly. For example, though the image on the retina of our eye is inverted, our minds have learned through

training and experiences of innumerable incarnations to reverse that image and see it correctly. The pictures and images are also inverted in the astral light, but the mind and astral senses of the medium are not trained to see things correctly and differentiate the true from the false.

Mediumship is always marked by *passivity*. When a medium is perfectly passive, his own astral spirit may be benumbed or crowded out of his body, and the body is occupied by some depraved entity, which is termed *possession* or *obsession*. (*Isis*, I, 487-490)

One can work hard and develop these powers artificially, such as by breathing exercises and by mortifying the body. It has more to do with the body than with the mind. There are processes recommended for this purpose, and some of them are so difficult that only a few brave and resolute persons are able to go through them; many have failed, and many have died while going through that training. That is why Mr. Judge says, “Few, if any, of us are at all fitted for a ‘forcing’ process.”

The other way of developing these powers is, naturally, in the course of one’s spiritual progress. Thus, for instance, when a student-aspirant begins to see balls of golden fire roll past him, or now and then becomes aware of future events, or is able to hear distant fairy-like bells, let him not take these experiences to be the proof of his spiritual development. They only show that they have made some progress on the path. “They may doubtless properly be regarded as evidences of advancement on the higher planes of thought and spiritual life and may be coveted and used for the benefit of others, but they are not in themselves the chief object of human desire,” writes Mr. Judge.

The Voice of the Silence mentions three Halls, namely waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep state, corresponding to the earth life, psychic life, and spiritual life, or the physical, astral, and spiritual planes. The question arises: Is it possible to bypass the astral realm in one’s spiritual progress? Mr. Judge says that when a student turns his attention to the higher life and intensely desires to find the true path, his soul begins to awaken. Then his inner senses begin to awaken gradually. It is also the stage when his soul has turned its

IS PSYCHISM DANGEROUS?

attention to the astral plane, and, as a result, he has many confused dreams and strange experiences, awake and asleep. Here, Mr. Judge seems to refer to psychic experiences. He says, “These may or may not continue: all depends upon the individual soul and upon Karma.... We may say that those students are more fortunate who make a marked degree of progress in spiritual things without having any conscious experience of the astral plane. For then they can later on learn it *from above*, instead of from below, and with far less danger to themselves.” In other words, it is possible to progress by discontinuous degrees, provided we come back later on to what we passed by. Thus, it is far safer to not pay attention to astral and psychic realms and their experiences and remain focussed on spiritual progress, and then, with spiritual knowledge, experience, and development, the soul can return to the psychic or astral plane and understand the same without getting lured by it. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, pp. 11-12)

The attitude to be cultivated by a spiritual aspirant has been well expressed in *Light on the Path*: “And the power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.” Humility is the greatest safeguard on the Spiritual Path. Mr. Judge observes that there are hidden, powerful forces in nature, and great progress is made in understanding them. “Astral body formation, clairvoyance, looking into the astral light, and controlling elementals are all possible, but not all profitable.” He seems to suggest that the acquisition of these powers is incidental to the journey along the path. Just as a traveller going from one city to another may have to cross several rivers, and in the absence of a boat he may be required to swim, or in the absence of a compass he is “compelled to exercise the art of locating his exact position by observation of the sun: but all that is only incidental to his main object of reaching his destination.” He significantly adds: “The very first step in true mysticism and true occultism is to try to apprehend the meaning of Universal Brotherhood, without which the very highest

IS PSYCHISM DANGEROUS?

progress in the practise of magic turns to ashes in the mouth.”
(*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 105)

It is easy to “wander off” into the by-lanes of alternative systems of philosophies that promise shortcuts to self-realization or a quick solution to one’s problems. It is easy to be led astray, lured by the dazzle of psychic development and psychic powers. One who pursues psychic development without purifying the moral nature walks the broad and easy path, which ultimately leads to destruction. Pursuit of psychic development is dangerous, and the untrained and impure dabbler is ultimately ruined in his psychic and moral health. When such a person realises the mistake and begins his search for truth and wishes to lead the true spiritual life, he might find it extremely difficult. His difficulty is compounded because the pursuit of psychic powers and consequent involvement with subtle but lower, material forces of nature (elementals) tend to strengthen the lower, personal nature. Even though he may be able to control desires of the flesh—abstaining from meat-eating or wine drinking—and might even make great intellectual progress, he has to fight a difficult battle to surmount pride, jealousy, and other desires of the mind. H.P.B.’s words of warning and advice in her Fourth Message, addressed to the Americans, apply to all: “Psychism, with all its allurements and all its dangers, is necessarily developing among you, and you must beware lest the Psychic outruns the Manasic and Spiritual development. Psychic capacities held perfectly under control, checked and directed by the Manasic principle, are valuable aids in development.” (*Five Messages*, p. 29)

“Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all other things will be added unto you,” says the Bible, implying that once we have made friends with the Inner Divine Ruler, we will have everything—power, name, fame, possessions, knowledge, peace, happiness, and so on. The “Kingdom of heaven” refers to the divinity within. “Kingdom of Heaven” is the state of spiritual bliss and perfection. It is that peace and bliss that leaves no desire for any worldly thing.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

“THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME” is a short story by Richard Connell, first published in *Collier's*, an American magazine, on January 19, 1924. The story is about big-game hunters Sanger Rainsford and his friend Whitney, from New York City, who are travelling by ship to the Amazon rainforest for a jaguar hunt. Big-game hunters are those who hunt large wild animals for sport, meat, or animal products. Whitney points out Ship-Trap Island in the distance, a place that sailors dread and avoid. As the ship sails through the darkness, they discuss whether their prey (animal that is hunted) actually feels fear. While Rainsford believes that they have no such understanding, Whitney feels that they understand fear of pain and fear of death. Rainsford asks him to be a realist. He tells Whitney: “The world is made up of two classes—the hunters and the huntees (prey). Luckily you and I are hunters.”

After discussion about the Ship-Trap Island, which has an evil reputation among sailors, Whitney goes to bed while Rainsford stays on deck to smoke his pipe. Suddenly, he hears three gunshots in the distance. He moves towards the railing of the deck and hoists himself onto the rail to get a better look. He drops his pipe, and in an attempt to catch it, he loses his balance and plunges into the water. His cries for help go unanswered, and the ship quickly disappears into the night. Rainsford swims in the direction of the gunshots and hears the screeching sound of an animal in agony, which stops with a pistol shot. Rainsford reaches the rocky shore and falls into a deep sleep. On waking up, when he moves through the forest in search of food, he finds an empty rifle cartridge. He follows the hunter's footprints in growing darkness and at last comes across a palatial chateau. He knocks at the door and is invited inside. The chateau is inhabited by two Cossacks: the owner, General Zaroff, and his gigantic deaf-mute servant, Ivan. Cossacks are a semi-nomadic, predominantly East Slavic, warrior people who lived primarily in eastern Ukraine and southern Russia.

When Rainsford is invited for dinner, he noticed numerous stuffed and mounted heads, trophies that Zaroff has brought back from his many hunting adventures around the world. Zaroff knows of Rainsford from his published account of hunting snow leopards in Tibet. Rainsford praises his host's specimen, remarking how dangerous it can be to hunt Cape buffalo. Zaroff tells him that now he hunts far more dangerous game on his island. He explains that although he has been hunting animals since he was a boy, he has decided that killing big game has become boring for him therefore he has found a new kind of animal to hunt, one with courage, cunning and reason. In other words, he has started hunting human beings. After escaping the Russian Revolution, he purchased Ship-Trap, built a home for himself, and rigged the island with lights to lure passing ships into the jagged rocks surrounding it. He would take the survivors captive and then hunt them for sport, by giving them food, clothing, a knife and a three-hour head start. He would himself use only a small-calibre pistol. Any captives who can elude Zaroff, Ivan and a pack of hunting dogs for three days are set free. However, so far, Zaroff had never lost a hunt. He said that captives are offered a choice of either being hunted or turned over to Ivan, who once served as official knouter for the Great White Czar. A knout is a Russian whip attached to a long wooden handle and was used for flogging as a corporal punishment in Russian history.

Rainsford denounces the hunt as barbarism, but Zaroff says, "Life is for the strong." Zaroff is enthused to have another world-class hunter as a companion and offers to take Rainsford along with him on his next hunt. Rainsford declines Zaroff's invitation and goes to bed. The sound of a distant pistol shot awakens him in the early morning. Zaroff comes back to the chateau at lunchtime and says that hunting humans no longer satisfies him. The sailors that are lured to the island present less and less of a challenge. When Rainsford staunchly refuses and demands to leave the island, Zaroff decides to hunt him instead, hoping that Rainsford, as a renowned big-game hunter, will provide the challenge he seeks.

Rainsford sets off into the jungle after receiving food, clothes, and a knife from Ivan. During his head start, Rainsford lays an intricate trail in the forest to confuse Zaroff and then climbs a tree. Zaroff finds him easily, but to prolong the pleasure of the hunt, he stands under the tree and smokes a cigarette before abruptly departing. Rainsford realized that “the general was playing with him! The general was saving him for another day’s sport! The Cossack was the cat; he was the mouse. Then it was that Rainsford knew the full meaning of terror.”

Rainsford builds a “deadfall trap” consisting of a dead tree balanced against a living one. The trap injures Zaroff’s shoulder, forcing him to return home for treatment. Yet, he congratulates Rainsford, saying that very few people know how to make this trap, and says that he will return soon. Rainsford runs for hours until he mistakenly steps into a bed of quicksand. He manages to be free and digs a pit in the soft mud a few feet in front of the quicksand. He lines the bottom of the pit with sharp wooden stakes, covers it with foliage, and then hides in the bush nearby. One of Zaroff’s dogs falls in and is killed.

The next day, when Rainsford spots Zaroff and Ivan coming with a pack of hunting dogs, he makes another trap by tying his knife to a sapling. The trap kills Ivan, but the hounds push on, cornering Rainsford at the edge of a cliff. Instead of facing the dogs, Rainsford jumps into the rocky sea below. Disappointed at Rainsford’s apparent suicide, Zaroff returns home and settles in for the night. His relaxation is disturbed by two thoughts: the difficulty of replacing Ivan and the fact that Rainsford has escaped him.

Zaroff locks himself in his bedroom and turns on the lights, only to find Rainsford waiting for him, having swum around the island to evade the dogs and sneak into the chateau. Zaroff offers congratulations for defeating him. He made one of his deepest bows. “I see,” he said. “Splendid! One of us is to furnish a repast [food] for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. On guard, Rainsford.” Rainsford prepares to fight him, saying that the

hunt is not yet over. Sometime later, Rainsford appreciates the comfort of the bed, implying that he won the duel.

American writer Richard Connell is best known for his classic short story, “The Most Dangerous Game,” which won him the prestigious O. Henry Memorial Award. The human-hunting-humans scenario in the story has inspired many other films. The story is inspired by the big-game hunting safaris in Africa and South America that were particularly fashionable among wealthy Americans in the 1920s.

Some critics have remarked that the most dangerous game is one in which the lives of the hunter and the hunted are equally at risk, and that happens when both are human beings. The two characters in the story each have their own view regarding hunting. Rainsford, who believes that man is superior to animals, feels that big-game animals have no feeling of fear or pain, and hunting is a sport that involves no moral consequences. His belief is challenged by General Zaroff, who has no qualms of conscience in hunting humans. Rainsford is repelled by such perversion of sport. Zaroff justifies his stand by asserting that “the weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure.” Ironically, when Rainsford, the hunter, becomes the hunted, he feels the unreasoning fear of being trapped and saves his life by copying the instinctive behaviour of hunted animals! He comes to realize that all creatures, including human beings, rely on fear and their instinct to survive to avoid pain and death, just as Whitney had originally argued.

The central theme of “The Most Dangerous Game” is the importance of compassion and the immorality of hunting for sport. We are made to reflect on the ethics in the matter of hunting by illustrating how Rainsford’s perspective changes when he becomes the hunted. The story also explores the civilized versus savage behaviour.

In an article that appeared in *Mumbai Mirror* (March 22, 2013), Gautam Patel, a lawyer by profession, pertinently remarks: Why do people kill animals for sport? Is it because they derive from it some sort of perverted pleasure? *Or*, does it add to their sense of self-

worth? *Or*, is it a reflection of man's increasing callousness and indifference towards animals? There are laws, governed by international treaties and domestic legislation, that prohibit the killing of certain species said to be endangered. The reason being that elimination of species causes irretrievable imbalances in the planet's ecosystems and imperils our existence. However, poaching continues to be a menace because detection and enforcement of these laws are very real problems. There is a market for the rhino's horn, the elephant's tusks, and the tiger's skin, bone, tooth, and claw, which pays handsomely. To call hunting a sport is as irresponsible as it is immoral.

Theosophy points out that the ancients instinctively felt oneness, harmony, and reverence for Nature. They were satisfied with what Mother Nature gave. But *our* wants have become unlimited. How can we rely on the vagaries of Nature? So, we must conquer Nature. Man is causing indescribable pain to animals when they are killed for medicine and, worst of all, for sport. Most "poaching" is killing for money or for mere sport. And the methods used by the poachers are extremely cruel. H.P.B. writes: "Too many forget that the sympathies of those who rule the animate world should extend beyond the limits of their own kind....It is bad to kill any sentient creature for the sake of the savage pleasure of the chase. It is perhaps worse to cause their destruction for the sake of coldly profiting by their slaughter." (*Lucifer*, November 1887)

If there is no demand for leather boots, leather jackets, mink coats, silk dresses, or ivory show-pieces, there will be no supply. We may not be guilty of hunting ourselves, but if we make use of these animal products, we are party to it and are giving an indirect consent to the killing of animals. Hence, Buddha says, "One should neither slay nor *cause to slay*." Karmically, of course, we are sowing seeds or causes that may be reaped by us, in subsequent incarnations, in the form of similar *helpless suffering*.

Ultimately, it is the question of our feelings and attitude towards animals. Do we recognize that animals too, have souls,

consciousness, and emotions? Man is responsible for the evolution of the lower kingdoms. As man progresses, he has the responsibility of raising the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature, nature, and dignity of conscious god-hood. When we kill even a small insect, we interrupt its progress. Hence the injunction: “Kill not—for pity’s sake—and lest ye slay the meanest [of created] thing upon its upward way.” (*The Light of Asia*)

Christian doctrine teaches that animals have no souls or that *the soul of the animal dies with its body*. Since the misunderstood Biblical teaching has resulted in the killing and suffering of the animals at the hands of man, it is necessary to know whether or not the animals have souls. The Brahmin and Buddhist philosophy points out that “by killing an animal, or even an insect, we arrest the progress of an entity towards its final goal in nature—Man.” Hence, “kill not” is one of the foremost commandments enjoined upon man by every true religious system. The whole Bible teems with charity to men and mercy and love to animals. To those who believe that “man is endowed with an immortal soul, and the dumb brute has no immortality, not even short survival after death,” H.P.B. points out:

“The whole question rests upon the misconception that ‘soul,’ *nephesh*, is entirely distinct from ‘spirit’—*ruach*. And yet it is clearly stated that ‘God breathed into the nostrils (of man) the breath of life, and man became a living soul,’ *nephesh*, neither more nor less than an animal, for the soul of an animal is also called *nephesh*. It is by development that the *soul* becomes *spirit*, both being the lower and the higher rungs of one and the same ladder whose basis is the UNIVERSAL SOUL or spirit.” (*H.P.B. Series No. 15*, p. 8)

In the article “Psychic and Noetic Action,” H.P.B. explains that what the Kabalists call *Nephesh*, or the “breath of life,” is the psychic element, or *Kama-manas*, of Theosophy, which is common to both animal and human beings. *Kama-manas* is developed more in human beings because of the greater perfection and sensitiveness of their cerebral cells. In his article “Reincarnation of Animals,” Mr. Judge explains that animals cannot have *Manas* as developed as man and

so cannot be self-conscious in the sense that man is. Since man has a more developed mind, brain, and nervous system, man suffers more intensely than animals. But animals do suffer pain and feel anger and fear. The animal kingdom, being lower, has the impulse to rise to still higher forms, but they may rise higher in their own kingdom. They cannot, in this evolution, rise to the human stage, as we have reached the middle or turning point in the fourth round. This is further clarified in the *Secret Doctrine* as follows:

“In calling the animal ‘Soulless,’ it is not depriving the beast, from the humblest to the highest species, of a ‘soul,’ but only of a conscious surviving *Ego-soul*, i.e., that principle which survives after a man and reincarnates in a like man. The animal has an astral body that survives the physical form for a short period; but its (animal) Monad does not reincarnate in the same but in a higher species and has no ‘Devachan’ of course. It has the *seeds* of all the human principles in itself, but they are *latent*.” (II, 196 fn.)

It is true that there is no reincarnating Ego or continuing entity in an animal (as in man) which after the death of the animal, will incarnate in another body. However, in animals there is monadic essence, which has the tendency towards segregation into individual Monads but it is gradual, and in higher animals it comes almost to the point (*S.D.*, I, 178). The Kabalistic axiom contains the true doctrine of evolution when it says, “A stone becomes a plant; a plant, a beast; a beast, a man; a man, a spirit; and the spirit, a god.”

Mr. Judge pertinently remarks: “What is the difference between wantonly killing a deer and murdering an idiot? Very little, to my mind.” If the European women enjoy bird or deer hunts, “it is their Karma that they are the descendants of long generations of Europeans who, some centuries ago, with the aid of the church, decided that animals had no souls and therefore could be wantonly slaughtered.”

THE art of life is to know how to enjoy a little and to endure very much.

—WILLIAM HAZLITT

LOUIS PASTEUR—FATHER OF MICROBIOLOGY

I

LOUIS PASTEUR was the son of Jean-Joseph and Jeanne, born on December 27, 1822, in France. Louis was not an outstanding student in his early years, and his main talent seemed to be drawing. In 1842, he took his examinations for the degree in science, appeared for the entrance examination to the great Normal School in Paris, and passed fifteenth in rank among 22 candidates. However, Louis was not satisfied with the fifteenth rank, so he tried again for a higher rank to enter the Normal School. Ultimately, he informed his parents that he intended to become a professor at a large university. When he took the examination this time, he ranked fourth. To prepare himself to become a science professor, Louis studied advanced physics, chemistry, and mathematics and spent Sundays in the laboratory, working on some experiments. He was nicknamed “Laboratory Pillar” by his classmates.

In the days of Pasteur, chemists were interested in studying the hard deposits which formed inside the wine barrel. The substance extracted from these hard deposits was called Tartaric acid, which was used for dyeing, for baking, for medicine, etc. Pasteur got interested in studying the shape and form of Tartaric acid crystals. He found that there was another acid, namely racemic acid, that seemed to be identical with Tartaric acid and yet was different. Pasteur used polarized light to study crystals. Normal light is made up of a mixture of light rays travelling in random directions, but in a beam of polarized light, the rays are travelling in the same direction. He made polarized light pass through both kinds of crystals. He observed that while tartaric acid was optically active, *i.e.*, rotated polarized light to the right, racemic acid did not affect the polarized light. On careful observation, Pasteur found that while Tartaric acid crystals were all identical, those of racemic acid were of two forms—one the mirror image of the other, like a pair of gloves. He proved experimentally that the left-handed crystals bent polarized light to the left and the

right-handed crystals bent light to the right. Hence, when these two types of crystals are mixed in equal quantities, as they were in racemic acid, they do not affect the light. This meant that the effect on polarized light was due to differences in the molecules themselves, which in turn affected the way the crystals were formed. His discovery was to have a great effect on chemical research.

He was worried that there was an acid, racemic acid, that was important and useful in industry, yet no one could prepare it in the laboratory. He soon discovered something that made him change his course of research. One day, when he found a solution of tartaric acid with heavy growth of a greenish substance, he examined the same and found that the greenish stuff was actually a cluster of moulds, *i.e.*, extremely small living things which scientists called microbes. Pasteur transferred this mould to a solution of racemic acid and discovered that the microbes were growing and feeding on one of the two types of crystals of racemic acid. This led him to the discovery that microbes can bring about chemical changes and could be used to separate chemical substances.

One day, a person who owned a factory for producing alcohol from beet sugar, which process is called fermentation, approached Pasteur and told him that something was going wrong in his factory because he was getting a sour product instead of alcohol. Pasteur brought hundreds of samples and studied them under a microscope. He found that when fermentation went right, there were millions of tiny oval bodies, but otherwise, there were hundreds of microbes that looked like tiny long rods. The first kind of microbes with oval bodies were “yeast cells,” which fed on beet sugar and made alcohol, but the other kind of microbes made acid from beet sugar. This is his “germ theory of fermentation.” He demonstrated that micro-organisms, or “germs,” were responsible for both fermentation and disease.

He showed that microbes produce certain substances known as “Enzymes” which aid the process of fermentation. He described it as a battle in which, when the healthy oval bodies of yeast are

defeated by the elongated bodies, producing acid instead of alcohol. It is these microbes that make the acid found in sour milk. Later, Pasteur solved the problem of preventing wine or milk from going sour, which he said happens when microbes get into wine or milk. They could be prevented from getting in by the process called “pasteurization.” It is a process that involves heating the wine to a temperature below the boiling point (about 57 degrees Celsius) and the milk to a temperature of about 63 degrees Celsius, which kills or inactivates micro-organisms and enzymes that can cause food spoilage or pose a health risk.

Microbes have a dual role. According to H.P.B., they are at once both “creators” and “destroyers.” Dr. Dubos writes that the same bacteria, yeasts, and fungi that are used by Anatolian shepherds, the Bulgarian peasant, and the French farmer to convert milk into Yoghurt or Camembert cheese are regarded by the sanitary American as objectionable because they sour or putrefy his pasteurized dairy products. (*Theosophy*, November 1959, p. 46)

In *Theosophy* magazine (September 1947), *The Rural New Yorker* is quoted: “Contrary to current popular belief, pasteurization of milk is not a step forward in nutritional health. It is a step backward. Certain important nutritional elements, *i.e.*, vitamins, enzymes, and minerals, are lost...the dietary value of milk is lowered, while the cost to the consumer is increased.”

Today, it is recognized that though pasteurization is essential for food safety, it can have some negative effects, such as loss of heat-sensitive vitamins like vitamin C, vitamin B1, and vitamin B2. Also, it can lead to the inactivation of certain enzymes that can help in digestion and other bodily functions. Moreover, if the pasteurized food is not properly refrigerated, some spore-forming bacteria, like *Bacillus*, may survive pasteurization and lead to food spoilage or poisoning.

Today, micro-organisms are used in the production of cheese, butter, vinegar, and medicines like antibiotics. Pasteur presented his first paper on fermentation in 1857, which gave birth to a science

called *Microbiology* or the science dealing with microbes, and later it led to the study of the chemistry of life called *Biochemistry*.

Louis Pasteur made significant contributions to understanding aerobes, anaerobes, and fermentation. Fermentation is a metabolic process where micro-organisms like yeast or bacteria convert carbohydrates, like sugars, into alcohol or acids under anaerobic conditions, *i.e.*, without oxygen. He identified that some micro-organisms could live without oxygen, and he called them *anaerobes*. *Aerobes* require oxygen for growth and energy production. It is by the process of fermentation that fruit juices are converted to wine, grains are made into beer, and foods rich in starch, such as potatoes, are fermented and then distilled to make spirits such as gin and vodka.

On p. 248 (*S.D.*, I), H.P.B. writes that for occultism, there is nothing inorganic in the Kosmos because life pervades every particle of matter. In that which we call “inorganic,” life is latent or passive and exists as potential energy. In an “organic” substance, life is active and exists as kinetic energy. In the footnote on p. 249 (*S.D.*, I) H.P.B. writes: “Is Pasteur unconsciously taking the first step toward Occult Science in declaring that, if he dared express his full idea upon this subject, he would say that the Organic cells are endowed with a vital potency that does not cease its activity with the cessation of a current of oxygen towards them and does not, on that account, break off its relations with life itself, which is supported by the influence of that gas?” Pasteur says, “I would add that the evolution of the germ is accomplished by means of complicated phenomena, among which we must class processes of fermentation.” Life, according to Claude Bernard and Pasteur, is nothing else than a process of fermentation.

There are organisms, or Lives, or Beings which thrive without air or oxygen. Pasteur found that some bacteria and microbes, as well as Vibriones, could exist without air, and in fact, if they were kept in air, it killed them. They derived the necessary Oxygen for their multiplication from various substances that surrounded them. “Certain germ-cells, such as those of yeast, develop and multiply in

air, but when deprived of it, they will adapt themselves to life without air and become ferments, absorbing oxygen from substances coming in contact with them, and thereby ruining the latter. The cells of fruit, when lacking free oxygen, act as ferments and stimulate fermentation....Pasteur shows that in the substance of our tissues and organs, the cell, not finding sufficient oxygen for itself, stimulates fermentation in the same way as the fruit-cell.”

If we turn to pp. 261-63 (*S.D.*, I) and the footnote, we are given deeper insight into the process of fermentation given by Pasteur, and perhaps the corroboration of the statement that life is nothing else than a process of fermentation. H.P.B. says that every physiological change and every change in the tissues of the body, which allow life to act, are produced by the *creators* and *destroyers*, which we know as “microbes,” erroneously, but they are (fiery) “lives.” Mr. Judge observes that microbes, bacilli and bacteria are composed of minute lives. “Their action, forced forward by the Life Energy—called Prana or Jiva—will explain active existence and physical death.” Occult science says that not only the chemical constituents of man, rock, and plant are the same, but the invisible and *infinitesimal lives* that constitute atoms of the body of man, plant, ant, elephant, or mountain are also the same. These *lives* build the forms and also destroy them, expelling the Egos from old forms to inhabit new forms. In other words, it is Life which creates and destroys all forms and thus is responsible for life and death.

The footnote on pp. 262-63 (*S.D.*, I), points out that “fiery lives” are “the seventh and the highest subdivision of the plane of matter and correspond in the individual with the One Life of the Universe, though only on that plane. The microbes of science are the first and lowest subdivision on the second plane—that of material *prana* (or life).” The physical body of man undergoes complete change every seven years, and its destruction and preservation are due to the alternate function of the fiery lives as “builders” and “destroyers.” They are “builders” or “creators” when they sacrifice themselves in the form of vitality to restrain the destructive influence of the microbes,

as they supply these microbes with vital constructive energy and compel them to build up the material body and its cells. They become “destroyers” or “devourers” when they stop supplying the microbes with the vital constructive energy and allow them to run riot as destructive agents. Thus, for the first five periods of seven years each, or 35 years, the human body is built, and for the next 35 years, the fiery lives begin the work of destruction.

In the footnote on p. 263 (*S.D.*, I), we are told that the destructive process of the microbes when the restraint of the fiery lives on them (which made them build under that restraint) is removed, can be compared to the explanation given by Pasteur. He says that “the cells of the organs, when they do not find sufficient oxygen for themselves, adapt themselves to that condition and form *ferments*.” These *ferments* “absorb oxygen from substances coming in contact with them, ruin the latter.” Thus, in the case of the human body, the process is started by one cell robbing the neighbouring cell of its vitality, when the supply is insufficient, and “the ruin so commenced steadily progresses.”

Next, Pasteur was interested in finding out, “Do microbes have parents?” Do they come from parent microbes, or do they just arise from non-living matter? This belief that by putting non-living things together, life is generated or produced by itself was known as the theory of “Spontaneous Generation.” People of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries believed that mice came from old rags and frogs developed from mud! Felix Pouchet, a well-respected member of the scientific community, published a paper in 1858 in which he claimed that under certain circumstances, living cells arose spontaneously and then developed into adult organisms.

(To be concluded)

ALWAYS dream and shoot higher than you know you can do.
Do not bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself.

—WILLIAM FAULKNER

A DAUNTLESS FIGHTER

ROBERT CROSBIE, the founder of the United Lodge of Theosophists (U.L.T.), passed away on the 25th of June 1919. Theosophical students should learn to contact the Mind of Robert Crosbie by studying his writings and his life. It is written in *The Voice of the Silence* that disciples at each new trial may “bend like reeds but never break.” When one hears the story of the life of Robert Crosbie, one finds that his Theosophical career brought him innumerable tests, through all of which he emerged with clarified vision. Bitter experiences did not embitter his disposition—his trust in humanity never wavered, and his friendliness for all students and aspirants never diminished.

To be like a reed but never break—both are virtues. The reed’s strength lies in its power to bend before the gale, adjusting itself. To bend before the blow and emerge unscathed, that unfolds adaptability. The aspirant has to learn to emerge unscathed, adapting himself to new circumstances that Karma precipitates. This Mr. Crosbie ever did—always with his gaze fixed on the distant goal. In the surrounding darkness caused by the failures of Theosophical aspirants he did not demand to see all, to know all—one step at a time was enough for him. He made sincere efforts to meet the situations created by Karma in a simple and straightforward manner. The sure success of each step is indicated in his emergence from trying events, each time wiser and stronger. He wrote: “Man is spiritual, in fact, but, thinking himself material and separate, and acting in accordance with his thinking, he brings about the battle between two natures in him....We would have to go through the crucifixion of the false ideas in ourselves, and arise as the Saviour did, to the right hand of the Father—the Ego free from all those delusions which have caused him to maintain himself in sin, sorrow, and suffering.”

Each student-aspirant has to learn never to break—never to desert the Path seen, however dim the glimpse.

THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE

FRAGMENT ONE—V

WHATEVER state of consciousness the Perceiver may be in, the things of that plane are for the time being, his only realities. In a sense, things on the lower plane are unreal *as compared to* the things on the higher plane. As compared to the Self, all else is unreal. The great *Adi Shankaracharya* taught, *Brahm satya, Jagat mithya, i.e.,* Self or the One Absolute alone is real; the entire world is *maya* (illusion).

As we study these teachings, it is clear that each one of us is composed of two natures: There is the personal, selfish, egotistic lower nature, composed of desires, likes and dislikes, and it is the vehicle of the Inner, Real man. But because this vehicle is soiled, the Inner, Impersonal man is unable to shine through. Hence, the whole discipline consists in purifying the vehicle so that it becomes a fit shrine for the God within.

The Voice of the Silence goes on to say, **“Before the Soul can see, the Harmony within must be attained, and fleshly eyes be rendered blind to all illusion.”** The “seeing” referred to here is that of the soul. It is the same as understanding or perceiving an idea when we say, “I see.” The Soul’s eye can see only if there is harmony within. To see *things as they are*, it is necessary to attain internal harmony by bringing the lower mind in harmony with the Higher Mind. When we see an object, say a chair, our senses bring to us its details as raw data. The lower *Manas* synthesizes it or transforms it into an idea of a chair, which may be quite different from the *real* chair. Our perception is affected by our conceptions and imperfections of the instruments that bring the data, and hence we do not see *thing-in-itself*.

We read in *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali* that the “Soul is the Perceiver; it is vision itself, pure and simple, and looks directly on ideas.” That Perceiver is the Higher *Manas*, or the Higher Ego. However, the Higher Ego cannot act directly on the body. Also, the

Higher Ego, being part of the essence of the Universal Mind, is unconditionally omniscient on its own plane and *only potentially so on our plane* because it has to act through its *alter ego*— the lower mind. However, we are unable to appreciate the fact that the Perceiver is *changeless*. This is because we identify the Perceiver with its perceptions. *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali* mentions that at the time of concentration, the Soul or Perceiver is like a spectator without spectacle, but at other times, *i.e.*, as we live the ordinary life, our mind is modified by the object perceived through the senses, and the Perceiver, as it views the object through the mind, also *seems to be altered into that form*. If red light falls on a white marble, it will *appear* crimson, though actually it is not crimson.

The Perceiver uses the lower mind as his instrument, like the astronomer uses his telescope for acquiring information respecting the heavens. If the telescope is not properly adjusted or is out of focus, there will not be a correct perception, leading, in turn, to wrong action. For correct perception, “the Perceiver must...learn, by experience and through the experience of others like himself with similar instruments, the proper adjustment and focussing of the instrument upon which right perception and action depend,” writes Mr. Crosbie. We are not able to see things as they are because the mirror of our mind is covered with the dust of attachment, the dust of emotions, passions, prejudice and biases. Hence, to clean the mirror or to adjust the instrument implies that we must acquire universal ideas.

Thus, for instance, the perception of an emotionally sensitive person is coloured by his emotions, and he is unable to “see” clearly or to judge impartially. In *Light on the Path* eyes are called the windows of the soul. The disciple is told that “before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears.” Being incapable of tears does not imply any hardness of heart or indifference on our part; it only means that we must not be swayed by emotions and sensations. The book explains that “to be incapable of tears is to have faced and conquered simple human nature and to have attained an

equilibrium that cannot be shaken by personal emotions.” Sensitivity is not destroyed but, in fact, becomes acute as we progress. To become incapable of tears refers to the stage we reach when we can forget ourselves and our personal reactions in any situation. We are thus able to feel more keenly the enjoyments and sufferings of others because we are not personally involved. A mother suffers with the child but is sufficiently detached to be able to help the child. When one thus learns to be sensitive to pain and pleasure without being swayed inwardly, he begins to “see” or develop *real insight*.

Along with the insight or “inner seeing,” comes the “inner hearing,” which is expressed in the *Voice of the Silence* as: **“When he has ceased to hear the many, he may discern the ONE—the inner sound, which kills the outer. Then only, and not till then, shall he forsake the region of Asat, the false, to come unto the realm of Sat, the true....Before the soul can hear, the image (man) has to become as deaf to roarings as to whispers, to cries of bellowing elephants as to the silvery buzzing of the golden fire-fly.”** We may perhaps correlate this with the second rule in *Light on the Path* wherein ears are called the gateways or doors of the Soul, and “through them comes the knowledge of the confusion of the world. Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness.”

To become a real listener, a *Shravaka*, is the *sine qua non* condition of discipleship, leading ultimately to adeptship. Therefore, the first stage in becoming a listener is to pay attention to what the ears hear and what sounds they have become accustomed to. One must learn to pay less and less attention to outside things, which include demands made by one’s own lower self, media, different political groups, various advertisements that influence us to buy certain products, egoistic talk, and small talk. At one’s place of work or even in one’s family, one may be expected to make sacrifices of one’s time and energy. It must be made judiciously. H.P.B. advises: “The duty—let alone happiness—of every Theosophist...is certainly to help others to carry their burden; but no Theosophist or other has the right to sacrifice himself unless *he knows for a certainty* that by

so doing he helps someone and does not sacrifice himself in vain for the empty glory of the abstract virtue....Psychic and vital energy are limited in every man. It is like a capital. If you have a dollar a day and spend two, at the end of the month, you will have a deficit of \$30.”

To become a real listener, a *Shravaka*, the disciple must begin by training his ears to lose their sensitiveness to earthly sounds and become more sensitive to the spiritual sounds that will arise from his inner nature; this is the first step towards becoming a *Shravaka*. One has to cease to hear the many. It does not apply only to the useless din of the world but also to all sensations, pleasant and unpleasant. Hence, one is asked to become as deaf not only to the “cries of bellowing elephants,” *i.e.*, to harsh criticism and condemnations that tend to depress or disturb one inwardly, but also to the “silvery buzzing of the golden fire-fly,” *i.e.*, to accolades, praise, and approval of others which is pleasant to one’s ears, and which is likely to make one proud or complacent.

Light on the Path says that the faculty of intuition can be developed only by the one who has learnt to interpret “many” voices and suggestions of the outside world in the light of the voice within. When the sounds of the outer, the disharmonious and jarring sounds of the world around, sicken him, only then will he begin to seek the centre of peace and harmony within himself. From this centre, in time, will spring the Voice of the Silence. In other words, when all the outer voices are silenced, the person discerns the ONE, the inner sound. The very word “discern” means to detect, *i.e.*, it always was, but only now is one detecting it. For this to happen, it is very necessary to set aside some time, every day, for silent reflection, silencing all other thoughts and turning to the divine within. Additionally, one has to undertake self-examination to recognize that one is more than one’s personality. The personal man with his thoughts, ideas, emotions, likes and dislikes, etc., is only an *image* (personality), a reflection, or a representation of the real Man.

This personality changes during life and also perishes at the end of it. Life after life, the ego takes up a new personality as its instrument.

This sort of exercise, *i.e.*, silencing one's thoughts and reflecting on the Higher-Self, is a necessity. It is not enough to be a good man. There is a difference between a good man and a spiritual man. All our good intentions and work are not enough because the Higher Self can give us guidance only if *we* turn to it for help. In *Sushupti* or dreamless sleep, we are able to get the guidance of our Higher Self, but are unable to bring it back to waking consciousness because the brain-mind is not trained. However, in our meditation, when we give it a chance to speak, it may give us guidance if we are fit and in earnest. The surest sign of positive meditation is a feeling of calmness and cheerfulness, helping others, and receiving from others in the right spirit.

After the aspirant discerns the ONE, he would forsake the *Asat* (untruth) and embrace *Sat* (truth). *Sat* is a term with many meanings. We are reminded of the first line of the sloka in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* (I.iii.28): *Asato ma Sadgamaya*, which means, "Lead us from (*Asat*) Unreality (of Transitory Existence) to the (*Sat*) Reality (of the Eternal Self)." In this line we are told that the spiritual aspirant, who has come to appreciate the finite nature of all things in the world, wants the Guru to guide him from the *Asat* to *Sat* or from the Unreal to the Real. *Sat* is the True Self, the blissful consciousness that ever was, is, and ever will be. *Sat* is God, or *Brahman* or One Reality. It is *Beness*. Being is like colour red, whereas *Beness* is redness, which cannot be described. For instance, we can conceive of any one type of triangle at a time that satisfies the properties of a triangle. Whereas we cannot visualize triangularity that embraces every conceivable triangle. *Beness* is more like a quality of triangularity. The Universe and all things in it are in a constant state of change and are *Asat*. They only *appear* to be real.

In spiritual parlance, "*Maya*" is the powerful force that creates the cosmic illusion that the phenomenal world is real. The world

cannot be “unreal” or false because we are able to clearly perceive it. If one’s hand comes in contact with a hot iron, one would feel the pain. It is real for the mind and the senses functioning on this plane. We might therefore say that the world is only “relatively” real. As compared to the unchanging Reality, or *Brahman*, the constantly changing world, consisting of temporary and impermanent things, is unreal. The unreal is illusory, very much like a dream, which has its own subjective reality but which is illusory as compared to the waking state.

Shankara compares the whole Creation to magic or jugglery; God is a magician who creates the world by the magical power called *Maya*. *Maya* is not distinct from *Brahman* but is indistinguishable from It, just as power to burn is inseparable from fire. The world is an *appearance* which God conjures up with his power, or *Maya*. When the rope appears as a snake, we have superimposed a snake on the substratum or reality called rope. The illusion of a snake in a rope is due to our ignorance of what really is there behind the appearance, *i.e.*, ignorance of the substratum or the ground (*adhisthana*), in this case, the rope. Further, the ignorance creating an illusion does not simply conceal from our view the real nature of the ground, the rope, but positively distorts it, *i.e.*, makes it appear as something else. Concealment (*avarana*) of reality and distortion (*viksepa*) of it into something else in our mind are two functions of an illusion-producing ignorance.

As a result, we see many objects in the One Reality, or *Brahman*, due to our ignorance, which conceals the real *Brahman* from us and makes it appear as many objects. For the one who sees through the trick of the magician, he fails to be a magician. Similarly, for those who see nothing but God in the world, God ceases to have *Maya* or the power of creating appearances.

(To be continued)

NOTHING strengthens authority so much as silence.

—LEONARDO DA VINCI

THE TRIADIC HEART DOCTRINE

THE ENTIRE corpus of Theosophic literature in its final analysis is essentially apropos of the Heart Doctrine; however, precious little is directly said on the subject. Therefore, it is important for students of Theosophy to try and decipher what the Heart Doctrine is and how it may be obtained.

There appear to be three aspects of the Heart Doctrine that are directly addressed in *The Voice of the Silence*. The first aspect states that the Heart Doctrine is the *Esoteric* purport of the *Exoteric* texts. “The ‘Doctrine of the Eye’ is for the crowd; the ‘Doctrine of the Heart’ for the elect” (*ibid.*, p. 29). Jesus says to his apostles that “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables” (*Mark* 4:11). In the Eighteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Krishna calls his teachings गुह्याद्गुह्यतरं (*Sloka* 63) or more secret than secrecy itself. In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 516), we read that “The whole essence of truth *cannot be transmitted from mouth to ear*. Nor can any pen describe it, not even that of the recording Angel, unless man finds the answer in the sanctuary of his own heart, in the innermost depths of his divine intuitions.” This aspect of the Heart Doctrine is *Nirukta*—the ineffable purport of all exoteric texts. Why is the Heart Doctrine veiled from the profane? Jesus answers, “Because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand” (*Matthew*, 13:13). The esoteric truths are hidden in plain sight within exoteric texts, and yet, seeing, we see not. H.P.B. has gone to great lengths in both *Isis Unveiled* and the *Secret Doctrine* to demonstrate in a few cases how esoteric truths are hidden in exoteric texts of all ancient traditions. This aspect raises the first question: *how do we extract the Heart from the Eye Doctrine?*

The second aspect of the Heart Doctrine is referred to in *The Voice of the Silence* as “‘Great Sifter’ is the name of the ‘Heart Doctrine,’ O Disciple” (p. 30). The “Great Sifter” is the Law of Karma or the Law of Harmony. In another part of the same book, it

is described as “the Law of Laws—eternal Harmony, Alaya’s SELF: a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting right, and fitness of all things, the law of Love eternal” (*ibid.*, p. 76). The Heart Doctrine is COMPASSION ABSOLUTE. A moment’s thought will illuminate how lofty this state really is—at a minimum, it means that we should genuinely feel the same compassion towards our enemies as we feel towards our own self! This aspect raises the second question: *how can we reach such an exalted state?*

The third and perhaps the most important aspect of the Heart Doctrine is that of the “Secret Path” as opposed to the “Open Path.” The Open Path leads the aspirant to *Mukti* or Nirvana, which shuts them out forever from the world of men. The *Open* PATH is “the way to selfish bliss, shunned by the Bodhisattvas of the ‘Secret Heart,’ the Buddhas of Compassion” (*ibid.*, p. 36). They sacrifice their own Nirvana— “bliss past human thought” and exchange it for “long and bitter duty,” to help on man’s salvation. This Secret Path is the Heart Doctrine. “Nirvanas gained and lost from boundless pity and compassion for the world of deluded mortals” (*ibid.*, p. 46). This aspect raises the third and final question: *how do we prepare to make that supreme sacrifice at the moment of choice?*

Now, let us consider these three questions in order. First, how do we find the esoteric meaning of exoteric texts? To fully appreciate the answer given by teachers to this question, we have to first internalize the difference between *Propositional Truths* and *Living Truths*. A Propositional Truth is a statement whose validity can be intellectually verified or falsified. It can be debated and people can be convinced of the verity or falsity of the proposition. The Pythagorean theorem is an example of Propositional Truth. Within the framework of Euclidean geometry and its five axioms, for any given right-angled triangle, the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides. If anyone disbelieves this proposition, they can be shown the proof using rules of inference from the axioms of Euclid and hence convinced of its validity. Everybody with a rational mind holds the Pythagorean theorem to

be true, and yet how many times have we applied this theorem in our daily lives? Has the admission of this proposition changed our life in any fundamental way? For most people, the answer is likely going to be in the negative. On the other hand, consider the statement “life is preferable to death” or its logical corollary “tomorrow is worth living for.” Can we consider this statement to be universally true like the Pythagorean theorem? No. For close to a million people who commit suicide globally each year, this statement is clearly not true. And yet, we find this truth to be the very basis of our life. We live this truth with every breath we take. It is, in fact, the very cause of our existence, the maker of this tabernacle. It is built into our very being. It is undeniably a Living Truth, for if you deny it, you cease to exist. Teachers of all times have stressed that in order to extract the Heart from the Eye Doctrine, we have to elevate the teachings from Propositional Truths to Living Truths. We have to “Live the Life,” not merely toy with metaphysical ideas intellectually. But when we first attempt to do so, we invariably trip, and Karmic pebbles bruise our feet. In that pain and struggle, life lessons are learned which in aggregate become *Shila*, “the key of Harmony in word and act.” There is no progress where there is no struggle. Thus, progressively, as Eternal Verities become, to us, living, breathing truths, the esoteric import illuminates in the sanctuary of our own heart, in the innermost depths of our divine intuitions.

Now to the second question, how to reach the state of “Compassion Absolute”? At the outset, it must be clarified that compassion is not sentimentalism, emoting, virtue signalling or people-pleasing. All these are foibles of character masquerading as Mercy. And they all have one thing in common—they lack justice. Take the example of someone publicly expressing compassion for a squatting tenant being legally evicted by their landlord. If they truly felt sorry for the tenant, they could very well give up their own home to the squatter and exchange places with the landlord. But they don’t. Instead, they publicly proclaim their cost-free sympathy with the squatter just to gain unearned social status. Where is the

justice in that? Compassion without justice is a vice. True compassion is altruism with no discernible personal benefit but with significant personal cost. Usually in practice one is physically constrained to expressing such compassion only towards a limited number of people. While such compassion is true, it is relative and not absolute. Absolute Compassion must, in its purview, include all of humanity. And to do so, one must necessarily raise one's centre of activity to causal and moral planes of being. Because the higher the centre of Being and hence activity, the broader its purview. Theosophy teaches that in Man there are two centres that are constantly in operation and in opposition. The lower, or animal, centre and the higher, or divine, centre. By allowing one's thoughts to dwell on Eternal Verities vindicated by life experiences, one progressively begins to embody those truths and elevate one's being towards the higher centre and hence approach the exalted state of Compassion Absolute.

Last but not least, how can we prepare to make the supreme sacrifice of the Bodhisattva? In the *Key to Theosophy*, while talking about self-sacrifice, the teacher points out that nobody has the right to sacrifice that which is not wholly their own. Further, the teacher logically shows how there is only one thing by the sacrifice of which no collateral damage is risked and all the downside is fully owned by the sacrificer—it is the sacrifice of one's personal comfort. A Bodhisattva sacrifices the ultimate comfort of Nirvana in deference to aeons of long and bitter duty. But we can scale this down to our level and progressively sacrifice our smaller personal comforts to take up voluntary responsibility for the collective. Instead of spending our spare time on the craven comforts of the modern world, we can work within our own capacity for the amelioration of the Human condition. The purview of the United Lodge of Theosophists is the moral and spiritual upliftment of orphan Humanity, along the lines of work laid down by the original teachers, without sectarian discrimination of any kind. Hence, it offers an open avenue under its aegis for those looking to prepare and work for Humanity in the causal and moral planes of being. As the Maha-Chohan said, "There

is hardly a theosophist in the whole Society unable to effectually help it.” At the initial stage, students can help disseminate the verbatim teachings through the internet, run the lodge, participate in study classes, digitize books, magazines, etc. This is largely on the physical plane. Once the tenets of Theosophy are well-understood, the student can operate on the intellectual level by making correlations, restating the teachings within context, bringing out Theosophy in comparative religious study, etc. Finally, to work on the moral plane, the student needs to attune “thy being to Humanity’s great pain.” Be in full sympathy with the collective cry of Humanity and identify the moral crisis underpinning that pain. The root cause of all human suffering is to be traced to the moral plane of being; all lower causes are simply effects thereof. Then apply the Dialectic Method on Metaphysical Facts to derive Ethical Values that address the underlying moral crisis and selflessly, anonymously broadcast that solution. This demands effort from the Heart and draws on the faculty of intuition. When we sincerely call on the Heart and exercise the faculty of intuition for selfless, altruistic purposes, it awakens in degrees.

These three aspects of the Heart Doctrine can be summarized as Understanding, Being, and Duty—or, *Jnana*, *Buddhi* and *Bhakti*. By Living the Life, one attains to *Jnana* which is spiritual intuition. With the awakening of intuition, one yokes oneself more to *Buddhi*. From such an elevation of Being, actions that naturally flow constitute *Bhakti* or Living the Life, thus closing the triadic virtuous cycle of the Heart Doctrine which is the synthesis and culmination of *Jnana*, *Buddhi* and *Bhakti* Yoga.

THE BEST way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don’t wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope.

—BARACK OBAMA

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Is death just an illusion? We mostly see death as the end, *i.e.*, absolute, irreversible cessation of consciousness and physical function. Such conventional wisdom of philosophies and religions is being challenged by a growing body of scientific thought. Science is attempting to redefine our understanding of life and death in the light of theories ranging from quantum mechanics to the theory of biocentrism. Is death truly an end, or merely a shift in perception? Is it a universal truth or a construct of our consciousness? On the death of his friend, Einstein wrote that his friend had departed from this world a little ahead of him. That means nothing because we know that “the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.”

Biocentrism is the revolutionary theory proposed by Dr. Robert Lanza, a cell biologist, which suggests that “life and consciousness are not by-products of the universe, but the very forces that shape it.” According to this theory, space and time are not external, objective realities, but tools of our perception, shaped by conscious observation. Reality does not exist without an observer. On the other hand, traditional, materialist views hold that the universe exists independently of any observer. In other words, “Biocentrism places consciousness at the centre of the universe. In doing so, it opens the door to re-evaluating what death really means—if the self is not simply the body, its ‘end’ might not be defined by physical decay.”

Quantum physics further supports the biocentric view by demonstrating that the building blocks of reality act differently depending on whether a conscious observer is involved. We associate death with a point in time, which loses its meaning if time is not absolute. It implies that consciousness may not “end” but simply shift in how it experiences the universe.

If we consider the concept of parallel universes and the deathless observer, expressed in biocentric terms, then it implies that “the conscious self may always continue in some version of reality. Death

in one timeline may not terminate consciousness, which could ‘shift’ to another where survival occurs.” This implies perpetual continuity in the multiverse. Though biocentrism unites physics, biology, and philosophy and opens new ways of thinking about age-old mysteries, it faces many scientific criticisms. We may sum up by saying that redefining death redefines life. If consciousness persists, then every aspect of human society, from science to ethics, will evolve. (*The Times of India*, TOI Desk, May 23, 2025)

Death is not an end in the sense of absolute, irreversible cessation of consciousness. If we think that there is only one life and that everything comes to an end when we die, we are likely to become materialistic. “Eat, drink, and be merry—for we know not tomorrow” may become our *mantram*. Such an idea is likely to make us afraid of death. We would want to hold on to life at any cost. H.P.B. has very logically argued that death does not come as an end because something survives the death of the body. She writes:

“A flower blossoms; then withers and dies. It leaves a fragrance behind, which, long after its delicate petals are but a little dust, still lingers in the air....Let a note be struck on an instrument, and the faintest sound produces an eternal echo. A disturbance is created on the invisible waves of the shoreless ocean of space, and the vibration is never wholly lost. Its energy being once carried from the world of matter into the immaterial world will live for ever. And man, we are asked to believe, man, the living, thinking, reasoning entity, the indwelling deity of our nature’s crowning masterpiece, will evacuate his casket and be no more! Would the principle of continuity which exists even for the so-called *inorganic* matter, for a floating atom, be denied to the spirit, whose attributes are consciousness, memory, mind, LOVE! Really, the very idea is preposterous.” (*Isis*, I, 114)

Dr. J. Paul Williams observes that the fundamental question to be answered is: What is man? There are three possibilities: (1) Is man just a body? (2) Is he a body that has a soul? (3) Is he a soul that has [or uses] a body? Our everyday experience shows that man is not just a body. If we accept that man *is* a soul, then what is the relation

between the soul and the body? William James pointed out that we can say that the body *produces* life [soul], *or* that the body *reflects* life. He gives an analogy. Light is produced by a candle; if the candle is put out, its light disappears. But light is reflected by a mirror; if the mirror is taken away, the light still continues. So also, we may suppose that the body reflects the soul; therefore, it is rational to believe that the soul can exist apart from the body.

We may argue that we do not have a *direct* experience of the soul existing independent of the body. So also, we have no *direct* experience of electrons and protons in an atom. Yet, there are innumerable instances of people who have had OBEs [Out-of-the-Body-Experiences]—in which they describe rushing out of the body, observing the body from a distance, and re-entering it—showing that the soul can exist independent of the body.

Great people are publicly admired, but they also have to face criticism. However, the person who is publicly admired but not criticised is not great; he may be mighty but not tolerant. The ordinary people are neither publicly criticised nor admired. They have limited admirers, and their criticism and admiration occur somewhat privately. Shri Krishna advises in the *Gita* to perform one's duty, unmindful of praise or criticism. The general human tendency is to embrace the pleasant and avoid the unpleasant. When a person is to be honoured, they are admired, but that does not mean that they are without any faults or blemishes. We are simply overlooking the negative side of that person. To emphasize the role of learning in life, Chanakya Niti says, "Learned people have only virtues, and no vices."

We are a blend of strengths and weaknesses. "All saints had a past, which might not be so saintly." It is said that Valmiki Rishi was once a dacoit and a wicked man named Ratnakar in his teens and adulthood. Likewise, Angulimal was a cruel man who changed after meeting the Buddha. For those who are flexible and willing to

change, transformation is possible.

Most people like to hear about their strengths but not their weaknesses. The *Gita* speaks of three kinds of admiration—Sattvic, Rajasic, and Tamasic. When the admirer’s soul is in a joyous state, it gives rise to the purest and most transparent form of admiration, with far-reaching effect, and tends to create positivity and brightness all around. Rajasic admiration is like *Vishakumbham payomukham*, *i.e.*, nectar in the mouth, poison in the heart, consisting of flowery language coming out of a dark heart. It is the most common form of admiration to be found in a society that seeks material glory. Tamasic nature is characterised by a lack of admiration. It is always critical of everything. Let us remember that there are many who are never admired publicly or privately, but they live without complaining, writes G. S. Tripathy, an adjunct professor of Physics at Berhampur University. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, May 17, 2025)

Both praise and blame, when used constructively, play an important role in helping one’s worldly as well as spiritual progress. Scriptures abound with advice on our attitude towards praise and blame, both as *givers* and *receivers*. However, we find more explicit guidance available as to our attitude towards *blame* as compared to praise, probably because “blame” is regarded as a negative quality in the pair. But surprisingly, while one is able to handle criticism with a little understanding, often it is appreciation and its expectations that prove to be a stumbling block.

A few words of praise go a long way in encouraging a person and in boosting his confidence. On the other hand, words of criticism often tend to demoralize and discourage, though constructive criticism has its own value and place in the process of improvement and growth. Words of encouragement, expressing one’s belief in the capability or virtue of another, are an indirect form of praise and can really work wonders. The words “I know, you have it in you” or “Come on, you can do it” coming from a well-meaning friend or an elder never fail to boost our confidence and strengthen our belief in ourselves. On the other hand, children who are repeatedly told

that they are “good for nothing” live true to the words.

Buddha shows the importance of right criticism and acceptance of the same. It is the duty of the discerning wise to blame what is blameworthy and admonish. He says that a fool looks only for praise and rejects honest criticism. If we wish to change ourselves and make spiritual progress, then we should follow that intelligent and wise man who blames what is blameworthy. It is the duty of parents, elders, and teachers to point out faults, which must be done without arousing ill-feeling, and that calls for real sympathy and understanding. If we are on the receiving end of criticism, then we must patiently listen and then find out if the criticism has any fairness and truth in it. If it has, then let us accept it as an eye-opener or a reminder of things that need correction. If we feel it is an unfair reproach, then we must examine it closely. This requires detachment and intellectual honesty. If the remark is not deserving or true, leave it alone and brush it off from memory. For memory, especially of unpleasantness, is a great obstacle to soul progress. We must have enough sense of humour to take all things lightly in a sporting spirit and manfully. It is said, “Every fool can find fault that a great many wise men cannot remedy!” Why should others’ uncharitable opinions concern us? We must strike a balance between being too self-opinionated and self-distrustful. W. Q. Judge said that there is an ever-present inner censor and a silent witness, whose perfect judgment we must heed. A person who has been able to cultivate a certain amount of healthy self-esteem is not likely to be dependent on other people’s appreciation.

In order to rise above admiration and criticism, we need to cultivate *impersonality*. *The Voice of the Silence* asks us to recognize, “Thy body is not Self, thy SELF is in itself without a body, and either praise or blame affects it not.”

ALL the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely
players.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE