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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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June 17, 2026

“EACH MEMBER A CENTRE”

A MASTER of Wisdom has gone on record saying that each member or student of Theosophy, if earnest, sincere and unselfish, could become, in his own town or city, an active centre from which would radiate unseen powerful forces able to influence men and women in the vicinity for good. Soon enquirers would appear, a Branch would be organized, and thus the whole neighbourhood would receive benefit. We may ask, “What comes in the way of each member becoming such a centre?” It is, basically and mainly, the mental attitude. Mr. Judge observes that most students think that people around them are not receptive. Who cares for Theosophy these days? But this is dangerous, because we are connected with others on the mental plane, and if we think nothing can be done, then we impress other minds around us with the same thought, and then, of course, nothing is done. As against this, if unselfishly and sincerely we *think Theosophy* and desire that just as we have benefitted from Theosophy, let others be benefitted, then it would be like conveying to the minds we meet in stray moments of the day and in many hours of the night, “Theosophy,” and “Help and hope for thee.” Such an attitude, combined with sincere efforts at promulgation, can have a miraculous effect. To *think Theosophy* means to *constantly aspire* towards it day and night.

The possibility of each student-aspirant becoming a centre of Theosophy and attracting like-minded students to form a centre of the United Lodge of Theosophists exists. The inability to start a

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new centre or to maintain the existing one has been attributed to one's mental attitude, as the right mental attitude would help us to overcome all the obstacles.

Let us first understand why each member is called a “centre” and not anything else. Does the term “centre” have any special importance? In the first of her five messages, H.P.B. writes: “The multiplication of local centres should be a foremost consideration in your minds, and each man should strive to be a centre of work in himself. When his inner development has reached a certain point, he will naturally draw those with whom he is in contact under the same influence; a nucleus will be formed, round which other people will gather, forming a centre from which information and spiritual influence radiate, and towards which higher influences are directed.”

Each student must strive to become a centre of work himself, for which he has to reach a certain stage in his inner development. What is that inner development? In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. says that an individual has to become a centre of spiritual action, and “from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellow-men.” A spiritual action, in the light of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, can be described as that in which the attitude of mind is that everything that gets done is being done by that Great Power and that one is only an instrument through which He gets that work done. One learns to abandon “*kartrutva bhav*” or doership, as also the attachment to the fruit of actions, and from the daily individual life of such a person radiates regenerating spiritual forces. In other words, in day-to-day life, whatever thoughts, feelings, desires or actions he encourages are of such an ennobling character that they induce others to emulate the same. These spiritual forces must originate from Buddhi-Manas and carry the power to regenerate their fellow men by touching their hearts because they flow from someone who has acquired spiritual discrimination and spiritual intuition.

To understand the significance of the term “centre,” we can take the example of the Sun, which is at the centre of the solar system

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with all the other planets revolving around it. The Sun is a centre of electrical and magnetic energy and protects the solar system from being reduced to ashes, for that is what would happen once the protective cover of the physical Sun is removed. In an atom, it is the nucleus which forms the powerful centre, around which electrons move in orbits. Today we know the power of a nucleus, which is used in making nuclear weapons by the process of nuclear fission. So, the nucleus is something that is a powerful, living force or energy. Likewise, one person with great spiritual force attracts other like-minded people and creates a Theosophical centre.

Do we have any example where one person can reach out to many and also generate a powerful Centre? Col. Olcott writes in *Old Diary Leaves* that Mr. Judge met H.P.B. in 1874, in New York, when he was barely 24 years old. He helped H.P.B. write *Isis Unveiled* in 1877. But when H.P.B. and Olcott left for India, there was a sudden vacuum. But actually, from 1874 to 1878, H.P.B. and Olcott had planted the seeds in American minds, and Judge was the Husbandman who nurtured those seeds with patience and perseverance. It is during those years that he conducted the meetings all alone, for seven consecutive years. He started *The Path* magazine and wrote almost all the articles himself under different pen names. He was called the “resuscitator of Theosophy” in America. Then several centres of the Theosophical Society came up in America.

In Robert Crosbie, we have another example. After the passing away of Mr. Judge, in the years that followed, Mr. Crosbie found that members were straying away from the original lines and original teachings. He then founded the first centre of the United Lodge of Theosophists in Los Angeles, on February 18, 1909, with seven other students.

The question may arise: Can we, as ordinary students, become, in a small way, a “centre”? Will we receive help from the Masters? It is important to note that the one who becomes a “centre” is first required to build an “inner” centre. As a first step, we must make a deliberate effort to turn within, reflect on what is studied, and meditate on the Masters of Wisdom. We have to learn to endure the

turmoil from the outside by exercising adaptability. “Our spiritual Will develops as we remain steady and calm and are able to turn from one to the other thing, to execute a duty and then to return to the previous one....Do not allow anything to cause annoyance in you....*Vairagya* in the mind and in the heart, in the small hourly affairs, will make your Inner Centre strong and then potent. Mundane things are mortal and will pass away, while we learn and grow through endurance....Trials and tribulations become helpers if we but remember their purpose in human evolution,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

In addition to study and application, the student has to add a sincere attempt at promulgation of the philosophy of Theosophy. The laws that govern such efforts at promulgation are the law of Karma and the law of cycles. We know that everything happens under Karma. Even when we have made the best efforts, and that too for something good, it may not bear fruit because there is some other Karma which is obstructing, and that very failure has a lesson to teach. The effort may not be fruitful because the motive was not right, or the action was performed with pride and was devoid of devotion. On the other hand, it is also true that there is a good chance of success when there is a wholehearted and sacrificial effort, giving all in terms of time and energy. It is the “widow’s mite.” The “widow’s mite” refers to a famous biblical story in the Gospels of Mark and Luke where a poor widow selflessly donates two tiny, low-value copper coins to the temple treasury. Jesus praised her, noting that while the rich gave out of their wealth, she gave *everything* she had to live on.

The article, “Surrender—The Power We All Need,” discusses the concept of surrender as applied to a student-aspirant, who is at times overwhelmed by the profound depth of the philosophy of Theosophy that he is endeavouring to promulgate. He finds himself inadequate for the task and determines to give up the duty of promulgation with a view to equipping his mind with sufficient knowledge. But such an attitude results from the lack of a *force* fundamental to Theosophic life. Through adequate self-examination, he finds that it is not merely paucity

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of knowledge which is the real hindrance, but the lack of power to will and to do and to make and to sustain resolves. So, he pursues study and meditation with a view to becoming a better expounder of the philosophy of Theosophy, only to discover that by this he cannot arouse the enthusiasm that is necessary for serving Theosophy and that the warmth of love does not radiate from him. He finds himself looking out for approval and praise from his listeners and readers. He realizes the need to develop the Impersonal Love streaming forth from him, which looks not for recompense, and to be able to do this, he has to generate the fundamental *force* of surrendering the self to the Self, and the Self will raise the self to Itself. The student must become the servant. Learn to lean upon the Self through service and devotion to the Masters (*The Theosophical Movement*, October 1946). “A devoted Chela once said: ‘I do not mind all these efforts at explanation and all this trouble, for I always have found that that which was done in Master’s name was right and came out right.’ What is done in those names is done without thought of self, and motive is the essential test,” writes Mr. Judge. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 38)

Then, there is the occult law of mind and heart; that law is the law of resignation. Much has been written in our literature about resignation. It not only means performing actions by renouncing desire and attachment for fruits, but as far as a student is concerned, it also means to become a mediator, merely a channel, or an instrument through which the Masters can work. Mr. Judge writes that “if the channel through which water is meant to flow is stopped up, the water will not run there, but if a clear channel is provided, the current will pass forward” (*The Heart Doctrine*, p. 9). Likewise, occult help from the Masters requires a channel. The law is that the force from the Masters will back our efforts when two conditions are satisfied: One, we must have unshakable faith and devotion for the Masters, and two, in the centre through which the person works, all are united. To a body of students that are not united, Masters cannot give any help, and then our efforts will not bear fruit. The inner state of the student—one of indifference or of enthusiasm

towards the teachings and the teachers—hinders or helps the progress of the entire lodge. When the faith in the Masters is shaken, disciples are not able to provide a clear channel.

When in the heart of the student-aspirant there is a genuine desire to help humanity, one lights up a “Tathagata light” within him, which is a genuine desire to help suffering humanity by taking to them the life-giving waters of the philosophy of Theosophy, knowing that “humanity sins, sorrows and suffers” because of ignorance. A Master of Wisdom writes: “Like the light in the sombre valley seen by the mountaineer from his peaks, every bright thought in your mind, my Brother, will sparkle and attract the attention of your distant friend and correspondent...and it is our law to approach every such an one if even there be but the feeblest glimmer of the true ‘Tathagata’ light within him.”

What kind of “help” and “hope” can be derived from Theosophy? “At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope, and love,” says *Light on the Path*. In a deeper sense, it is the hope of becoming a better human being. True hope has its foundation in knowledge—*knowledge* of an ultimate objective possible of attainment by every human being. One has to be hopeful and not doubt one’s capacity even in the face of all adversities and bodily or mental handicaps, especially in living the spiritual life. It is a hope of reaching unconditional happiness. It is also a hope for the spiritual progress of humanity. Therefore, it is said that hope springs eternal in the human breast. It is the well-spring of life, which brings hidden energies and powers to the surface. It is the kind of hope which cannot be dashed or extinguished completely. It rises, phoenix-like, from its ashes.

Hope is unique to man, and so is aspiration, which in a way is proof that life has a noble purpose. As expressed in *Prometheus Bound*, “To love, and bear; to hope, till hope creates from its own wreck the thing it contemplates.” H.P.B. says that no student of Theosophy should despair of humanity but aid in the development of the nobler qualities.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL

THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL is a short story written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. It is an American Gothic parable that was first published in the 1836 edition of *The Token and Atlantic Souvenir* and later appeared in *Twice-Told Tales*, a collection of short stories by Hawthorne, published in 1837. It is believed that the author may have been inspired by a true event. A clergyman named Joseph Moody accidentally killed a friend when he was a young man, and after that, he wore a black veil from the man's funeral until his own death.

At a parish, in the small Puritan town of Milford, somewhere in New England, most likely in the seventeenth century, residents are happy as they wait to go into church. The minister, Reverend Mr. Hooper, who is around thirty years of age and unmarried, arrives. However, the congregation is met with an unusual sight: Mr. Hooper is wearing a black semi-transparent veil that covers his entire face except for his mouth and chin. He gives no explanation for wearing it. An old woman remarks that Mr. Hooper has “changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face.” The sight disturbs and perplexes the townspeople, and some think that Hooper has gone insane, but when he delivers his sermon for the day, they are unusually moved. Mr. Hooper's sermon is on secret sin and is “tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament.” This topic concerns the congregation, who fear for their own secret sins, and his sermon makes them feel as if he has looked inside them to see their sins. Afterwards, Hooper goes through his usual practice of greeting his congregation, but no one seems to feel comfortable interacting with him. Squire Saunders, who has invited Hooper to dinner on Sundays ever since he arrived in the town, conveniently forgets to do so today.

In the afternoon, there is a funeral service, and Hooper's veil is appropriate for the occasion. As he bends over the body, which

belonged to a young woman, his veil hangs down so that the woman could see his face if she were alive—Hooper quickly covers his face again. As Hooper leaves the church, two townspeople comment that it seems as if he is walking with the woman's ghost by his side. In the night, Hooper performs a wedding for a young couple. He catches a glimpse of himself in a mirror and is so terrified by his own appearance that he spills the ceremonial wine on the carpet and rushes out of the church.

Everyone talks about Hooper's veil, but no one asks him why he is wearing it. Some believe that Hooper is insane, but most say that he has committed a horrible crime and is atoning for it by hiding his face. Eventually, a group goes to see him, but they are too afraid to inquire about his veil.

Hooper is engaged to a young lady named Elizabeth. She speaks to him about the veil a few days after he begins to wear it. She tells Mr. Hooper that she does not see the veil as awful, as others have, but that it covers a face she enjoyed seeing. Elizabeth asks Mr. Hooper to remove it. Mr. Hooper replies that there will come a time when all people cast aside their veils. He will wear his until then. Elizabeth presses him, saying he should at least tell her why he is wearing the veil. He refuses. Elizabeth tells him that the townspeople are saying that he is wearing it to cover up a secret sin. "This does not persuade him," he answers with a smile. Finally, Elizabeth says she understands why people think the veil is so horrifying. She is also horrified and starts to leave.

Mr. Hooper pursues Elizabeth, begging her to be patient. He says that he is lonely under his black veil. In reply, she begs him to show her his face one time. He refuses. She bids him farewell, breaking off their engagement. Mr. Hooper is left to reflect; he smiles slightly at the thought that Elizabeth is not upset about the purpose of the black veil but only by its presence. From then on, Hooper is completely isolated from the rest of Milford.

Years pass, and Mr. Hooper continues to wear the veil. No one speaks to him about it again. He is saddened that children are

frightened by his appearance. However, it makes him a more efficient minister. People seem to find sympathy with him, and some people travel for miles simply to look upon the minister in his black veil. People claim that the sight of Hooper's black veil converted them to Christianity, and sinners on their deathbeds ask to see Mr. Hooper. Hooper's reputation for being an impressive preacher stretches across New England. Nonetheless, all are somewhat disturbed by the minister's appearance. He came to be called Father Hooper. Gradually, all the parishioners who knew Mr. Hooper before he wore the black veil die, one by one, of old age.

Eventually, the time comes for Father Hooper to die. Attending his deathbed is his former fiancée, Elizabeth, who never married and has remained his friend. Reverend Mr. Clark, a minister from a nearby town, comes to pray with Father Hooper. Mr. Clark asks whether Father Hooper is ready to cast aside his black veil since the hour of reckoning is at hand. Mr. Clark starts to remove the veil, but Father Hooper pushes his hands away. Confused, Clark asks Hooper what crime has caused Hooper to hide his face. Mr. Clark tries to persuade Mr. Hooper to confess his sins. Mr. Hooper does not feel the need to do so because he knows that only God can judge sin. Hooper asks why Milford has been afraid of him for so long and says that they should be afraid of each other. He asks why people have always avoided him when every person, in fact, wears their own black veil every day. He laments that people hide their true selves from their friends, from their loved ones, and from God. His final words are, "Lo! on every visage a Black Veil!" He can only be condemned, he continues, when all humans are completely honest and open with each other.

He collapses and dies while the assemblage watches in horror. A faint smile remains on the face of his corpse. They laid it in the coffin and put him in the ground, still veiled. The grass has grown over his grave, the narrator says. Many years pass, and Mr. Hooper's face has turned to dust. The narrator notes that it is horrifying to realize Mr. Hooper's face decayed under the black veil.

Nathaniel Hawthorne grew up in Massachusetts, and from 1850 to 1860, he wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, one of the first true best-selling novels in the United States; *The House of the Seven Gables*, often regarded as his greatest book; as well as *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun*. Nathaniel Hawthorne is considered by many critics to be one of the greatest short story writers. Hawthorne is considered a master of the allegorical, or symbolic, short story.

Hawthorne's ancestors were from Salem, and they were strict Puritans. "The Minister's Black Veil" takes place in a small Puritan community and is, in part, a commentary on Puritanism. Salem was a Puritan community. Though the Puritans and the Church of England both adopted Calvinism, the Puritans had opposed many of the traditions of the Church of England. Thus, they were religious dissenters, and to escape religious persecution, they migrated and settled in Massachusetts, seeking to build a Bible-based society according to their own chosen discipline. The Puritan society may be described as a restrictive and rigid society which discouraged individuality and individual desires. Puritans punished anyone seeking material and sexual gratification because they considered material and sexual desires to be unnatural and evil and therefore the work of the Devil, as they connected good with God and evil with the Devil. Puritans also believed that all humans are tainted by *Original Sin* as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve and that only good behaviour and religious education could lead them to an eternal afterlife in Heaven. They emphasized inner goodness, which must be reflected in their behaviour.

It is interesting to reflect upon the absurdity of the "original sin" by finding out what is the origin of evil. Christian theology states that evil came into the world because the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, and because of Adam's sin, every other human being is and has been a sinner. Interestingly, this first man was made in the image of God—he was *perfect*—and yet, he was unable to restrain himself from doing forbidden things! There was in him the tendency to do wrong, writes Mr. Crosbie.

Hence, the Christians have the doctrine of *original sin*, which says that everyone is born sinful. This means that we are born with a built-in urge to do bad things and to disobey God. This marked the *fall* of man, from perfection to imperfection. However, how does original sin reach from Adam to the present humanity? According to one explanation, the whole of humanity is somehow contained in Adam, and hence, humanity fell with the fall of Adam. Another explanation is that original sin is hereditary and was passed on from Adam and Eve to their descendants. St. Augustine explained that original sin was passed from parents to children through libido, *concupiscence* or sexual intercourse. Difficult as it is to understand the transmission of the tendency to do evil from Adam to the human race, there is a further dilemma. Did evil *originate* with Adam and Eve? If evil did not exist before Adam sinned, how could he know that it was wrong to disobey God?

In Ancient Philosophy, the birth of the Kosmos is attributed to ONE becoming the many, or homogeneity becoming heterogeneity, creating the contrasts. The creation of contrasts or “pairs of opposites” has given rise to evil, *i.e.*, free will through choice created evil. Moreover, one-third of evil is inherent in manifestation. Evil is not immanent in matter, which is eternal, but in the illusion created by matter. To be free from evil, one must recognize that matter and material things are continually changing and are ephemeral. Yet, it is only when the spirit (or soul) passes through envelopes of matter and learns to discern between good and evil or light and darkness that it can reach experience and knowledge.

“The Minister’s Black Veil” is a parable, a story meant to teach a moral lesson. In the New Testament, Jesus makes use of parables to establish correct behaviour between people and also in their relationship with God. In the story, the parable seeks to convey the message that all people have sinned and that most of us try to conceal it. According to some commentators, Mr. Hooper wears a black veil as an admission of his guilty conscience, though he does not specify his sin. He tells Elizabeth, “I, perhaps, like most other mortals,

have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil,” thereby conveying that all people should have guilty consciences. When he is on his deathbed, he states that he sees “on every visage a black veil.” He seems to convey that he is being honest about his shortcomings by wearing a black veil; the others who do not want to confess their guilt or sins are wearing figurative veils. The veil is used as a representation not of “secret sin” but of the inherent sinful nature of all people.

Alternatively, the black veil may be taken to represent Mr. Hooper’s specific sin, which some readers think to be adultery. Edgar Allan Poe speculated that Minister Hooper may have committed adultery with the lady who died at the beginning of the story, because this is the first day he begins to wear the veil, and that such a crime has been committed is a point which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive.

The veil may be looked upon as a mirror because it is a visible representation of hidden guilt; it forces the parishioners to reflect on their own unconfessed sins. Veil is deliberately ambiguous. While the townspeople assume that Hooper is hiding a specific sin (such as adultery), Hooper’s dying words suggest that the veil represents the hidden sins and flaws we all conceal from one another.

The story is set in Puritan New England, and the Puritans of the seventeenth century had strict rules for behaviour in daily life, and probably the author is showing the difference between inner goodness and outward religious practice. The veil is used to symbolize the facades that people use to cover up their sinful natures. However, when he says that “all of mortal race might be ready...for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces,” he seems to suggest that in reality, there can be no true concealment of such sins because an omniscient God will always be able to detect them.

Here, “dreadful hour” refers to the final or Last Judgment, when God will judge all the dead for their worthiness to go to heaven based on their behaviour on earth. The Puritans believed that breaking the rules of the Puritan Church would prevent a person’s

soul from entering heaven after death. The author seems to emphasize that if the Puritans believe in this, then why is there a contradiction between their beliefs and their behaviour.

Theosophy teaches that after death, the personal, lower man has a panoramic review of the life just ended in the company of his higher, divine self. He sees himself as he really was, without any self-deception. “The soul marshals up all past events, grasps the sum total, the average tendency stands out, the ruling hope is seen. Their final aroma forms the keynote of Devachanic existence,” writes Mr. Judge. (*Echoes from the Orient*, 56-57)

As soon as the Real Man’s task of “reviewing” the past life is over, the five constituents, minus the physical body and the life energy, pass on to the astral region called *kama loka*. *Kama Loka* is the world or plane of desires. In *The Ocean of Theosophy*, we are told that *kama loka* is the Christian “purgatory” and is compared to a slag pit, meaning a pit into which the waste material separated from the heating of metals is dumped. It can be said that nature has provided a pit or space to discard the negative aspects or lower desires gathered during one’s lifetime.

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, lower desire nature and lower mind from the higher trinity of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* or the Real Man, which goes to *devachan*, *swarga* or paradise, after the separation. It is a state of consciousness where the Reincarnating Ego or Real Man, called *Sutratma*, enjoys unalloyed bliss and happiness. This is the *swarga* of the Hindus, and the paradise or heaven of the Christians.

Where is hell? The most terrible suffering reminds us of hell. Our Earth is considered to be a hell. But for some, there is suffering in the after-death state called *Kamaloka*. The state of the ego and its stay in *Kamaloka* as well as in *Devachan* depends upon the quality of life led on earth. Some suffer during their stay in *Kamaloka*, while others may remain in a dreamy state.

THE SYMBOLOGY OF SERPENT AND DRAGON

II

IN ORDER to understand why the earth is called *Sarpa Rajani*, we need to understand that according to Theosophy, the earth is not a lump of gross matter but is an entity, and like man, the earth too is sevenfold. Our Earth has six other companion globes, and together, these seven globes form the *Earth Planetary Chain*. These seven globes of the earth's chain, while differing from one another in the substance of which they are made, are united together in a single mass. They are not seven separate balls and can be seen when we are in a different state of consciousness. For the sake of convenience, we may refer to these seven globes as A, B, C, D, E, F and G. We are now on globe D, the fourth in the chain. The course of evolution begins on globe A and proceeds through globes B, C, D, and up to G. There are seven Root Races on each globe. When the evolution of the Egos in these seven Root Races has been completed on our earth, the stream of Egos will pass from globe D to globe E for further evolution. When the Egos have completed their evolution on A to G globes, that circling is termed as one "Round." We are now in the middle of the Fourth Round and on globe D.

At the beginning of every new Round, after the period of obscurity, our earth and also the other six companion globes cast off their old skins, like a serpent, and therefore the earth is called in the *Aitareya-Brahmana* the *Sarpa Rajni*, the "Queen of the Serpents." So far, the earth is said to have cast off her old *three* skins because this refers to the three preceding Rounds she has already passed through, the present being the *fourth* Round out of the seven. When it is said that she puts on seven new skins and stands in the first one, it refers to seven geological changes that accompany the evolution of the seven Root-Races of humanity. The first skin must refer to that which is after the first geological change, which accompanies the evolution of the first Root-Race. (*S.D.*, II, 47)

On p. 208 (*S.D.*, II), H.P.B. observes that the Mystics are able to see that the symbol of the serpent represents a spirit—sidereal [astral], aerial and tellurian [of or inhabiting the earth] at the same time. Since the “sidereal spirit” represents the astral light and also *Akasa* or the divine astral light, there are good and bad serpents, so to speak, the embodiment of the divine wisdom in the spiritual region and the embodiment of evil on the lower planes. The *Akasa* has been described as the plane of eternal divine consciousness. It is the plane of cosmic ideation and spiritual prototypes. Ideas of things first exist in the *Akasa*, and then they are reflected and reversed in the astral light.

A serpent coils up in order to strike, and that “coiling to strike” represents the working of the law of Karma, which, based on the causes or actions set into motion by us, strikes an unerring blow. The astral light is at once divine as well as devilish. Acting like a hypnotizing machine, it influences the mind of man, even those who are asleep. As the recorder of all our thoughts and deeds, it accumulates causes to strike back, like a serpent coiling up to strike the offender. As the great tablet of the earth, it records pictures of every moment and holds them in its grasp, and thus, in one aspect, it is Yama, the judge of the dead, because it is by the pictures we impress therein that we are judged by Karma. But the real reason why the Astral Light is compared to a serpent is its wavy motion, which deceives us. In *Echoes from the Orient*, Mr. Judge describes its substance as imponderable ether, which permeates every atom of the globe. Obeying the laws of attraction and repulsion, it vibrates to and fro, making itself now positive and now negative. This gives it a circular motion, which is symbolized by the serpent.

“The early Christians—besides the Ophite Gnostics—had their dual Logos: the Good and the Bad Serpent, the Agathodaemon and the Kakodaemon” (*S.D.*, I, 410). The early Christians, the Ophite Gnostics, *Pistis Sophia*, which is considered to be a document of the earliest centuries of Christianity, and the Christian writers such as Marcus and Valentinus spoke of the good and bad serpent as

representing their dual Logos. However, the serpent became a symbol of evil and the Devil only during the Middle Ages.

We read on p. 508 (*Isis*, II) that the pairs of Ophis and Ophiomorphos, Apollo and Python, Osiris and Typhon, Christos and the Serpent are all logoi, and it is not possible to understand the one without the other, as day cannot be known without knowing night. They are regenerators and saviours, one in a spiritual sense and the other in a physical sense. Both Ahura-Mazda and Osiris are the synthesis of creative powers which, when differentiated and personified, become Ahriman and Typhon, respectively. If we understand the relation between Osiris and Typhon, we will also be able to understand the relation between Ophis and Ophiomorphos.

In the *Glossary* under Typhon, we read that every creative god was dual, “life-giver” and “death-dealer,” as in the pair of Osiris-Typhon. Typhon represents the lower quaternary in man and the ever-conflicting and turbulent principles of chaotic and differentiated matter in the Universe. Osiris represents the Spiritual Triad in man and Spirit in the Universe. Alternatively, Osiris is the personification of the universe in ideation (Ideal Universe), and Typhon represents the same universe in material form. Typhon is the terrestrial and material envelope of Osiris, who is the indwelling Spirit. Together, they symbolize good and necessary evil. They are as inseparable as light and shadow.

There can be no life without death, and no regeneration and reconstruction without destruction, so also the darkness or absence of sunlight for a while is necessary for the plants to grow. So, it is for the spiritual growth of man, who grows and progresses by self-induced and self-devised ways and means checked by Karma; it is essential that the sunlight of goodness and truth be contrasted with the darkness of evil so that man can aspire and make choices, without which he would be an automaton, a machine.

“There is no *malum in se*: only the shadow of light, without which light could have no existence, even in our perceptions,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 413). “*Malum in se*” is a Latin phrase that means

“evil in itself” or “evil *per se*.” This was used in reference to the assessment of conduct, which was inherently wrong or sinful by nature. Thus, murder, rape and robbery are evil or wrong, whether one considers them so or not. From the higher point of view, there is no “*Malum in se*” or evil in itself. Mr. Judge explains that if a man murders and is imprisoned and punished for it, and that in turn brings about a transformation in him, then was the act out-and-out evil? The answer is no.

There is nothing evil in itself, because, for instance, poison can kill, but it can also heal. Even that which is useful and constructive can become destructive when it is altered in its constitution. Too much of nearly anything can be harmful. “Too much vitamin A, hypervitaminosis A, can cause liver damage. Too much vitamin D can damage the kidneys. Too much water can result in hyponatremia, a dilution of the blood’s salt content, which disrupts brain, heart and muscle function. It also means that what is good for one may be evil for another. Sugar is good for one who is feeling a loss of vitality but evil for the one suffering from diabetes.

In other words, it implies that good and evil are relative terms, and evil must be taken to be the shadow of light, *i.e.*, inseparable from the light. Also, we would not be able to perceive or appreciate good without evil. In the story of *Kaliya daman*, Krishna did not destroy the serpent Kaliya but asked him to retire into the fathomless depths of the sea. That means that even if we can get rid of evil from our “individual” natures, it will always remain as the opposing and balancing power to goodness and maintain equilibrium in nature. If good and evil are understood in a theological and sectarian spirit, they have to be taken as two completely opposite forces or powers instead of the correct understanding that evil is good gone astray, and then it would not be difficult to understand how a serpent is a symbol of cunning and evil but also a symbol of “divine healing.”

The allegory of the “Brazen Serpent” of Moses is about the Jews in the wilderness, who complained to God about not having water. God sent “fiery serpents” to bite them. Then God gave Moses a

brazen serpent (serpent of brass) on the pole as a remedy so that any person who looked at it lived. The Brazen Serpent is also the emblem of the DIVINE HEALER, healing those who looked at it. The “Brazen Serpent” of Moses represents the good Spirit and Divine Wisdom. In *Genesis*, the bite of the “fiery serpent” or the bad spirit, could be healed only by the Brazen Serpent.

When it is said of the “brazen serpent” that those who looked at it lived, it must be understood as a symbol of resurrection and an assurance of everlasting life by the power of the Divine within us. To undertake the difficult pilgrimage from the “wilderness” or desert of unconsciousness to the “well of Beer,” which represents Knowledge, is man’s task on earth. The Brazen Serpent has a cosmical meaning as well, for it symbolizes not only the resurrection of man but also the rebirth of the entire cosmos and the starting anew of the various cycles of manifestation after long ages of rest or inactivity—the pralaya of the Hindus. (*The Theosophical Movement*, January 1967)

What does the crucifixion of Christ signify? Every time we remain deaf to the Voice of Conscience, or the prompting of the inner God, we crucify the Christos within us, because Christ is the Divine principle in each one of us. To resurrect the Christ *we* have crucified, we must allow divine nature to control the terrestrial nature and thus raise ourselves to the spiritual level. Spiritual life has been defined as *conscious existence in spirit while we are in this body*. Spirit is eternal, and we need to become aware of it. Our knowledge of matter has become instinctive, but not so our knowledge of spirit. When that happens, we will resurrect into spiritual life.

This duality, represented by the Serpent symbol is reflected in the double serpent of the Caduceus. In (*S.D.*, I), pp. 284-85, we read that Asclepius, also written as Æsculapius, is spoken of in Egyptian mythology as the son of the sun-god Apollo. He is also described as a divine physician. Both Asclepius and Mercury (messenger of the gods) are shown as carrying a wand called the Caduceus. Even Thoth Hermes carries the serpent-rod, the emblem of Wisdom, the rod that became the Caduceus. We find this rod in

the hand of Asclepius (the god of medicine who heals the sick), which is of a different form from the wand of Mercurius or Hermes. The rod of Caduceus is a rod with a knob, flanked by two wings of the Swan (*Hansa*). The rod is entwined by two serpents. *Metaphysically*, the rod represents the trunk of the *Ashwattha* tree (of the Fifteenth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*), or the tree of life and being. The trunk grows and descends at every new *manvantara* from the two dark wings of the Swan of Life. The two serpents coiled around the rod represent Spirit and Matter. They descend along the trunk of the rod, and where their tails embrace is the manifested universe, or the world of illusion.

The Caduceus is the Tree of Life and Being (the *Ashwattha*), and it has Macrocosmic and Microcosmic aspects. When applied to man or microcosm, we read that when a human being, using his free will, assimilates by self-effort the knowledge and experience, he grows or progresses and becomes a tree of life because he realizes the Unity of all and therefore lives the life in and of the Spirit. In other words, when a person is able to overcome the illusion of the manifested universe, or is able to cut down the “tree of life” by an axe of dispassion, he becomes the tree of life, or an Adept, possessed of Wisdom.

The serpent has ever been the symbol of the Adept and of his powers of immortality and divine knowledge. Mercury conducts and guides with the caduceus the souls of the dead to Hades and even raises the dead to life with it. It shows the dual power of the Secret Wisdom: the black and the white magic. It shows this personified Wisdom guiding the Soul after death and its power to call to life that which is dead—a very deep metaphor if one thinks over its meaning, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 364)

Both the *Ashwattha* Tree and the Caduceus are symbols which make clear that the ancients knew that there exists One eternal element, or the homogenous source, from which not only all the terrestrial and chemical elements but also all that exists in manifestation have been derived by differentiation.

(To be concluded)

THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE FRAGMENT ONE—XVII

“Before thou set’st thy foot upon the ladder’s upper rung, the ladder of the mystic sounds, thou hast to hear the voice of thy *inner* God in seven manners.

The first is like the nightingale’s sweet voice chanting a song of parting to its mate. The second comes as the sound of a silver cymbal of the Dhyanis, awakening the twinkling stars. The next is as the plaint melodious of the ocean-sprite imprisoned in its shell. And this is followed by the chant of Vina. The fifth like sound of bamboo-flute shrills in thine ear. It changes next into a trumpet-blast. The last vibrates like the dull rumbling of a thunder-cloud. The Seventh swallows all the other sounds. They die, and then are heard no more.”

The ladder mentioned here is symbolic. A ladder helps one to go from the ground level to a higher level. Likewise, the ladder of spiritual progress helps the aspirant to progress from the level of ordinary existence to the higher level of spiritual existence. We read in *Vernal Blooms* (p. 77), that as one progresses on the path, one has certain experiences, such as “seeing spots of light flash out now and then, or balls of golden fire roll past him,” but that does not mean that one is beginning to see the real Self. Likewise, “the sudden ringing of distant fairy-like bells” is no proof that one is cultivating spirituality. These experiences pertain to the astral plane and may be classed as psychic experiences.

In this passage, we are given a description of the experiences of an aspirant at a certain stage of his development. He hears the voice of his Higher Self in seven different manners. There are two types of sounds, *ahat* and *anahat*. *Ahat* refers to sounds produced by striking something, say, a drum, a key on the keyboard, or a string of a musical instrument, and so on. *Anahat* is the un-struck sound. It is the inner voice, which is often heard as a voice of conscience by us. However, here it refers to the hearing of the voice of our

inner God or the Higher Self in seven manners. The sounds that he hears are not the purely psychic experiences of hearing bells, seeing colors, etc. However, it is difficult to say what they signify. In the *Letters That Have Helped Me* (p. 9), Mr. Judge writes to a student-disciple that, “It is a great advance that you hear the bells, which few hear, and evidence that you are where you can hear them; that is a great deal indeed. Do not look for the voice of the bells, but regard the ideas which thereupon come into the head, and apply to them the touchstone of your own Soul.”

These seven sounds (voices) may be suggestive of various stages in the inner development of a student on the Spiritual Path, or they may be the sounds heard by a Yogi during meditation. If taken symbolically, they may be considered to correspond to seven notes on the musical scale in descending order, *viz.*, *Ni, Tha, Pa, Ma, Ga, Re, Sa*. The first one, described as the nightingale’s sweet voice chanting a song of parting to its mate, may be compared to note “Ni” and may be taken to represent the separation from divine nature when a ray of *manas* is launched to work through the body. Psychologists say that “parting” is an archetypal experience that each one of us is bound to experience at some point in our life or the other. In the stories we read about the parting of a son from the parents, who goes out in the world to face challenges. But here, the “parting” seems to refer to more of an archetypal experience, which is universal and transcends specific cultures and historical eras. At every incarnation, a fresh ray of the Manas incarnates in the body and works through it, and its only link with its divine nature is through *Anatahkarana*.

The sound of the silver cymbal of the Dhyanis may compare with note “Dh.” There are seven Dhyani Buddhas at the head of seven hierarchies of divine beings. Our monads are derived from one of the seven Hierarchies and are presided over by a Planetary Spirit or a Dhyani Buddha, the “Angel” of that Star whose ray is our monad. It will be either the guiding or simply the presiding “Angel” in every new rebirth of the monad, *which is part of his own essence*.

The plaint melodious of the ocean-sprite, imprisoned in its shell, may be compared with note “Pa” and may represent the complaint of the Ego encased in the personality, like the ocean spirit imprisoned within a shell. The chant of *Vina* may be compared to the note “Ma” and may represent the lower nature working in harmony with the higher. The footnote explains that a *Vina* is an Indian stringed instrument like a lute. The fifth and sixth—sounds of bamboo flute and trumpet blast—may be compared to notes “Ga” and “Re,” representing reawakening and a challenge to fight. The last which absorbs all the others, is like *Sa* or *Do*. In Indian classical music, in the musical instrument called the *tanpura*, the note “Sa” is fixed in the beginning and is not required to be adjusted, no matter what *raga* is sung. So also, our minds must become like the note “Sa,” ready to accept the ideas, feelings and opinions of others without being ruffled. In the highest state of meditation, the six principles are merged into the seventh, and likewise, the six sounds are merged into the seventh, and then the Soundless Sound or *Anahat nada* is heard.

“When the six are slain and at the Master’s feet are laid, then is the pupil merged into the ONE, becomes that ONE and lives therein.”

The footnote explains that it refers to the slaying of the six principles, the state when the personality is destroyed, and the inner individuality is merged into and lost in the Seventh or Spirit. The disciple is one with the *Brahman* or *ATMAN*. This seems to refer to the state of *Samadhi*. In the *Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. writes that “In the state of *Samadhi*, the higher spiritual consciousness of the Initiate is entirely absorbed in the ONE essence, which is Atman, and therefore, being one with the whole, there can be nothing objective for it.”

When we are able to transcend the self-identifying attachment to not only family and loved ones but also to physical form, ideas, desires, emotions, etc., we succeed in merging the personal “I” into the Individual “I.” But even when we cease to identify ourselves

with the personality, so long as there remains even a subtle sense of separateness, the union with the divine is not possible. When the universe grows “I,” and there is the realization that “I am verily the Brahman,” we may say that the arrow has merged into and is one with the mark. It is described as the *Samadhi* state, when the higher spiritual consciousness of the Initiate is entirely absorbed in the ONE ESSENCE, which is *Atman*. *The Voice of the Silence*, (p. 22), describes it by saying, “Where is thy Individuality, Lanoo, where the Lanoo himself? It is the spark lost in the fire, the drop within the ocean.” Thus, *Samadhi* is the state in which the ascetic loses consciousness of every individuality, including his own. He becomes—the ALL.

“Before that path is entered, thou must destroy thy lunar body, cleanse thy mind-body, and make clean thy heart.”

The footnote explains that the “lunar body” refers to the “astral form produced by the *Kamic* principle, the *Kamarupa* or body of desire.” It refers to the astral or personal self. In other words, the lunar body is the astral body influenced by the *Kamic* principle, as *Kama* affects the magnetic (fluid) currents in the astral body. The “mind-body” or *Manasa-rupa*, refers to the “individuality or the reincarnating *Ego*, whose consciousness on our plane or the *lower Manas*—has to be paralysed.” One should so live his terrestrial life that the incarnated mind remains unentangled in worldly passions and desires, lest that portion of *manas* be lost at death. One has to endeavour to be less and less separative, personal and assertive, and learn to forget oneself completely in the service of humanity.

The article, “The Elixir of Life,” shows that the essence of the discipline to attain true contemplation requires a “physical, mental, moral and spiritual” development to run on parallel lines. “The physical man must be rendered more ethereal and sensitive; the mental man more penetrating and profound; the moral man more self-denying and philosophical.” (*Five Years of Theosophy*, p. 17)

There must be purification of base tendencies such as fear, avarice, pride, envy, ambition and curiosity. Normally, our astral body is inextricably interwoven with the physical body, cell for cell and

fibre for fibre, like the fibres of a mango in the pulp. It is possible to project the astral body out of the physical, *consciously or unconsciously*. It takes years of training and perfection in the power of concentration to make the astral body coherent. Every emotion has an impact on the astral body and prevents it from becoming coherent. For instance, while the astral body is developing into coherent body, anger causes violent shaking and pulling apart of the coherent particles of the astral. Likewise, fear tends to shrivel up, coagulate and contract it. So long as there is envy, the astral form takes on a cloudy appearance instead of being pure and clear and attracts to itself malevolent beings (elementals), which in turn tend to wake up in the aspirant every evil passion, writes Mr. Judge.

First and foremost, desire must be relinquished from inside. Mere *suppression* of desires with a strong effort of will cannot give us success in contemplation. Suppressed desires are like a smouldering coal covered with a thin layer of ash which leaps into flames with a little whiff of wind.

In *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 7*, we are given steps to purify our desires, beginning with killing out the desire for the material possessions. The next step is to overcome subtler desires, such as those for power, knowledge, love, happiness or fame. How to achieve this? The answer is, “Life itself teaches these lessons,” because even when we get what we want, we are likely to lose it, *or* it may not be what we had expected, *or* it loses its charm once we have obtained it. Thus, our life experiences show that it all turns to dust and ashes in the mouth. Gradually, after many such experiences, we begin to intuitively perceive that satisfaction is attainable only in the infinite, so that at last, we begin to use our “Will” to centre all our desires on the Eternal. “Desire only that which is within you... which is beyond you... which is unattainable,” says *Light on the Path*.

(*To be continued*)

EASTERN THOUGHT AND THE WESTERN MIND

DUE LARGELY to globalization, media and technology, cultures world-over are homogenizing at a rapid pace, leading to a convergence in fashion, habits and language. Post-world-war Japan is not just a stark example but simply a culture ahead of others in this global trend. The unique cultural heritage of the Orient is being lost to Americanization with every passing generation. However, even with the inescapable westernization of the Orient, there is still a stark difference to be noted in the prevalent thoughts and attitudes of the two hemispheres.

The foundation of modern American thought falls into one of two distinct categories, *viz.*, Calvinist Christian values or degraded Enlightenment values (with reason, scientific progress and human emancipation considered as original liberating ideals). The gladiatorial clash of these two titanic ideas can be traced back to the Middle Ages of Europe when the Church exercised a monopoly over the mindspace of the populace. This is exemplified by the story of Galileo being shown the instruments of torture by the Inquisitors to force him to recant the heliocentric theory in favour of the then Church dogma of geocentricism. But following the Renaissance, the collective mind of Europe broke asunder the shackles of the Church and inaugurated the great Enlightenment. The values forged by this Age of Reason were diametrically opposed to religious dogma and were conceived of in fierce opposition to it.

First was the idea that **Reason** and Logic were the only sure guides in understanding and exploiting our natural environment. But to do this effectively, it formulated the Second great idea of **Liberty** that vouchsafed freedom of thought, speech, conscience and action, so long as such did not impinge upon the self-same freedoms of others. The third idea of **Progress** provided the teleological purpose for the first two. Previously, scriptural commandments provided directionality, but all such ethical babies were thrown out with the toxic bathwater of the Church. And Progress was solely defined

along the lines of physical wellbeing or improvement in living standards and lifespan. Given the terrible privations suffered by people back then, this was indeed a worthy goal. And since then, these three ideals have been spectacularly successful in achieving the objective of improving living standards throughout the world.

But these Enlightenment values have long outlived their utility and hence inevitably degraded ever since. Reason and logic need axiomatic presuppositions on which to be grounded. And since the metaphysical was revoltingly dispensed off, all that remained was the physical. Hence, Reason devolved into **Materialism** or physicalism which is the idea that all phenomena, including human experience, can be ultimately reduced to matter and its physical processes. In Sanskrit, the best translation for Liberty is “Swatantra” with “Swa” meaning self and “Tantra” meaning “control.” However, nobody in modern times view Liberty as self-control but rather as “**Sveccha**” or doing as one pleases. The modern west considers itself free only in proportion to its ability to fulfil its basest of impulses. So, the true Liberty of self-mastery has degraded into unbridled indulgence. And finally, the enlightenment idea of Progress as the improvement in physical wellbeing, having largely achieved its objective and unable to answer questions of purpose beyond the mundane, has now degraded into **Moral Relativism**—denial of Universal Ethics. Everyone is free to set their own standard of morality or lack thereof, and is celebrated for it.

The Calvinist Christian values are the decadent relics from the Dark Ages, washed over with many reformations and reinterpretations, still retaining the core orthodoxy of the Church. These dogmas in their modern garb carry the acronym TULIP. **Total Depravity** is the idea that every part of human nature is depraved by sin, and divine intervention is the only way to salvation. This divine intervention is accomplished through **Unconditional Election** wherein God unconditionally and arbitrarily chooses certain souls for salvation while others are condemned to eternal damnation. And such an election is necessary because even though Jesus died to

atone for the sins of humanity, terms and conditions still apply with the concept of **Limited Atonement**. But once chosen, God showers them with such grace that they inexorably come to faith with the idea of **Irresistible Grace**. And finally, once chosen, God ensures that salvation is inevitable with the dogma of **Perseverance of the Saints**.

The western thought, lurching from religious dogmatism to nihilistic materialism, has failed to synthesize these in their highest spiritual sense in the One truth. In their current, degraded and mutually antagonistic expressions, they both offer nothing but wrong ideas. And wrong ideas lead to bad outcomes. Let's take the example of Western jurisprudence with its retributive and capital-punishment-heavy leanings. If someone commits an evil offense, physicalism says that such evil is the outcome of the bio-chemical process of the brain. And if those processes are mechanically and violently brought to an end through capital punishment, then that evil is also annihilated. On the other hand, the Calvinist Christian dogma says that such an evil person was not part of God's elect and hence was anyway destined to hell, capital punishment only hastening the inescapable eventuality. And since hell is eternal, a wicked person once dispatched to it will forever deliver earth from their evil. So, from both perspectives, capital punishment is a no-brainer. Clearly, what you need is the deeper knowledge of the real nature of man. Theosophy teaches that evil is the expression of *Skandhas* or tendencies developed by the individual over many lives, along with the contributive influence of society. And that when the body is put to death, those *Skandhas* are not destroyed but rather become more potent because they are now freed both from the limitations of the physical body and the salutary influence of the divine nature brooding over its embodiment. Such potent *Kama Rupas* look to avenge what they perceive to be unjust punishment on humanity by constantly inducing sensitive minds to lurid thoughts and violent acts. We have heard of many such victims confessing to committing horrid crimes driven by a foreign, inexorable voice in their head. As such, capital punishment only serves to multiply crimes in society rather than

deter them. This is just one example of the numerous ways in which wrong ideas engender bad outcomes.

If we turn our gaze to Eastern thought, especially Indian, we find that despite the maddening diversity, the following three civilizational values are almost ubiquitous throughout the subcontinent. First is the idea that everything that happens to us is the result of our past actions or **Karma**. While the understanding of this doctrine is abounded with misconceptions, the fundamental idea is almost innate in the populace. Further, such causes are not just acts performed in this life but in previous lives also. And as a corollary, the effects of our current actions will revisit us in this and future lives. As such, the concept of *Punarjanma* or **Reincarnation** is built into the Indian psyche. And finally, that this cycle of birth and death is an ocean of sorrow or *Samsara*, liberation from which is the teleological purpose of life, called *Mukti*. As a consequence of these ideas, Indian civilization has demonstrated remarkable tolerance, non-violence and a certain disdain for carnal enjoyment. India is the only country where Jews were never persecuted, Parsis were welcomed, Tibetans were given asylum and the society historically embraced all peaceful faiths and peoples. India had developed sophisticated seafaring ships since the Indus Valley civilization which were used for extensive trade for thousands of years, until the start of British rule. Even until 1750, India controlled about 25 per cent of the world's GDP and yet it never colonized an inch of territory outside its boundaries. In stark contrast, no sooner had Europe developed seafaring ships than it started naval wars, slave-trade and colonization. India is perhaps the only country that can claim to have ascetic kings such as Chandragupta Mourya, who built one of the most prosperous kingdoms on earth, yet voluntarily abdicated his throne in his prime, became an ascetic. His grandson, Ashoka, following this Dharmic tradition ushered in a golden age of Buddhism, the positive impact of which can be seen all across Asia even today. Just as wrong ideas engender bad outcomes, ennobling ideas produce salutary consequences.

On the other hand, when we analyse the Occidental and Oriental minds, we find that the tables are completely turned. The modern Indian mind is pre-eminently superstitious when not touched by Western education. As W. Q. Judge puts it, “If one will calmly examine the facts, he will find the nation as a whole superstitious to the last degree; the few theosophists and Englishized ones being but as a drop in the ocean” (*“Forum” Answers*, p. 116). While those who are the custodians of the ancient spiritual inheritance of Aryavarta are bogged down with “hair-splitting dialogues, endless commentaries, long explanations, and fine controversies over distinctions.” This excessive intellectual activity has led to “spiritual pride; and spiritual pride in them then brings on stagnation.” Besides, those minds influenced by Western scientific thought have rejected the metaphysics, ethics and contemplative tradition of the East along with its religious dogmas and have wholly embraced the nihilistic materialism of the West. Even a century ago, the Masters sensed the psychic degradation of the Indian mind with these words, “If it be permissible to symbolize things subjective by phenomena objective, I should say that to the psychic sight India seems covered with a stifling grey fog—a moral meteor—the odic emanation from her vicious social state” (*The Mahatma Letters*, Letter No. LXXXI, p. 384). And in another place the Master says, “I had come for a few days, but now find that I myself cannot endure for any length of time the stifling magnetism even of my own countrymen” (*The Mahatma Letters*, Letter No. IV, p. 12). As history has it, this materializing trend and psychic degradation have only accelerated since those times.

Conversely, we find the Western mind, as W. Q. Judge puts it, to be vigorous and eager. Having thrown off the yoke of Christian dogma during the Enlightenment, the Western mind is unencumbered by the weight of superstitious ideas and the pride of heritage. Furthermore, the crest and force of the current evolutionary wave are undoubtedly in the West. This is also why the modern Theosophical Movement was founded in New York, the epicentre

of Western influence. But the West lacks the seed-ideas, language, culture and tradition to express, experience and assimilate transcendental metaphysical verities. While the East is in possession of the seeds of ancient wisdom, it lacks the fertile soil on which they may sprout and burgeon forth again. Hence, from the broad-perspective of humanity, the winning combination is the integration of Eastern Thought within the Western mind. As such, one of the primary objects of the Theosophical Movement is “the union of the West with the East, the revival in the East of those greatnesses which once were hers, the development in the West of that Occultism which is appropriate for it, so that it may, in its turn, hold out a helping hand to those of older blood who may have become fixed in one idea, or degraded in spirituality.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, Book II, p. 74)

As the Masters point out, “This is the moment to guide the recurrent impulse which must soon come, and which will push the age towards extreme atheism or drag it back to extreme sacerdotalism, if it is not led to the primitive soul-satisfying philosophy of the Aryans” (*Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*). But such soul-satisfying Aryan philosophy is not to be found in the current superstitions of the Hindus nor in the gibberish of self-styled “gurus,” but rather in the synthesis of Science, Philosophy and Religion, which is Theosophy. It is the only system of thought which offers a logical metaphysical framework with sufficient details to work upon, the exalted teleology of the Bodhisattva and a dialectic that can be used to derive ethical imperatives for life from the metaphysics. It is through the study and dissemination of this philosophy that the Western mind can be Aryanized and the Aryan mind made more Cosmopolitan, so this union of East and West can bring forth humanity on a higher plane of development.

THE time is always right to do what is right.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Until recently, in Australasia, one found in the tropical waterway not only familiar crocodiles but also a unique cast of crocodiles very different from any of the living species. “Yet the crocodiles that inhabit the region today are just the survivors of a much richer and stranger lost world.” A recent review, dating back from the past 129,000 years, shows that there has been extinction, human encounters, and survival against the odds. We are told that modern crocodiles are members of the genus *Crocodylus*. However, this region was dominated once by an entirely different group of *crocodylians* known as “mekosuchines.” For more than 50 million years, *Mekosuchines* were the apex predators of Australasia. “These remarkable animals came in an astonishing variety of shapes and sizes, inhabiting many different environments. Some were giant semi-aquatic ambush predators, much like the saltwater crocodiles that still patrol northern rivers today. Others were much smaller ‘dwarf’ species that inhabited islands such as New Caledonia.” Though most of them are located in Australia, some are found also in New Guinea and across the southwest Pacific. Ancient rock art shows a long and relatively stable coexistence between humans and these powerful reptiles. We are told that the largest living saltwater crocodile, *Crocodylus porosus*, is around 6.3 metres long.

On mainland Australia, one finds only fossils of *mekosuchines*, and most of them date from more than 40,000 years ago. It is not clear if humans and *mekosuchines* ever interacted directly, but they seem to have disappeared after a long period of coexistence with humans. The exact cause of their demise in Australia remains a mystery.

However, on the islands of New Caledonia, Vanuatu and Fiji, some *mekosuchines* species managed to survive until recent times. The extinct crocodiles of New Caledonia and Vanuatu were small and reached the length of less than two metres as adults. It is likely that they lived more on land than today’s semi-aquatic crocodiles.

“It seems likely that direct or indirect human involvement may be the reason for the disappearance of these ‘dwarf’ island crocodylians. The prehistoric past is not just a record of vanished worlds but a warning for the future. Understanding how apex predators like crocodiles responded to past climatic changes, environmental upheaval, and human impacts provides important clues for their conservation in the future,” write Jorgo Ristevski (Researcher, Paleontology, The University of Queensland), Julien Louys (Professor, Paleontology, Griffith University), and Nicole Boivin (Honorary Professor, Archaeology, The University of Queensland). (*The Conversation*, May 19, 2026)

The Secret Doctrine mentions that according to Esoteric philosophy for a vast period of about 300 million years, our earth, man and all kingdoms of nature were in an astral stage. The *Secondary Age*, with its three subdivisions—Triassic, Jurassic and Chalk or Cretaceous periods—is considered to be the “age of reptiles,” and science denies the presence of man in that period. But if man did not exist side by side with these monsters, how does man know of their existence? During a large part of the Secondary Age, both men and animals did not have corporeal frames or physical bodies. They were in astral forms. Man could therefore survive in the same place with huge reptiles and birds without being afraid of them. Humanity was in the Third or Lemurian Race and flourished on the Lemurian continent. We are told that first it was man’s frame that gradually began to solidify. As man’s frame thickened, the animals grew smaller because of the material drawn from their bodies.

On pp. 323-24 (*S.D.*, II) we read that the Lemurian continent stretched from the foot of the Himalayas to Tibet, Mongolia, the Gobi Desert, to Hardwar, Assam, and going South, it covered Madagascar, Sumatra, and from Australia, it extended to the Pacific Ocean, which shows that Australia was part of the Lemurian continent.

On p. 197 (*S.D.*, II) we read that it has been suggested by the zoologists that today’s Australian natives, who co-exist with very

old flora and fauna, must belong to remote antiquity. Jukes says that the marsupial animals (such as Kangaroos), as well as shells and certain fossil plants found in Jurassic rocks, much more resemble those now living in Australia than the living forms in any other part of the globe. That can be explained on the basis that since the *Jurassic period*, as compared to other places, less change has taken place in Australia, and therefore the Australian plants and animals retain greater resemblance to plants and animals of the Jurassic type as compared to other plants and animals which are in other parts of the globe. In other words, from the Jurassic age, less change has taken place in plants and animals in Australia than elsewhere. There seems to be a law of retardation working in Australia. The reason given is that the nature of the environment changes or develops side by side with the race belonging to that place. When the main portion of the Lemurian continent was submerged, those Lemurians who escaped the cataclysm lived in Australia, and they became progenitors of the present native tribes. This subrace was produced or was the progeny of the Lemurians and the animals, *i.e.*, of monsters, which no longer exist, and their fossils lie deeply buried under the sea floor. Their remnants are living in the environment, which is subject to the law of retardation. Australia is one of the oldest lands but is in a condition wherein it can produce no new forms unless it is inhabited by new and fresh races.

H.P.B. says that in the work called “Mythical Monsters” by Charles Gould, the author mentions the existence of gigantic animals existing side by side with human beings. He is of the opinion that such giant and monstrous animals are not myths, not figments of the imagination of savage people, but a reality. He also states that man has existed side by side with animals from some thirty thousand to around one million years ago, which have become extinct long time ago. He describes these animals as weird and terrible, of which the first variety is of the monsters who, based on their huge bones and vertebrae, appear to have been some 200 feet long. The remains of 10 such animals were found in Colorado. The second variety is

Titanosaurus montanus, being 50 to 60 feet in length. The third are the Dinosaurs of the Jurassic age. H.P.B. gives several other examples of giant animals, such as a four-horned male deer called the *Sivatherium*, found in the Himalayas, which is as large as the elephant and taller than the elephant. Then there is *Megatherium* and a flying reptile called *Pterodactyl*, some 78 feet long. All these co-existed with man. They attacked the man and the man attacked them because the man also was of a gigantic stature like these animals. According to De Quatrefages, man must have existed side by side with the earliest gigantic mammalian animals as far back as in the *Secondary Period*.

H.P.B. also mentions elephants as being remains of giant animals such as, Mastodons and Hippopotami, and even these elephants are gradually disappearing. Just as man has decreased in size from his gigantic stature, so also, in the future, the elephants will decrease in size before entirely disappearing. We do find some specimens of pigmy elephants in the cave deposits of Malta. These pigmy elephants are being associated with pigmy Hippopotami, which are two feet six inches high. (*S.D.*, II, 218-19)

Pain never enters our lives gently; it breaks in and rearranges our inner world. “It touches our thoughts, shakes our emotions, questions our beliefs, and sometimes challenges our will to live.” Pain leads some people to close the doors of the heart and others to fall into hopelessness and depression. When misunderstood, pain can become a silent destroyer. But then there are those few courageous people who respond to pain by questioning everything they once believed; they fall temporarily to rise again. “These wounded souls become heroic warriors.” It all depends upon one’s perception, whether one looks upon pain as an enemy or a mentor. When wounds are severe, one witnesses the process of destruction and reconstruction within oneself. “Illusions break; the ego cracks; and expectations collapse. The false identities that once gave comfort begin to dissolve. In that

chaotic and vulnerable state, truth quietly sets its foot inside the soul. What once seemed permanent reveals its fragility. What once seemed essential loses its shine.” This process of breaking paves the way for deep self-examination and the beginning of a spiritual quest. The sensitivity of such an individual increases, and they feel more deeply their own pain as well as the silent pain of others. They are driven to seek truth and are not satisfied with superficial comforts.

This struggle may culminate in the development of compassion. “It is the ability to recognize oneself in another’s suffering. It is the realization that pain is a shared human experience.” Such a person becomes less harsh and judgmental, and instead, spontaneously extends a helping hand to those who suffer. True compassion gives birth to the deepest art, profound ideas, and meaningful work. Pain leads to awakening, reflection and growth, which comfort never can. Pain is harsh, but when met with courage and awareness, it becomes a powerful catalyst.

“When we choose to see pain as a passage rather than a punishment, we begin to transform. . . . In the end, it is not the absence of wounds that defines the greatness of life, it is the courage to rise from them. And those who rise do not merely survive. They enlighten and illuminate humanity,” writes Dr. Ujjwala Kakarla. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, May 1-15, 2026)

Buddha taught that all conditioned existence is suffering or pain. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, points out that there are three kinds of suffering: (1) Actual suffering, as when we have a toothache, bruised hand, etc. (2) Potential suffering, as when we possess something which is a source of enjoyment to us for some time but is potentially a suffering because one day we will have to give it up. (3) Metaphysical suffering, as nothing mundane, earthly or conditioned can give full or final satisfaction.

In our search for pleasure, we find that pain is a co-ruler with pleasure. Pleasure is derived from the fulfilment of desires. Buddha says, “What grief springs of itself and springs not of desire?” In

satisfying the desires, we experience pain. It is because either we do not get what we want or even if we get what we want, in due course it turns to dust and ashes in the mouth. *Or*, it may happen that having got what we wanted, there is in us the desire to cling to that thing or that person forever, and that is never possible.

“Pain arouses, softens, breaks and destroys...It is an implement, a thing, which is used, evidently.” Pain arouses. It is only when we experience pain that we sit up and ask questions of life. We come to a realization that we need to learn to surrender *our* will to the *divine* will. Pain shows that all is not well with us. It shatters our illusion and shows that whatever we have is not our own and is not sufficient. Something vital is missing in our lives. We do not care to know if God exists or not, so long as there is even a slight possibility of obtaining happiness in some other way. When all earthly doors are closed to us, then, as a last resort, we turn to God.

So long as life flows by smoothly, we do not ask those knotty questions of life, which we ask only when pain pursues us. Pain alone makes us grow. H.P.B. writes: “Woe to those who live without suffering. Stagnation and death is the future of all that vegetates without a change. And how can there be any change for the better without proportionate suffering during the preceding stage? Is it not those only who have learnt the deceptive value of earthly hopes and the illusive allurements of external nature who are destined to solve the great problems of life, pain, and death?” (*S.D.*, II, 475)

The first test that the novice, who wishes to become a disciple, has to pass through is to endure, without losing equilibrium, the keenest enjoyment, the bitterest pain, and the anguish of loss and despair. We should not allow our suffering to get the better of us. What helps a person to pull through even the most painful conditions is a future goal. Nietzsche’s words are very profound: “He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how*...That which does not kill me, makes me stronger.” (*Man’s Search for Meaning*, pp. 97 and 103)