

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY

WHAT is it to be vulnerable? A vulnerable person is the one who is open to emotional or physical injury. Vulnerability refers to a person's state of being susceptible to manipulation, persuasion, temptation, etc. Children, women, the handicapped, the blind and the old people are the most vulnerable to physical harm. We hear of child abuse and cruelty to women. We shudder at the thought of losing our sight. Our efforts are towards fortifying ourselves against physical, mental and emotional hurt. And yet, experiences of life show us that it is not possible to be *completely* invulnerable, even physically. That seems to be one of the implications of the myth of the Greek god Achilles and the story of Duryodhana in the epic *Mahabharata*.

In Greek mythology, when Achilles was a baby, it was foretold that he would die in battle from an arrow in the foot. His mother Thetis took him to the River Styx which was supposed to offer powers of invincibility, and dipped his body into the water. But as Thetis held Achilles by the heel, his heel was not washed over by the water of the magical river. Though Achilles survived many great battles, he was finally killed by the arrow that was lodged in his heel. Likewise, the story goes that after a few days of fighting, most of the Kauravas were killed in the *Mahabharata* war, except prince Duryodhana. Gandhari, the mother of Kaurava princes, who had remained blind-folded for many years out of respect for her blind husband, had acquired great mystic power of sight. The story goes

that Gandhari sought to make her son Duryodhana invincible and invulnerable through her gaze. It is said that she allowed her gaze to rest on every part of the body of Duryodhana who was standing naked before her except for the loincloth. The entire body of Duryodhana was made invulnerable to attack by any weapon, except his groin. Shri Krishna, who knew about it, advised Bhima, the Pandava prince, to strike the blow with his mace below the navel, and thus kill Duryodhana.

Metaphorically, “Achilles’ heel” refers to a deadly weakness in spite of overall strength which can, actually or potentially, lead to downfall. We can be vulnerable through weakness in our character. Those who know of our weakness can take advantage of it and bring us harm. None of us is invulnerable, as each of us has one or more weak spots. It may be lust for money, sex, fame, power, food and what have you. As a first step then we may remain away from those temptations, while inwardly building up strength to combat them. We provide a chink in the armour, through this or that weakness in our character. The Buddha says, “He whose hand has no wound may touch poison. Poison harms not one who has no wound. No evil is to him, who does no evil” (*The Dhammapada*, verse 124). Even weakness for something as simple and harmless as food, can be used by others to exploit us and to bring our downfall. A person in a certain Buddhist order had weakness for plum cakes. Everyone in the order knew that you could get almost anything done from this person by offering him a plum cake! A person as great as *Dharmaraja* Yudhisthira, the eldest Pandava prince, brought about the downfall of entire Pandava family, through his weakness for the game of dice. A chain is said to be as strong as its weakest link. Each one of us is as strong as our weakest point, which can work our downfall. A person with ninety-nine virtues can be brought to ruin by one weakness.

We are vulnerable in our weaker moments. When one is in the grip of a strong desire, emotions tend to cloud one’s reason and discrimination. Overpowering passion can create a moment of

weakness, and so also, frustrated desires, aims and plans. An otherwise balanced person then commits murder, rape or suicide. Others can take advantage of the weak moment, and by the show of sympathy can make him blurt out innermost secret or some confidential information.

We are tempted and tested in the weakest points of our character. Life puts us into tight spot, again and again, because of that one weakness, whatever that may be. But, our weak points can become our greatest strengths, if we work hard upon them, often bringing about a turning point in our life. In the article, “Spiritual Progress,” H.P.B. writes:

The idea of growth involves also the idea of disruption; the inner being must continually burst through its confining shell or encasement, and such a disruption must also be accompanied by pain, not physical but mental and intellectual....The trouble that comes upon us is always just the one we feel to be the hardest that could possibly happen—it is always the one thing we feel we cannot possibly bear. If we look at it from a wider point of view, we shall see that we are trying to burst through our shell at its one vulnerable point. (*H.P.B. Series No. 26*, pp. 23-24)

The process of spiritual advancement involves the process of breaking the shell or mould made up of our fixed thoughts, feelings, outlooks, etc. *Our* trouble always seems to be the hardest, because we have not mastered a particular weakness or learnt to deal with that particular circumstance of life. It is our “vulnerable point,” our “Achilles’ heel,” through which nature gives us the opportunity to grow, if we could only learn to handle. It could be money for one, and anxiety for another. It could well be lack of knowledge, skill or aptitude, for which one could be exploited. Our weakness could be our attachment to our family members. In a relationship, there are emotional blackmails. Your deep and strong love for another could be used as a weapon against you. When the calamities come pertaining to that particular weakness, we find them troublesome

and difficult. But if we do handle them well, we are able to burst through the shell, *i.e.*, overcome that one inhibiting factor in our character. Vices and weaknesses of man can become stepping-stones on the ladder of progress, as they are surmounted, one by one.

We desire to be strong and invulnerable, as no one wants to be exploited. But knowing that we could never be completely invulnerable, and that the undercurrent of vulnerability is always present, we must learn to tap it. Instead of associating vulnerability with fear and pain let us explore the hidden power of being vulnerable. Since life is full of uncertainties, we are always in a vulnerable state—open to hurt and pain. Then why not accept it and make the most of it? Being vulnerable gives an opportunity to learn some of the toughest lessons of life, especially in human relationships. At times, we may *choose* to be vulnerable for building better human relationship. For instance, some of us are reluctant to admit our mistake and apologize to another person, out of the fear of appearing a weakling. We might say to ourselves, “If I apologize once then he will expect me to apologize again and again, even in small matters. I do not want to give him undue importance.” By admitting our mistake we feel that we are making ourselves vulnerable. If we are ready to be vulnerable we inspire others also to be vulnerable. And, actually, what another person considers our weakness, is in reality our strength.

In fact, *Light on the Path* asks the disciple to learn to be completely vulnerable. He has to recognize and realize that the very thought of individual rights is the result of selfishness and self-centredness. A disciple has to undergo a yearly ceremony in which he has to give up all weapons of offence and defence. He has to learn never to raise his voice in self-defence or excuse, or in condemning or criticizing another person. From this ceremony he returns to the world as helpless and as unprotected as a new-born child. As a corollary, he has to practice courageous endurance of personal injustice. It is only when one develops the power of vulnerability does he become fit to acquire *spiritual* powers. At the root of such

vulnerability lies the acceptance and realization of the unity of all that lives and breathes.

At a certain stage in one’s spiritual development, one comes to possess tremendous powers. Though these powers could be used to defend oneself, and also to bring about incalculable harm to another, apparently even without the lifting of a finger, a true Adept refrains from using them for self-defence. Such was the case of Jesus. Perhaps no other Adept suffered as helplessly as he did. He chose to be vulnerable, though he was given a chance to escape the torture of the cross by performing certain phenomena. H.P.B., who never defended herself, in spite of being unjustly attacked by her opponents, writes in anguish, “I am *killed*. Killed in my honour, fame, name, in everything H.P.B. held near and dear, for this body is *Mine* and I feel acutely through it.” Forgetfulness of the personal self and sincere altruism, are *sine qua non* conditions for spiritual progress. The more impersonal we are the greater is our capacity to be vulnerable. In a sense, to be willing to be vulnerable is to have complete faith in the law of Karma—leaving it to the impartial and just law to make all adjustments. So long as there is even a single thought about the self, there remains the danger of misusing the powers and knowledge for selfish purposes or self-defence.

Let us not seek to develop the power of vulnerability all at once. Others do not know that we are struggling to bring about this inward change, and so they might begin to rub us the wrong way, and then we might explode, and then perhaps we may be even worse off than before. To be truly vulnerable is not to be timid. There is the story of a snake who was venomous and vicious, who used to bite just anyone who crossed his path. At the advice of a saintly person, he began to mend his ways. At a certain point in time he was completely harmless. Seeing that the snake would not retaliate, children started throwing stones at him, just for fun. The snake approached the saint and sought his advice. The saint advised him to “hiss, but do not bite.”

Says *Through the Gates of Gold*, “He who determines that

nothing shall make him suffer, does but cloak himself in a profound and chilly selfishness. It will protect him from pain; it will also separate from pleasure.” The great pain and desolation that he experienced on death of his beloved friend, led St. Augustine to conclude that if love is to be a blessing, not a misery, it must be for the only Beloved who will never pass away, *i.e.*, God. Prof. C. S. Lewis comments that to love at all is to be *vulnerable*. You may wrap your heart carefully with hobbies and little luxuries, avoiding all entanglements. No doubt, it will be safe in the casket of your selfishness—safe, dark, motionless and airless, but it will also become impenetrable and irredeemable. Vulnerability has transforming power, we must use it to gradually transform love and passion into compassion.

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?
I fondly ask—But Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies: God doth not need
Either man’s work, or his own gifts; who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best:
His state

Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed
And post o’er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.

—JOHN MILTON

W. Q. JUDGE—A TRUE ALCHEMIST

THERE are many types of leaders of men. There is Alexander called the Great, there are Napoleon and Genghis Khan and other soldiers like them who affected millions of lives, not all of them for the worse. There are Emperors like Marcus Aurelius and Akbar who affected the minds of a lesser number, perhaps, but along more constructive lines; and among powerful Emperors who can forget Ashoka, the beloved of his people, whose rule was a spiritual blessing to his subjects, and whose influence, extending even to our own days, inspires millions? At the opposite pole, there is the memory of Ivan the Terrible who influenced those whom he touched in a wrong way. Verily, in ancient days rulers and kings moulded history as they no longer do, for nowadays kings and emperors are mere figureheads.

Of all types of leaders, the spiritual teacher who is the educator of the heart and the adjuster of the mind is the most influential. The schoolmaster is not so great and powerful a moral influence today as he should be, and whatever good impresses he makes on the consciousness of his pupils are wiped out very soon by world-passions and civilization-forces which surround them on all sides. The Great Prophets, the Real Gurus, are the most powerful influencers of humanity. One Buddha, one Shankara, have remade the history of human thought and of human endeavour which thousands of Bhikkhus and a long line of Acharyas have not been able to achieve.

Who is there who does not aspire, if not continuously, at least now and then, to possess the freshness of the youth-mind, the chastity of the maiden-heart, the energy of the growing limbs? This is not quite impossible and the art of becoming evergreen in consciousness has been taught down the ages by the true Prophets, Seers and Gurus. One of the difficulties which the ordinary human mind experiences may spring from the very vision which that mind is capable of perceiving—the vision splendid of Mighty Sages of majestic moral

strength. It is possible for even the ordinary human mind to visualize and with the aid of descriptive text to imagine the glory and the power embodied by a Krishna, a Buddha, a Zarathushtra, a Jesus. But such a visualization may bring a feeling of despair. How can we, at our stage of groping for knowledge, with our vicious tendencies, ever rise to the pure condition of the enlightened Sages? When the heart, and not only the mind, *knows* the doctrine of Reincarnation, such confusion and discouragement vanish and in their place arise hope and certainty. Recognizing that each one has many lives on earth to learn all that life here can teach us, it becomes possible for the heart to assent fully to the possibility of attaining human perfection.

It is the existence of the successful Disciples of the Great Gurus whose achievements energize us to right endeavour. These true Chelas of the Immortal Gurus reveal, by their nearness to us, the possibility of our remaking ourselves. Before our eyes, so to speak, a man performs the magic of transmuting the iron of his lower nature into the pure gold of the higher. What he has done, that we too can do. Such a true Alchemist—working not with physical metals but with the psychic forces inherent in each one of us—was William Quan Judge, whose death anniversary falls on the day of the Spring Equinox. What did Mr. Judge achieve in his life that thousands of students of Theosophy look up to him with reverence and devotion?

He was born in Ireland, but, throwing away the dross of that nation while retaining its basic purity, he became an American. Ireland is one of the oldest surviving spots of ancient Atlantis, and therefore has its psychic and spiritual kinship with the Americas. Mr. Judge became a citizen of the United States. In this process he lost the insularity of nationality while elevating the feeling of patriotism. This sharpened his insight into the nature of the masses of mankind and gave him an international and cosmopolitan mind. He became not merely a lover of Americans, but a lover of humanity.

By profession he was lawyer, but being humble of mind as well as logical he looked beyond his legal codes into the records of Nature

to learn what Her laws were. From fallible man-made laws he went to the infallible Divine Laws of Nature. This brought him a philosophic perception, the vision that Nature was united and indivisible, and was ruled not by accident and haphazardly, but by the law of Harmony.

Investigation into the processes of visible Nature early led him to the Invisible in Nature. Soon he was investigating the occult arts of the Mesmerist and the Psychometrist. This opened up in him the forces of his own psychic being; he found a world within himself, devilish and divine, psychic and spiritual. Conviction that there must be knowledge made him a seeker and brought him to his Guru—H. P. Blavatsky. It was but natural that the Guru recognized the Chela, but Judge too felt the old tie with his teacher, and the labour of love, centuries old, was once again recommenced. What Krishna was to Arjuna, that H. P. Blavatsky was to Judge.

In 1875 Judge commenced the conscious walking in this incarnation of the old, old way. Faithful but not blind, self-confident but not vain, humble but not weak, resolute to march forward to great duties, he had laboured steadfastly for 21 years when he quitted his body on the 21st of March 1896.

The transmutation achieved by Mr. Judge under the guidance of H.P.B. and her Masters is one of the glories of the Theosophical Movement inaugurated in New York in 1875. His books and articles have a sustaining power; their message is universal, for all people. The inquirer desiring to learn what Theosophy is, will find an excellent presentation in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. The practitioner who wants to tread the Path walked so successfully by Mr. Judge will find of priceless value his epistles to his own young students and co-workers, gathered in the volume, *Letters That Have Helped Me*. His renditions of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and of the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali are not erudite commentaries, but practical aids to the pupil who desires to learn so that he may practice, experience and then teach. His short articles are truly great and bring not only knowledge, but also inspiration.

Mr. Judge was thus a Bearer of the Torch of Truth. He was not a world-famous figure in his day, but with the passing of every year an increasing number of discerning minds are recognizing his worth. Catching fire at his shrine, they are learning to repeat the Great Truths in living experience. When people who should have known better attacked him, he treated them with compassion and non-violence. He practised what he taught. In one of his letters he wrote:

If some offend then let us ask what is to be done, but only when the offence is against the whole. When an offence is against us, then let it go. This is thought by some to be “goody-goody,” but I tell you the heart, the soul, and the bowels of compassion are of more consequence than intellectuality.

Of such a Compassionater among men much can be said. But Mr. Judge’s real worth can be felt in the heart by him only who tries to assimilate the teachings which he gave. He did not invent or originate these teachings but learnt them sitting at the feet of the Gurus whose servant he was. Next to H. P. Blavatsky the entire Theosophical Movement owes to Mr. Judge the deepest debt of gratitude. One of the three chief founders of the Theosophical Movement, he remained, like H.P.B., true and loyal to the programme and the policy of human service to the day of his death. India knows only a little about him, but he was a lover of Aryavarta, as those who study his writings soon come to know.

It is the memory of such a person that we shall be remembering on the 21st, benefiting ourselves as we draw from his precepts and his example the inspiration and the power to follow, humbly yet confidently, in his footsteps.

MAN cannot remake himself without suffering, for he is both the marble and the sculptor.

—DR. ALEXIS CARREL

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

THE SELF—I

THE CHAPTER is called *Attavaggo* or the Self. *Atta* or *Atma* means the Self. Scholars have got into endless arguments as to whether or not the Buddha taught of existence of the soul. This canto not only speaks of the self but also distinguishes between the real, the immortal and changeless *spiritual* “Self” and the unreal, mortal and ever changing *personal* “self.” He says: “*The Self is the Lord of self; what higher Lord could there be? When a man subdues well his self, he will find a Lord very difficult to find.*”

In the *Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. points out that the Buddha’s priority was to arrest first of all the muddy torrent of superstition, to uproot *errors* before he gave out the truth. And as he could not give out *all* [esoteric teachings] for the same good reason as Jesus, who reminds *his* disciples that the Mysteries of Heaven are not for the unintelligent masses, but for the elect alone, and therefore “spake he to them in parables” (*Matthew*, xiii:11)—so his caution led Buddha *to conceal too much*. He even refused to say to the monk Vacchagotta whether there was, or was not an Ego in man. When pressed to answer, “the Exalted one maintained silence,” as his affirmation or denial would have only created confusion in the mind of the uninitiated. H.P.B. writes that the Buddha withheld such difficult metaphysical doctrines from the masses in order not to perplex them more. His reply to Ananda on why he remained silent when monk Vacchagotta asked about the existence of the Ego shows that he distinguished between the personal temporary Ego and the Higher Self. The former refers to the incarnated consciousness working through the personality, which perishes at death and only its aroma attaches itself to the immortal Ego. The latter is the Higher Self or that in man which remains unaffected through all the experiences of life, called by Shri Krishna as “*Maheswara*, the Great Lord, the spectator, the admonisher, the sustainer, the enjoyer, and also the *Paramatma*, the highest soul.” (*Gita*, XIII)

Many intellectuals were attracted to Buddha's teachings and one of them was Malunkya-putra. He was frustrated at Buddha's reticence regarding metaphysical questions. So one day he confronted Buddha and threatened to leave the spiritual discipline if Buddha refused to answer certain metaphysical queries. Buddha asked: "Have you ever thought why I never discuss metaphysics?" "No," replied Malunkya-putra. Buddha said, suppose a man has been wounded by a poisoned arrow and his friends are about to call a doctor, but he says, "I will not allow you to remove the arrow until I have learned about the caste of the man who shot the arrow; until I have known how tall he was and where he lives; until I have known what wood the bow is made from; who made the arrow, and so on, what would you think of such a man?" Malunkya-putra said that he must be a fool, as his questions have nothing to do with getting the arrow out. He would die if he waited to hear the answer. "Well, then, similarly, I do not explain the metaphysical questions, but I teach how to remove the arrow, *i.e.*, the truth of suffering, its origin and its end," said Buddha. In other words, there is emphasis on Ethics, in Buddha's teachings.

1. *If a man holds himself dear, let him diligently watch himself. The wise man should keep vigil during one of the three watches. (157)*

In this world, different people are attached to different things. One may be attached to one's body, another to his position or money or reputation, and so on. When this happens, one is instinctively driven to nurture, protect and safeguard that which is held dear. The person becomes automatically alert when it comes to the matters that are close to his heart. We see that those who hold their bodies dear are very careful about it. They find out about right diet, exercises and are prepared to go to any length to ensure its well-being. The Buddha points out that if the man holds himself dear, he must diligently watch himself and keep vigil during one of the three watches. The watch system or watch schedule is a method of

assigning regular periods of work duty aboard ships and some other areas of employment. A watch system allows the ship's crew to effectively operate the ship 24 hours a day for the duration of long voyages or operations. Time on shipboard is usually divided into periods of four hours—from midnight to midnight—and the lapse of every half hour is marked by one or more stroke of bell—from one stroke for the end of the first half hour to eight strokes or eight bells for the end of the fourth hour. Buddhists believe that "Three-Knowledges" should be achieved through the process of enlightenment, which the Buddha achieved in the three watches of the night of his Great Enlightenment. The "Three-knowledges" are memory of past lives, seeing the rebirth of others according to their Karma, and complete intuitive penetration of the Four Noble Truths and the destruction of spiritual defilements which fester in the mind and heart and keep it obscured, defiled and unenlightened.

In the Hindu philosophy, *Brahma-muhurta*, the time early in the morning, one and a half hours before sunrise, is considered to be most auspicious for the performance of spiritual activities. It is said that the spiritual activities performed early in the morning have a greater effect than in any other part of the day. Similarly, in the second chapter of the *Gita*, we are told that "what is night to those who are unenlightened is as day to his gaze; what seems as day is known to him [the self governed sage] as night, the night of ignorance." "Watching oneself" and keeping "vigil" during one of the three watches of the night implies that we have to be mindful of our every action throughout the day and also meditate and reflect on the noble teachings of the Great Ones during one part of the night rather than sleeping away all the time. The term "vigil" is associated with nocturnal devotions or prayers. It is active wakefulness of spiritual activity as against watchfulness in worldly activities.

(To be continued)

PANCHAMAHABHUTAS—THE FIVE GREAT ELEMENTS

THE THIRTEENTH chapter of the *Gita* is said to contain the whole of occultism. The Chapter is entitled, “Devotion by means of discrimination between the body and soul,” or, the *Kshetra* and *Kshetragna*, i.e., the field and the knower of the field. If we are to arrive at an understanding of what is permanent, we must clearly see what is impermanent and perishable. *Kshetra* is the perishable body. In the Seventh Chapter of the *Gita*, shri Krishna says, “Earth, water, fire, air and *akasa*, *Manas*, *Buddhi* and *Ahankara* is the eightfold division of my nature. It is inferior; know that my superior nature is different and is the knower; by it the universe is sustained.” The inferior nature is the phenomenal and transient nature, which disappears into the superior at the end of a *kalpa*. The inferior nature is relatively so, and is identical in *essence* with the superior nature. Included in the inferior nature are all the visible, tangible, invisible and intangible worlds. Most schools of philosophy accept that the material world is made up of five kinds of elements or *panchamahabhutas*, namely, ether (*akasa*), air (*vayu*), fire (*agni*), water (*apas*), and earth (*prithvi*). However, the *Carvakas* or Materialists reject ether, because its existence cannot be perceived, but only inferred. According to them the material world is composed of only four perceptible elements. Sankhya philosophy describes the *panchamahabhutas* or five elements known to us as originating from *Prakriti*.

In Sankhya philosophy *Prakriti* is said to be the ultimate cause of the world of objects, which includes our mind, senses and intellect. *Prakriti* is constituted of three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. *Guna* here means constituent element or component and not attribute or quality. They are regarded as being intertwined like the three strands of a rope which binds the soul to the world. The evolution of the world is owing to contact between *Purusha* (Self) and *Prakriti*, and that is not like the contact between two finite objects. *Prakriti* is

influenced by the presence of *Purusha*, just as thought influences our body. The three *gunas* are in a state of equilibrium in *prakriti*, but its contact with *purusha* causes a disturbance in the bosom of *prakriti* so that each *guna* tries to preponderate over the rest. (*An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*)

In the article, “The Septenary Principle in Esotericism,” H.P.B. points out that the universal root-principle, *Mulaprakriti*, as undifferentiated cosmic essence is identical with *Parabrahmam*. However, when from passive *Mulaprakriti* it has become *avyakta* (an active evolver), it becomes (*gunavat*) or endowed with qualities, and becomes *Prakriti*. The first product of the evolution of *prakriti* is *Mahat* and that in turn produces *ahankara* or self-consciousness, and the latter in turn produces *Tanmatras* our subtle elementary principles or particles, out of which *mahabhutas* or gross elementary principles or particles are evolved. To the latter belong desire nature (*kamarupa*), astral body (*linga sarira*), life-energy (*prana*) and physical body (*sthula sarira*).

In Sankhya philosophy *ahankara* is said to be of three kinds, depending upon the predominance of one or the other *gunas*. From the *sattvic ahankara* arise five organs of perception (*Jnanendriyas*), five organs of action (*karmendriyas*) and the mind. From *tamasic ahankara* arises *tanmatras* or subtle essence of the five elements. The five *tanmatras* are the potential elements or the essences of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. The gross physical elements arise from the subtle elements, by the process called *panchikaran* or Quintuplication. It is the process by which the five elementary constituents of the universe are said to be compounded with one another to form grosser entities that serve as units in the composition of the physical universe.

Thus, from the essence of sound (*sabdatanmatra*) is produced *akasa* (ether), with the quality of sound. From the essence of touch (*sparshatanmatra*) combined with that of sound, arises *air*, with the attributes of sound and touch. From the essence of colour (*rupatanmatra*) combined with that of sound and touch, arises *light*

or *fire*, with the qualities of sound, touch and colour. From the essence of taste (*rasatanmatra*) combined with that of sound, touch and colour arises water, with the qualities of sound, touch, colour and taste. The essence of smell (*gandhatanmatra*) combined with previous four gives rise to earth, which has all the five qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. The evolved universe is a play of twenty-four principles, of which *prakriti* is the first, the five gross elements are the last, while Mahat, *Ahankara*, mind, five organs of action, perception and *tanmatras* are the intermediate ones. (*An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*)

Occult Science recognizes Seven Cosmical Elements—four entirely physical, the fifth (Ether) is semi-material, while the two highest elements are at present beyond the range of human perception. They will appear as presentments in the sixth and seventh races of this Round. The fifth element Ether will become visible towards the end of the Fourth Round, and it will predominate over other elements throughout the Fifth Round. Ether will manifest fully in the Fifth Round, and it will be as familiar to us then, as air is to us now. In *Transactions* H.P.B. points out that universal, cosmic elements are the *noumena* of the terrestrial elements. Cosmic elements are not confined to our Solar System. Earth, water, air, fire and ether that we know of are terrestrial elements. Water as a cosmic element is quite different from water as a terrestrial element we know. Water is often used to denote matter in precosmic state. Chemical elements are described as sub-elements, and they are said to be conditional modifications of ONE ELEMENT.

Ether of science is not the *Akasa* of the Hindus. Ether is the Kosmic sediment or grossest form of *Akasa*. Both *Akasa* and Ether are said to be derived from ONE ELEMENT. Ether is *Akasa* in its lowest form, and it mingles with the highest layer of the Astral Light. There exist in nature two agencies—matter which is ponderable, visible and tangible, and something which is imponderable and inactive, argues Dr. B. W. Richardson. The imponderable and active agency, also called caloric, is a material substance flowing from the

sun, which fills every point of solar system. H.P.B. points out that the “caloric” or sun-force is the physical residue, so to say, of Ether. It is the astral fluid or astral light of the Kabalists, says H.P.B. Thus, there are two elements in the Universe, the one is the ponderable matter and the other is the all-pervading Ether or solar-fire. H.P.B. points out that truly speaking it is not ether, but one of the principles of Ether, just as Ether itself is one of the principles of *Akasa*. This ether or astral light is *without weight, substance, form, or colour*, and *its particles repel each other*. Dr. Richardson states that “by the attraction of caloric [imponderable matter] for ponderable matter, it unites and holds together all things; by its self-repulsive energy separates and expands all things.” H.P.B. considers this to be an almost occult explanation of cohesion. This ether penetrates the particles of ponderable substance and holds them together in bond or union. Further, the caloric or astral light or ether, pervades everything—the most solid earth, rock, crystal, metal, plant, including the human body, are all charged with ether in various degrees. The capacity to receive ether or the sun-force is different for different kinds of ponderable matter. It is the amount of ether or imponderable matter in the ponderable matter that determines various *states of matter* such as solid, liquid, gaseous, etc. The densities of various bodies, the hardness and softness, depend upon the relative proportions of ethereal and ponderable matter of which they are composed. Thus, by *adding* sufficient quantity of caloric [the imponderable matter] to a solid, its attraction for the particles of imponderable matter is weakened and gradually, the solid is converted to liquid and then to gaseous condition. Likewise, *abstraction* of caloric from a gas, would lead to gradual increase in attraction of ponderable matter particles with that of imponderable matter, thus reducing it to liquid and then to a solid state. Dr. Richardson sums up by saying that sun is the generator, store-house and diffuser of ether. Ether determines the constitution of the bodies and allows the particles of ponderable matter to glide over each other. (*S.D.*, I, 524-527)

“As there are seven *Dhatu* (principal substances in the human body) so there are seven Forces in Man and Nature,” (*S.D.*, I, 290). “As the human body is supposed to consist of 84,000 *dhatu*s (organic cells with definite vital functions in them), Asoka is said for this reason to have built 84,000 *dhatu-gopas* or Dagopas in honour of every cell of the Buddha’s body, each of which has now become a *dharma-dhatu* or holy relic,” (*The Theosophical Glossary*). Ayurveda means “veda of life.” It is the system of medicine based on the concept of *doshas*, *dhatu*s (tissues) and *malas* (waste matter). *Dhatu* is a Sanskrit word, which etymologically means, “that which enters in the formation of the body.” The human body is made up of seven tissues or vital substances or *dhatu*s. They are: life sap or lymph and chyle (*rasa*), blood (*rakta*), muscles (*mansa*), fatty tissue (*med*), bones (*asthi*), bone marrow and nervous tissues (*majja*), and semen, ovum and reproductive system (*shukra*). All these seven tissues are considered to be made up of five great elements or *panchamahabhutas*.

However, one or more *mahabhutas* might predominate more in one tissue than in the other. Thus, in muscle and fatty tissue there is predominance of *prithvi mahabhuta* or earth element. Similarly, there is predominance of water element or *apas mahabhuta* in lymph and chyle. *Tejas* or *agni mahabhuta* (fire element) primarily constitutes the haemoglobin fraction of the blood. The *mahabhutas* are present in different proportions in different people. When the proportion of these *mahabhutas* changes, the equilibrium is disturbed, resulting in disease. (*Ayurveda the Ultimate Medicine*, pp. 67-68)

In *Chhandogya Upanishad* sage Uddalaka tells the pupil that the food we eat, has gross form, middle form and subtle form. The gross form of the food is thrown out as excreta, the middle form is absorbed in the body in the form of flesh, while the subtle form of food or the vibration produced by the essential quality of food influences the mind. Hence, mind is formed of the essential subtle parts of food. Likewise, *prana* or vitality is formed of subtle part of water. Speech is formed of the fiery elements in the food. To prove

his point the sage asked the pupil to abstain from taking any food for fifteen days, though he was allowed to drink water. At the end of fifteen days when he returned back to the teacher, he was asked to chant Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, etc., which the pupil was unable to remember. However, on eating the food he was alert once more and could remember the Vedas.

The sage also explained that our hunger and thirst is the result of the action of three elements—earth, water and fire in our body. We feel hungry because the physical food is dissolved or liquefied by the element of water and its essence is absorbed in the system. We feel thirsty because the water (element) in our system is absorbed or dried up by the fire element within us. Thus food is liquefied by water, and water is absorbed by fire, and what is left is energy. Thus, the root of what one eats is in the Waters, while the root of what one drinks is in the Radiance or Fire, and the root of Fire is in the Real Self.

In her book, *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan*, H.P.B. narrates the ritual of burning the dead by the Hindus at their burning *ghats*. The dead body is burnt in an hour or so, leaving behind only a few handfuls of ashes, which the Brahmin scatters to the four winds of heaven over the sacred river, so that they will be mingled with sacred waters. The spectator, says H.P.B., is struck with the deep philosophy underlying the fundamental idea of this rite. In scattering the handful of ashes of that which once lived and felt, loved and hated, the Brahmin entrusts them to the four elements: to *earth*, out of which it grew and developed little by little into a man, and which fed it for a long time; to *fire*, emblem of purity, which devours the body, and as it were, purifies the spirit of all that is sinful, so that it can freely gravitate to the sphere of post-mortem existence; to *air* which was inhaled and thus sustained life; and to *water* which cleansed it physically and spiritually, quenched its thirst, and now receives its ashes into her pure bosom. (p. 136)

ZANONI—THE TRIALS OF OCCULT LIFE

II

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GLYNDON'S behaviour throughout the novel is marked by restlessness, activity and desire. Thus, he can be absorbed in his painting for three days, and disgusted the fourth. He can relinquish Viola in his fierce desire for occult knowledge, but fall in the snares of a village-girl when he is near attaining it. He may therefore symbolize the Lower Manas entangled with the desire principle, stamped with the quality of *Rajas*, which, it is said in the *Gita*, produces "love of gain, activity in action and the initiating of works, restlessness and inordinate desire."

Viola, throughout the novel, acts on impulse. Whether in surrendering her life to Zanoni in spite of her former fears or in abandoning him when the superstitious fears are stimulated again, she shows very little rational consideration. She may, therefore, stand for personal instinct of that order which is fed by the quality of *Sattva*, as is shown by her beauty and her purity. The relation between her and Zanoni, according to the psychological interpretation, may be expressed in the words of the *Gita*: "The *Sattva* quality attaches the soul through happiness and pleasure."

The Dweller of the Threshold seems to be the same as Mara of the Buddhistic writers. The explanation is given in a foot-note in *The Voice of the Silence* that Mara, in Esoteric Philosophy, is "personified temptation through men's vices." And now we see the meaning of Mejnour's dark hint: "Dread its eyes most when thou beholdest them not." For temptation does not thwart the desire that is ignoble and debasing. It is when desire has a worthy object that fear and temptation try to deter it. So, aspiration is foiled by the temptation of the sensual, as discovery is, by the fear of the unknown. All men, says Mr. Judge,

are influenced by a "Dweller," which is the effect upon them of their own, their family, and national defects, and although they may never, in this life, see objectively any such form, the influence is still there, and is commonly recognized as "bad inclinations and discouraging thoughts."

So much for the Dweller.

The relations of Zanoni with Adon-Ai and with Viola represent the two attractions which act continually upon Manas. While it is in communion with the Higher Self, it possesses marvelous potencies, and is content with the serenity of wisdom. But when it associates itself with instinctual desires, however good and pure, it loses its perception of the higher principles. And if it yields to fear or temptation, it loses its link with the Higher Self. Suffering and hardship, however, teach it the "vanity of human wishes" and it turns back to find its true rest in the spirit. That is why, at the end, Zanoni is shown as overcome with realization of the vanity of his hope to raise Viola to his own existence.

The doings of Glyndon are a study of Manas caught up in the lower aspect of the desire principle. Desire should follow the purer impulses of nature, for thus it will gain a *Sattvic* addition to its *Rajasic* stamp. This is the meaning of Zanoni's repeated efforts to unite Glyndon with Viola, and his saying that Viola's nature would purify Glyndon. But if the Lower Manas reject this, and take knowledge for its object, it will have the guidance of the contemplative mind—while it submits to its control. But it must overcome the temptation of the sensual and the fear of the unknown. If it succumbs to fear and temptation, the pure intellect can no more associate itself with such desire because the nature of the intellect is to be detached from the objects of sense.

To take up now the second, the occult line of interpretation.

The whole story represents the ascent along a curve of evolution at high level. It begins at the point where a man asks to be taught the secrets, as Glyndon does. Mervale, Glyndon's friend, is used to contrast with the neophyte the dense, material man of the world,

whom even Zanoni's presence cannot rouse to any consciousness of deeper truths. The process of development is expressed, not in the doings of a single character, but through several of them, each shown at its own level. The crown of this evolution is shown forth by Adon-Ai.

Glyndon, as we have seen, is a man just beginning the ascent. But his desire for knowledge is more fierce than sustained. He is spurred to renounce Viola and choose the path of occult life, by the desire to emulate Zanoni, by rosy dreams of everlasting youth and superhuman power. With such motives his failure is inevitable. His lower kamic nature has not been subdued; hence it is that he yields so easily to the seductions of the mountain girl who represents all sensual attractions. He has no reverence for his Master. With all these weaknesses it is no wonder that, when he rashly invokes the awful Guardian of the Threshold, his soul cannot overcome the horror. The whole wretched plight he falls into is the danger against which the Neophyte is warned in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Beware lest thou should'st set a foot still soiled upon the ladder's lowest rung. Woe unto him who dares pollute one rung with miry feet. The foul and viscous mud will dry, become tenacious, then glue his feet unto the spot; and like a bird caught in the wily fowler's lime, he will be stayed from further progress. His vices will take shape and drag him down. His sins will raise their voices like as the jackal's laugh and sob after the sun goes down; his thoughts become an army and bear him off a captive slave.

Kill thy desires, Lanoo, make thy vices impotent ere the first step is taken on the solemn journey. Strangle thy sins and make them dumb forever, before thou dost lift one foot to mount the ladder.

Glyndon is, therefore, an aspiring would-be chela, who fails in the test and is rejected by his master, Mejnour.

Mejnour is a high occultist and wise sage. He is not touched by human passions. Indeed the only times he comes into contact with

other people are when the laws of the Fraternity compel him to. Zanoni sums him up, when giving Glyndon into his charge; he says:

"I resign thee to a master who has the power and will to open to thee the gates of an awful world. Thy weal or woe are as nought in the eyes of his relentless wisdom."

But Mejnour's wisdom is of no benefit to mankind. "He asks no charity and gives none—he does no evil and seems to confer no good." We would say, therefore, in our scheme of interpretation that he is one of those souls, who, having attained to wisdom, deny their relation with the world. Indeed, such is the path that he points out to Glyndon: "Such is the world that Zanoni still cares for," he says. "You and I will leave it alone."

He continually warns Zanoni against involving himself in human affairs. And, though it may seem that his warnings are justified, we must count Zanoni's the nobler spirit.

For Zanoni has chosen the Path of Renunciation. He has sympathy for humanity, though that sympathy has yet to be purified into full intelligent compassion. That is why, in spite of his great powers as an occultist, his love for Viola is a fetter upon his soul. He strays from the path, for we see that after his union with Viola, he goes away with her to a pleasant island, caring no more for the rest of mankind. The happiness which he would have rejected for himself as selfish, he covets for Viola—and loses his universality of outlook. That is his true fall.

It is obvious that he has reached very far, for he is in actual communion with Adon-Ai. It is significant that it is to Zanoni, even in his errors, rather than to the unfaltering Mejnour that Adon-Ai's presence is granted. It emboldens us to say that Adon-Ai represents the Nirmannakaya who ever cares for suffering humanity and lends his assistance to any one engaged in its true service.

But when Zanoni succumbs to his human passion, he forfeits his right to invoke Adon-Ai. And the reason is clearly stated by H.P.B. in her article on "Mahatmas and Chelas."

Higher things can be perceived only by a sense pertaining to those higher things. And whoever therefore wants to see the real MAHATMA must use his *intellectual* sight. He must so elevate his *Manas* that its perception will be clear and all mists created by *Maya* must be dispelled.

It is precisely these mists of Maya that are clouding Zanoni's intellect through human passion, and Adon-Ai therefore cannot respond to his call.

The problem of love, indeed, is one of the highest tests that the occultist has to pass on his way to Adeptship. Zanoni fails in this. The case is the same as one considered by Mr. Judge in his article on "Living the Higher Life":

If at the time the pupil's affinities have become converted into devotion for the initiate, the latter becomes blinded in his philanthropic work and noble duties of a sage, and commits, through the infatuation of a love for the pupil, serious blunders, which result in a catastrophe to both of them and to humanity; and both the pupil and initiate fall down and have to mount their rugged pathway again with increased difficulties in the way.

The serious blunder is accepting a boon from the Dweller of the Threshold and the catastrophe is their untimely death. At the end, however, Zanoni sees how vain was his hope of raising Viola to his own height, that is to say, he sees his mistake. The mind is cleared from Mayavic mists, and he once again holds commune with the great Nirmanakaya, who is his Guardian Angel. Having failed, however, Zanoni must face that problem, in another life and conquer it before he can fully realize himself.

It remains to explain the Dweller of the Threshold. Mr. Judge declares that it is triune and depends upon three relations: (1) To our nationality; (2) to our family; (3) to ourselves.

(To be concluded)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

Question: The Indian epic *Ramayana* mentions building of a bridge or Rama Setu. The bridge was built of stones thrown into the ocean by Hanuman (the monkey-god) and his army of monkeys (*vanersena*) by writing the name of Rama on them, which floated. However, when Rama himself threw a stone into the ocean, it sank. It troubles our minds and hearts to conclude that Rama, an *avatara*, was powerless and nothing! Was it momentary lack of faith on part of Rama for which he suffered ignominy?

Answer: *Ramayana* mentions the floating stones used by Hanuman and his *Vanarasena* to build the Rama Setu, a bridge, connecting India and Srilanka at Rameswaram, in order to rescue Sita who was held captive by Ravana in Lanka. The description as to how the bridge was constructed appears in *Yuddha Kanda* or "War Episode" of *Ramayana*. It is said that the bridge was built under the supervision of Nala. Nala, the engineer and architect, was also a monkey, and son of *Viswakarma* (the Divine carpenter, or builder). The challenge in building the bridge was to make the stones float because as soon as the stone was thrown into the water, it would sink. Hanuman, the monkey-god, discovered that the stone that was thrown into the sea, taking the name of Rama, or with Rama's name inscribed on it, did not sink, but remained floating. The story goes that Lord Rama was watching the progress of the work and decided to extend a helping hand. When Rama threw a stone into the ocean, without inscribing his name on it, the stone sank.

How does one explain it? One explanation could be that there is power in the word "Rama," and hence the stones inscribed with

name of “Rama” floated instead of sinking. However, the other explanation is in terms of faith. With faith all things are possible. Faith establishes the Will. It has been known that by using the power of Will, a yogi can change the polarity of his body, and make it positive with respect to earth, and hence he is able to levitate or raise his body in the air like a bird. Earth is a magnet charged with positive electricity and when any object acquires the same polarity, it is repelled. Perhaps, on similar principle, the stones floated instead of sinking.

The more intriguing question is: How the stone thrown by Rama sank? One obvious answer is that the stone sank, following the law of nature. Though Rama was an *Avatar*, possessing immense powers and knowledge, when he does not exercise powers, all his actions are subject to the laws of nature. It is only when he chooses to exercise powers that *seemingly* miraculous things happen, because then, superior laws of invisible world modify the behaviour of laws known to man.

The second explanation could be that Rama wished to *emphasize* the power of faith and devotion. Hence this incident shows that even what Rama could not do, the *bhaktas* or devotees could do owing to their faith. Come to think of it for an *avatara* like Rama, building a bridge in the ocean is no difficult feat. He could have achieved it even without the help of Hanuman and his *vanersena*! In fact, there is no need to build the bridge. In the *Old Testament*, Moses, who was an Initiate, asks the sea to part and it parted, and he, along with the Jews, crossed the Red Sea. Similarly, when Shri Krishna, as a new-born baby, was being carried in the basket to Mathura, by his father Vasudeva, it began to rain heavily and there was flood in the river. The child only touched the river-water with his toe and the river parted and made way for Vasudeva!

Moreover, as suggested in the question, if the reason for sinking the stone was that Rama momentarily allowed *a-viswas* (doubt) or shaking of faith in the Divine, it must have been with the intention of demonstrating the result of non-belief. For instance, when a boy

suffering from epilepsy and possessed by demon was brought to Jesus’ disciples, they could not cure him. He was then brought to Jesus, and Jesus could drive away the demon and cure the boy. When the disciples asked Jesus why they could not cure the boy, Jesus said, “It was because you have not enough faith. I assure that if you have faith *as big as a mustard seed*, you can say to this hill, ‘Go from here to there!’ And it will go. You could do anything!”

Though all things are possible for Great Beings within the framework of the law, at times, they choose to abstain from exercising superior powers for a purpose. In *The Ocean of Theosophy* we are told that Rama and Krishna are reckoned as major *avatars*. An *Avatara* is Divine Incarnation, the descent of a god or some exalted Being, who has progressed beyond the necessity of rebirths, into the body of a simple mortal. A wonderful description is given of an *avatara*, by Mr. Crosbie, who distinguishes between an *avatara* and perfect man, thus:

A *Siddha-Purusha* (perfect man) is like an archeologist who removes the dust and lays open an old well which has been covered up by ages of disuse. The *Avatara*, on the other hand, is like an engineer who sinks new well in a place where there was no water before. Great Men give salvation to those only who have the waters of piety hidden in themselves, but the *Avatara* saves him too whose heart is devoid of love and dry as a desert. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 152)

And yet, if needed, he is willing to undergo suffering and even suffer ignominy for a purpose, or for the greater good!

Question: In Astrology, sun is represented by the symbol of a circle with a dot in the centre, ☉. However, in the *Secret Doctrine*, the same sign has different significance. How to understand the meaning of the symbols used for seven planets in Astrology?

Answer: H.P.B. points out that every symbol is like a many-faced diamond, each of its facet is open to several interpretations and is related to several sciences. There are seven keys to interpretation of

every symbol, such as, astronomical, metaphysical, psychological, philosophical, geometrical, etc. The symbol of boundless circle with a point in the centre, refers to the unmanifested Logos which sleeps in the bosom of *Parabrahmam* during *Pralaya*, and through which radiate light, energy and wisdom of *Parabrahmam*, writes Mr. Subba Rao (*S.D.*, I, 429). The point in the circle is also called the mathematical Point or the “Cosmic seed,” which contains the whole Universe as the acorn the oak. It is said to correspond in Astrology and Astronomy to the Sun. Like the Logos the physical Sun is the window through which the light and life of Central Spiritual Sun radiates. In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 30), H.P.B. explains the symbology of planet Venus. She points out that the *diameter* when found isolated in a circle, stands for female nature and the primitive Root Races, while the diameter from which runs a vertical line—represents male and female, *not yet separated*. It is also represented by Egyptian Tau **T**, which then becomes the cross +, or male-female separated and fallen into generation. Venus is symbolized by a sign of a globe over the cross ♀. The Egyptian ansated cross is another form of Venus and meant, esoterically, that mankind and all animal life had stepped out of the divine spiritual circle and fallen into physical male and female generation. The crescent of Moon ☾, is boat-shaped, and represents female principle or womb of nature, carrying germs of life.

However, we do not find any explanation for symbols of other planets in theosophical literature. But we get some interpretations in the books on Astrology. At a simple level, the symbols of the planets have been derived from the Greek names of the Gods associated with these planets or from the weapons used by these gods. Venus is represented by hand-mirror, ♀, as she is associated with beauty. Mercury is associated with caduceus with serpents intertwined on a rod and the wings forming a semicircle, ☿. Mars, the Roman god of war, is represented by ♂, which represents the shield and a spear. The symbol of Jupiter is ♃. It is the hieroglyph

for Eagle or Jupiter’s bird. It is Greek letter Zeta, the first letter of Zeus, which is Jupiter’s Greek name. The symbol for Saturn is ♄ which symbolizes Scythe or sickle, as Saturn is supposed to be Roman God of Agriculture.

Metaphysically, we can see that symbols of almost all planets are a combination of circle, semi-circle and a cross; wherein circle represents pure spirit, semi-circle or crescent represents soul, and the cross represents matter, or body. Thus, Sun and Moon represent Pure Spirit and Pure Soul, respectively. Alan Leo, in his book, *Planetary Astrology*, points out that Mars and Venus are reverse of each other and they depict relation of Spirit with body (or matter). Planet Mars having cross (modified form of arrow) above the circle, shows spirit trying to manifest and express itself through matter, a drive towards manifestation, hence, associated with force and energy. In it are both *destruction* and *construction*, symbolizing God of War. Planet Venus has cross *under* the circle. Here, Spirit has succeeded in expressing itself through matter. There is supremacy of spirit over matter and hence it is planet of peace and love. The Moon or half-circle represents psychic world and is connected with moods and mind. Saturn and Jupiter are reverse of each other. They depict the relation between soul (or mind) and body. The Saturn which is cross over half-circle, ♄, means matter over mind, and represents cold, dry and calculating intellect. Mind or soul is under domination of matter and hence tests, trials and temptations are necessary to free the soul. The planet Jupiter has reverse symbol, with semi-circle placed over cross, that shows mind rising over matter. The soul is free from domination of matter, and feels compassion for struggling humanity. In the symbol of planet Mercury we find all three: crescent on top of the circle which is on top of the cross. Mercury has been called the messenger of gods, and in the symbol we find Venus with wings, or consciousness expressing itself through matter and soaring higher to unknown regions.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What is an “evil eye” or *nazar*? Down the ages people have feared “evil eye.” When children fall sick for no apparent reason or when suddenly things begin to go wrong, or when roadblocks come your way repeatedly, it is said that the evil eye has struck. “Evil eye” is also described as *nazar* or *drishti*. The concept of the Eye of Sauron in Tolkein’s *Lord of the Rings* is based on evil eye of Balor spoken of in Irish legends. It is believed that some people possess evil eye. Anyone can possess the evil eye momentarily. When a person looks upon another person or object with envy or deep adoration, it can result in disaster. Inadvertently, even a mother’s gaze can drain the child of his positive aura and then the child falls sick. An evil eye can be explained on the basis of aura, which is the energy shield around each person. This aura can be positive or negative depending upon the physical and mental health status.

There are various means of protecting oneself from evil eye or “*nazar*.” In ancient Egypt, the “Eye of Horus” was considered to protect one from the evil eye. In Turkey, there is blue “*nazar*” amulet, and in Arab countries it is the hand of Fatima or Khamsa or Hamsa, while the Muslims say *Inshallah* or “God wills it,” to ward off the evil eye. The concept of “keeping one’s fingers crossed,” has its origin in keeping the crucifix, to keep away evil. There is the practice of putting “*nazar ka tikka*” or black dot on child’s face and wearing of black thread on right arm or ankle to ward off evil. Even deities are protected from the *nazar* of adoring devotees by the practice of *jhaadna*, which consists in dusting off negative forces and evil spirits with a fan of peacock feathers, writes Devdutt Pattanaik. (*The Speaking Tree [The Times of India]*, February 6, 2011)

The power of the “evil eye” is not a superstition, but a reality. An “evil eye” is the destructive power of thoughts. Whenever we think, every thought coalesces itself with a unit of life-energy or “elemental.” An elemental is a colourless force or energy without any attributes, but when coalesced with thoughts, it acquires quality

or colour. Electricity is a colourless force, but when it is passed through a rod, the rod gets charged and anyone touching it will experience shock. Just like a charged rod, these elementals carry bad thoughts to another person and cause him harm. Only when the person is pure—at the level of speech, body and mind—such bad thoughts are powerless. For instance, when people fix their thoughts in envy upon a person, who suddenly gets rich, he is adversely affected by them and may lose the money. So also, the envious glance of a person on a beautiful vase or car or any other object or person may result in damage or injury to the same. The elementals precipitate down the glance of the envious person. Envy is a powerful emotion. Envy is worse than jealousy, because the feeling involved is, “If I cannot have then no other should have it.” In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 380), H.P.B. points out that certain persons possess the power of the evil eye, and some possess it even unconsciously. Thus:

There are persons who can kill toads by merely looking at them, and can even slay individuals. The malignance of their desire brings evil forces to a focus, and the death-dealing bolt is projected, as though it were a bullet from a rifle.

We need to cultivate goodwill towards all. H.P.B. mentions that each one of us is endowed with a magnetic potentiality, which when helped by an intense and indomitable will, can be used for bringing about harm or good.

Inward purity is considered to be the greatest protection against the power of the “evil eye” or any other Black Art. Clear conscience and the desire to benefit humanity would act as a protecting shield. A pure person can be a protection for the others around him. From a philosophical point of view, as H.P.B. says, there is not even a misshapen day, accident or chance in our lives. In other words, there can be nothing outside of our *karma*, although we may not know the causes. If an individual becomes a victim to an evil-eyed person, could it not be due to some karmic affinity between the victim and

the malignant person?

Solitude is one of the most important necessities of true leadership, said William Deresiewicz, an essayist and critic, in a lecture delivered at the United States Military Academy at West Point, which appeared in Spring 2010 issue of the quarterly magazine, *The American Scholar*. The excerpts of the same appeared in *Utne Reader* for September-October 2010. Sitting on the Yale College admission committee Deresiewicz observed that the students appearing for the interview were great kids who had been trained to be world-class hoop jumpers. “Any goal you set them, they could achieve. Any test you gave them, they could pass with flying colours....But I think there is something desperately wrong, and even dangerous about the idea....We have a crisis of leadership in America because our overwhelming power and wealth, earned under earlier generations of leaders, made us complacent, and for too long we have been training leaders who only know how to keep the routine going,” says Deresiewicz. He feels that though America has technocrats and people who could fulfil goals, what America lacks is people who could think for themselves and can formulate a *new* way of doing things and looking at things. Multitasking has impaired the ability of people to think for themselves, and concentrate long enough to develop an idea of one’s own. We are able to do our best thinking by slowing down and concentrating. Concentration means gathering yourself together into a single point rather than letting yourself be dispersed. There are difficult and troubling questions, which arise, but the answers to them could only be found within—in solitude. When you expose yourself too much to television, newspapers, magazines, Facebook and Twitter, you are marinating yourself in the conventional wisdom. In the cacophony it is impossible to hear your own voice. His advice to the cadets was to think through in advance, on the issues of

morality, mortality and honour, and find out if they had the strength to challenge an unwise order, or question a wrongheaded policy. “You need to know...who you are and what you believe.” American Revolution was a result of precisely this kind of independent thinking, says Deresiewicz.

The help and guidance, especially in the process of spiritual development, comes from the inner planes of being. We are continually influenced by the ideas of the people around us. Theosophy teaches that our thoughts and feelings are impressed in the astral light, which acts as a hypnotizing agent. *Light on the Path* states that only he who is untameable, who cannot be dominated, who knows that he has to play the lord over men, over facts, over all things save his own divinity, can arouse the faculty of intuition. We are influenced by a thousand and one voices, but we have to follow only our own sense of right and wrong. We need to consult wise people, good books and above all our own inner nature. We may go wrong in our judgment, but the important thing is to learn self-reliance and self-rule. Emerson writes, “It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.” H.P.B.’s advice is, “Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for all men, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves.”

Besides self-reliance and independent thinking, *Tao Te King* teaches that qualities of lowliness and humility are necessary for all great leaders and rulers. There is the concept of Servent-leadership, in which a person is a servant first, one who has the compelling drive to be of use to the world and solve its problems. A servent-leader seeks to draw out, inspire and develop the best and the highest within people, from the inside out.

Recently, the notion that science deals with facts and has no

relation to values was challenged. It is argued that scientists strongly disvalue fraud, error and “pseudoscience,” and at the same time value reliability, accuracy and precision. The pursuit of science is an implicit endorsement of the value of developing knowledge of material world. Typically, the pursuit of scientific knowledge provides an opportunity for appreciation of values, by teaching truthfulness, open-mindedness, suspended judgment and willingness to change one’s opinion in the light of new evidence. Since science proceeds through the agency of individuals, we find that individual scientists express the values of their cultures and religions when they engage in scientific activity. For instance, Einstein’s statement, “God does not play dice,” seems to be based largely on the conviction that physical universe could not contain such an inherent component of randomness. Each scientist comes from a different background and hence there is variation and disagreement in interpretation. As a result, only conclusions that are robust across varying interpretations will tend to be widely perpetuated, feels William Wimsatt. However, objective science emphasizes the conceptual, rational and empirical; it is looking towards the external world, and tends to fragment the whole into smaller and smaller fragments. Hideki Yukawa, while tracing the history of science back to ancient Greece, wrote, “There not only were intuition and abstraction in complete harmony and balance with each other, but there was also no such thing as the estrangement of science from philosophy, literature, and the arts.” Moreover, there is a need to amalgamate science with humanism. Russell, in his essay on “machines and emotions,” remarks that when science learns to understand human nature, it will be able to bring happiness into our lives, which machines and physical sciences have failed to create. Science cannot be separated from all virtues and values, ethical or spiritual. Values are far more important in today’s age of science and technology than they ever were before, writes Dr. Nandita, Reader in the Department of Education, Punjab University, Chandigarh. (*Science Reporter*, December 2010)

The field of scientific investigation is bounded by *physical nature*.

It is the knowledge obtained by analysis, experiment and logical reasoning, going from premises to conclusions. If the premises are wrong the conclusions are bound to be wrong. Science deals only with phenomena (results), while Occult Science deals with *noumena* (causes). “Science” is a term used in different ways, but etymologically derived from the Latin word “*scientia*,” connected with the verb “*scire*,” to know. Science, in the widest sense, encompasses every concept related to concrete or the abstract, the seen or the unseen world. True science and the pursuit of knowledge do not stop at physical realm but go beyond, and thus speak of the existence of astral, psychic and spiritual realms.

Many discoveries of modern science are raising the question of moral basis and of motive. It seems that twenty-first century technologies—robotics, genetic engineering and nanotechnology—pose a greater threat to humanity than did the twentieth-century technologies underlying weapons of mass destruction. Bill Joy, a co-founder and chief scientist of Sun Micro-Systems feels that scientists, technologists and engineers should adopt a strong code of ethical conduct that would ensure that they will desist from creating or developing any knowledge-enabled technologies of mass destruction.

Light on the Path says that scientific quest for knowledge—obtained by work and experiment—is held in high esteem by the Adepts. “Every fresh discovery drives them a step forward.” And yet, science needs to base its work on the foundation of morality and philanthropy, as expressed by a Master of Wisdom:

May I not ask then without being taxed with a vain “display of science,” what have the laws of Faraday, Tyndall or others to do with philanthropy in their abstract relation with humanity viewed as an integral whole? What care they for MAN as an isolated atom of this great and harmonious Whole, even though they may sometimes be of practical use to him?

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