

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SILENCE

FOLK WISDOM has intuitively grasped the importance of silence, enshrined in the saying, “Speech is silver, but silence is golden.” One of the evils by which modern society is debased is constant prattle, which is misuse of the power of speech. Too many of us talk for the sake of talking. When two or more people come together, they indulge in idle talk, small talk, or crack jokes, often at the expense of the absent person. Idle talk easily degenerates into gossip and backbiting. It is quite a challenge to be part of a group and yet not be party to gossip and slander. It is only with some effort that now and then, one succeeds in diverting the conversation to discussing weather or some social or political issue. Mr. Judge almost laments at this folly of humanity, saying: “What a petty lot of matter we spend time on, when so much is transitory. After a hundred years what will be the use of all this?”

To begin with, it is a helpful and uplifting exercise to observe silence by avoiding the abuse of speech through gossip, obscene jest, personal and curious prying, and idle talk. It would be quite useless to observe silence for an hour or more, and then indulge in any of the sins of speech. Many of us indulge in idle talk. The best way to determine what talk is idle, is to put a simple question: “Is it necessary?” If that which is not necessary to say is said, it comes in the category of idle talk. If something is necessary to say, then further questions, as to how to say it, when to say it, arise. There is a Chinese

aphorism: “A sage does not say what he does; but he does nothing which cannot be said.” There are families where very little is exchanged among the members by way of verbal communication. Yet, a lot of support is drawn from silent presence. We keep our personality in the foreground by inordinate self-assertion, in small and seemingly harmless ways, such as, telling others what we are going to do in regard to matters that are not necessary to communicate. Some of us *just have to* narrate every trifling detail of happenings in the office to our family members, and likewise, cannot help but discuss our family life with our colleagues.

We may not perhaps be guilty of outright gossip or obscene talk, but under the guise of interest in the welfare of another we may slip into the sin of prying into other people’s affairs. Talk about our own personality tends to strengthen egotism. Mr. Judge’s advice is that during conversation we must try to keep in the background, and our effort should be to allow the other person to speak. We must suppress in ourselves the desire to tell about ourselves. To begin the fight against sins of speech is to prepare for real silence. *Regularity* in the observance of silence is a great aid. Observance of silence for a few minutes every day *at the same time* is better than an hour of silence observed at different times day after day. By observance of silence at regular hours memory and attention get their training.

There is something like unuttered speech as well. In one sense, silence is unuttered speech. There is a Sanskrit verse to the effect that the guru is a young man, and disciples are elders; the teaching is silence, and yet the doubts of the disciples are dispelled. There are occasions when words are not necessary. A mother who sits by the bedside of her sick child does not have go on speaking reassuring words to her child, and yet something warm and comforting spills out of her heart, and that is felt by the child. One of the requirements of spiritual life is to learn the value of silence. Silence is needed to conserve spiritual energy, as one of the main avenues through which it goes to waste is through empty sounds and vain speech. At the highest level, the power to speak emanates from the Higher Self.

Thomas Carlyle says:

Speak not, I passionately entreat thee, till thy thought hath silently matured itself, till thou hast other than mad and mad making noises to emit: *hold thy tongue* till some meaning lie behind to set it wagging. Consider the significance of SILENCE.

Theosophy warns against the hypocrisy of observing silence outwardly and allowing the mind to be noisy and turbulent. In Hindu homes, often elderly ladies follow the discipline of observing silence for an hour or so. But they would sit and observe their daughters or daughters-in-law, who may be working in the kitchen, and continually communicate with them by sign language or by gesticulation. This is not true silence. Silence means silencing the chatter of the lower mind. The mind must be made silent, not by making it blank, empty or passive, susceptible to any outside influence, but by bringing it to dwell on some great and noble idea. At the base of every word there is thought. A petty or mean or distracted mind is bound to produce petty, mean and rambling thoughts. Ultimately, observance of silence is a soul-exercise. In the process of spiritual development, help and guidance comes from the inner planes of being and to avail of it we must stop inner and outer chatter.

Sometimes silence is the best response. In a domestic quarrel or otherwise, if we do not want to aggravate the situation we may keep silent, even if we are being wrongly accused, so long as we are the only affected party. Instead of condemning or reprimanding, when one withdraws in silent pity, it gives that person a chance to turn the corner. We may choose to keep silent if that is going to save someone’s life. There is the story of a sadhu who was asked by a group of men running with open swords, in which direction the thief had gone. The sadhu kept silent though he knew the answer. However, to keep silent when one hears an innocent person slandered is unthinkable. Commenting on the violence against women, Ashwin

Sanghi writes that we can no longer remain silent in the face of outrages. We cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the injustices our own society continues to heap upon women. He quotes Martin Niemoller, an anti-Nazi theologian, who spoke of the inactivity of German intellectuals during the rise of Nazi power, thus: “First they came for the socialists, and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a socialist. . . . Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me.” It would be worthwhile for the silent majority to take to heart the words of Martin Niemoller and break their self-imposed silence. On the other hand, those who have been incessantly talking may keep in mind the words of Martin Farquhar Tupper, a 19th century English poet and philosopher, who wrote: “Well-timed silence hath more eloquence than speech.” (*The Times of India*, January 14, 2013)

The dirt and dreg of kamic nature often find their outlet in useless or injurious speech. There is a verse which says that “it is not what goeth into the mouth that defileth, but what comes out of it.” After we eat the food, there is assimilation of food and elimination of waste-products. The health of the body improves or suffers with every morsel we take in. One of the main ways of determining the condition of the body is to examine the process and product of elimination. Our psychic nature feeds on certain thoughts and desires, and has its own ways of assimilation and elimination, of sustaining itself in good or ill health. One of the modes of elimination is related to power of speech, writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

Further, he points out that in spiritual growth learning and listening go together; they precede teaching and speaking. In ancient India, an earnest seeker who sought to walk the spiritual path was called *shravaka*, a listener. In ancient Greece he was named *Akoustikos*. He was not even permitted to ask questions, but instead, *bija-sutras* or seed-thoughts were given to him to ponder over and understand to the best of his ability. These thoughts were intended to be purificatory food, which if assimilated properly, would cleanse his

kamic or desire nature. Once started on this path, he was ready to become, in the course of time, a positive doer, an exerciser, *Shramana*, which is the *Asketos* of the Greeks. Those who are in search of the *pearl* of wisdom must acquire the strength of muscle, through the *vow of silence*. It consists in self-imposition of periodic silence; not indulging in injurious, useless or untruthful speech; not speaking of our own faults and weaknesses, lest by speaking of them we lend them the strength which ensues from the power of speech. Lastly, we should not speak even that which is true unless at proper times, to proper people, under proper circumstances.

Gandhiji told a visitor to Sevagram in December 1938 that silence had become both a physical and a spiritual necessity for him, adding:

Originally it was taken to relieve the sense of pressure. Then I wanted time for writing. After, however, I had practised it for some time I saw the spiritual value of it. It suddenly flashed across my mind that that was the time when I could best hold communion with God.

There are a thousand and one voices within and without demanding our attention. There are many voices of the flesh, such as, “I am tired; I am cold; I am hungry”; then there is the voice of selfish desires and ambitions; there is also the voice of the lower mind, which is continually planning and scheming to gratify those desires. There is the voice of personal affection and care for family and friends. The multitude of these voices tends to drown out the “still small voice” of our Higher Nature. Now and then, when we succeed in controlling the chatter of the lower mind so as to be in attunement with our divine nature, we do receive “communication”—guidance and illumination—from the inner planes of being, which is described as, “voice of conscience,” or “whisperings of *Buddhi* to *Manas*.”

Light on the Path tells us that “to obtain pure silence necessary for the disciple, the heart and emotions, the brain and its intellectualisms, have to be put aside.” It is then that one is able to hear the “Soundless sound” or “Voice in the Spiritual Sound.” The

very first Fragment of *The Voice of the Silence* points out that there comes a definite stage in the life of an aspirant, when he will hear the voice of the *inner* God, or Higher Self in seven manners. It will be first heard as Nightingale's sweet voice, next it will be like the silver cymbal of the Dhyanis, and the last will vibrate like the dull rumbling of a thundercloud. The seventh sound swallows all the other sounds—it is the voice of the silence. This must happen in the high state of *Samadhi*, when one loses all sense of individuality and becomes the ALL. The fragment also points out the prerequisites for hearing the Voice of one's Higher Self, such as, silencing one's thoughts, withdrawing one's mind from the external sounds and sights and fixing one's whole attention on the Master.

We might learn to spend some time every day in solitude. The mystic traditions of Islam emphasize the need to be away from the activities of life and spend some time every day in quiet contemplation. Some of us cannot remain alone for more than 10 to 15 minutes, without reaching out for a phone, or switching on the television set or music system. Every day we should observe silence for a few minutes and set apart half-an-hour for meditation.

David Villasenor, in his essay on "Silence," puts it thus: "Silence among Indians is that state reached when the mind of man is an absolute vacuum to the physical world, empty of physical 'selfness'....Civilized man feels a loneliness and even an extreme melancholia in the jungle of the mind that may make stillness a terrifying experience, but he can pass through this barrier if he will learn to understand it. Then he would discover, as the Indian did long ago, that to stand in solitude on a mountain top at sunrise or sunset, or by a waterfall in some hidden canyon of ethereal beauty, and to absorb this majesty with utter peace and awe, in which soul merges with creation, and self is forgotten, is to become one with a joy and happiness so tremendous that no mere earthly pleasure can compare....Silence is truly the language of the spirit among the Indians."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

"WHERE has my mommy gone, grandmother?" Arthur's lip trembled as he asked the question. For days he had not been allowed to go into his mother's room. "Hush! Your mother is sleeping" or "Mother isn't feeling well; you must be quiet." Or, after school, he would be told to run down the street and play. That very morning a neighbour who had a car had taken Arthur for an all-day outing, it being Saturday, when there was no school, down to the sea, where he had always loved to go. He had waded and picked up shells and eaten sandwiches and fruit and little cakes. He had slipped a little pink-frosted cake into his pocket, to take home to his mother. They had waited to see the sunset before she had brought him home and he had run into the quiet house and been overjoyed to see the door of his mother's room, kept closed all these days, standing open. Puzzled not to find her, he had run to his grandmother, who had come to live with them not very long before.

She drew him to her when he asked his question. "You know your dear mother had been very sick, Arthur. She left her love for you but she has had to go away to rest."

"But, grandmother," he wailed, forgetting how old he was and crying like any little fellow, "she wouldn't go away and not tell me good-bye. She always told me when I went to school, 'Good-bye, dear boy, be good!'"

"She had to go, dear. She will come some day."

"When, grandmother, when? He stamped his foot in exasperation and bafflement.

"When she gets rested, she will come."

"I need my mommy to take care of me!"

"Your daddy and I will take good care of you, darling. And remember, Arthur, your daddy and I will miss her too."

On Monday, when Arthur went to school, he saw a child point at him and say to another child, "He has lost his mother, His mother

is dead.”

Arthur’s heart sank. On going home he asked his grandmother, “What does it mean for a person to be dead, grandmother? A boy said my mother is dead!”

“It means just what I said, my darling. She’s gone away to rest. You know that when you play hard all day you rest all night and in the morning you wake up as fresh as ever. Well, being ‘dead’ means that we need a longer sleep. And what do you think your mother is dreaming about while she ‘sleeps’?”

“Me?”

“Surely, besides you she is dreaming about your daddy, her mother and daddy, and all the relatives and friends she loved. She certainly must dream of us and sometimes we dream of her.”

“Every night,” Arthur’s father told him, “your mother was not really here with us when her body was asleep. You could tip-toe into her room and even hum a little tune without her waking up; but you knew that in the morning she would be awake and would talk to you and read you a story. It is like that now, only she is very sound asleep. When the right time comes, she will wake up again.”

One day when the leaves were putting on their bright autumn colours, they all drove out to see them in glory. But the next time they went the leaves were falling and the day came when most of the trees were bare. Arthur’s father told him that the trees, although they looked so quiet, were working steadily and would work all through the winter, even when the snow fell, preparing for the new time of growth.

When spring drew near they watched the glossy little buds that, from being almost flat against their twigs, swelled more and more week by week till they unfolded slowly and leaves and flowers came out. And Arthur’s father taught him another verse about the “Power divine which moves to good.”

In dark soil and the silence of the seeds

The robe of Spring it weaves....

“And then, daddy?” Arthur asked.

“Over and over again the Wheel of Life turns, son! It turns for people too. We call it spring when the tree puts on a new coat of leaves for its active season. The spring season for every Soul, like you and mother and grandmother and me, begins when we put on a baby body. And it grows and fills out and gets tall and strong and then, when our autumn time comes, whether after many years, or sometimes only a few, we have no more use for the body, just as the tree has no more use for its old coat of leaves. Before the leaves of a tree fall off or even turn bright-coloured they give back to the tree all they have that would be of use to it.

“It is the same with us. Our Soul is like the tree and all the good things that we have thought and felt and said and done are like the food the leaves give to the tree. While we are away, the real Soul part of us, sometimes for years and years, is very busy, like the tree in winter, getting ready for another life in a new body, as the tree gets ready for another spring.”

“But, daddy,” Arthur asked him anxiously, “how will I know my mother if she has another body?”

“Never fear, son!” he spoke with comforting conviction. “Some day when we come back at the same time you and I will surely know your mother and know each other, and she will know us, because we love each other. Don’t you remember when we all went to the children’s party at the Smith’s and they gave each child a mask to wear? The others did not recognize you right away, but your mother and I knew as soon as you came in that it was our Arthur there behind the mask!”

Death is a morbid subject even for most adults, but it is important that children also begin to have right concept of death. Each child is an old soul in a new body. As children grow up they witness death of their pets, of their grand-parents or some elderly relatives. It is important for a grieving person to grasp that death is not an end.

Death is a transition, and there is waking into another life. The pamphlet *What is Death?* suggests that death only brings an end to the body, but the “real person” lives on, and that when karma permits we will meet “him” or “her” again in some other life. Thus: “In spite of the fact that you have suffered and grown hopeless because of your recent loss, a new cycle of growth and understanding can be before you....What was it that you loved of this Being who has passed—the body? Or was it the soul that used it? You knew that individual through all his changes of body, of which there were so many. This in itself is proof that it was not the body but something else you loved. And is that Soul which you loved now dead? How can you say so—you who persist through every change of form! That which lives and thinks in you is the ‘Eternal Pilgrim,’ for him there is no beginning and no end, however many changes of body and of mind you use. Nothing is ever lost. This losing of yours is nothing but loss of physical contact for a little while....”

The two theosophical books, *Eternal Verities* and “*Because—*” *For The Children Who Ask Why*, which deal with philosophical and moral subjects, such as, Karma, Death and Rebirth, Dreams, Ghosts, God and Prayer, are written in easily understood manner, so as not to overwhelm the understanding of a child. In the book “*Because—*” *For the Children Who Ask Why*, the aunt of two children who had lost their mother explains that like petunia plants dying in the frost, the worn out body of their mother had died. The children are told by their aunt to try to be happy for their Mother, because kind death came to her tired body. Like putting away the clothes that have grown ragged and old, mother had put away her body and she will come back again in a newer, better body. Death is like sleep. During sleep, for a time, we leave our bodies behind us, and live in other bodies of our souls, and live in a world of dreams and dreamless sleep, untouched by sorrow. However, their Mother’s love for them did not die with her body, just as their own love for their mother did not die because her body was dead.

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

MISCELLANEOUS—II

5. *A true Brahmana goes scatheless though he have killed father and mother and two kings of the warrior caste and destroyed a kingdom with all its subjects. (294)*

6. *A true Brahmana goes scatheless though he have killed father and mother and two kings of the priestly caste and as the fifth an eminent man. (295)*

THESE verses can prove to be extremely dangerous if they are not understood correctly. How can Buddha who taught non-violence teach such a shocking thing as this? We find it shocking because we give them literal interpretation. The comment on these verses in the book points out that in the Introduction to *Texts from the Buddhist Canon*, translated by Samuel Beal we are told: “With respect to these verses, both Professor Max Muller and Professor Childers are inclined to regard them as showing that a truly holy man who commits such sins as those specified is nevertheless guiltless.” However, this is equally difficult for us to understand. We get its explanation in what Shri Krishna tells us in the *Gita*. Thus:

Those who have spiritual discrimination call him wise whose undertakings are all free from desire, for his actions are consumed in the fire of knowledge...although engaged in action he really doeth nothing....All the actions of such a man who is free from self-interest, who is devoted, with heart set upon spiritual knowledge and whose acts are sacrifices for the sake of the Supreme, are dissolved and left without effect on him. (*Gita*, IV)

“He whose nature is free from egotism and whose power of discrimination is not blinded does not slay though he killeth all these people, and is not bound by the bonds of action.” (*Gita*, XVIII)

Thus we see that the perfected one, the sage would never do anything that is contrary to the law. They are the embodiments of the law whose every action is in accordance with the law. Moreover,

every action of theirs is an offering to the Supreme. They do not have any self-interest in any of the actions and hence offer no focus where the result of their actions may return. This may be considered to be the metaphysical meaning of the verses. The comment also gives us the allegorical meaning which occurs in the third book of the *Lankavatara Sutra* in which Mahamati Bodhisattwa addressed Buddha and said, “According to the assertion of the Great Teacher, if a male or female disciple should commit either of the unpardonable sins, he or she, nevertheless, shall not be cast into hell. World-honoured One! how can this be, that such a disciple shall escape though guilty of such sins ?” To whom Buddha replied, “Mahamati! attend, and weigh my words well!

Is not Love (*Tanha*) which covets pleasure more and more, and so produces “birth”—is not this the mother (*mata*) of all? And is not “ignorance” (*avidya*) the father (*pita*) of all? To destroy these two, then, is to slay father and mother. And again, to cut off and destroy those ten “*kleshas*” which like the rat, or the secret poison, work invisibly, and to get rid of all the consequences of these faults (*i.e.*, to destroy all material associations), this is to wound a *Rahat*. And to cause offence and overthrow a church or assembly, what is this but to separate entirely the connection of the five *skandhas*? (“five aggregates,” which is the same word as that used above for the “Church”). And again, to draw the blood of a Buddha, what is this but to wound and get rid of the sevenfold body by the three methods of escape. . . . Thus it is, Mahamati, the holy male or female disciple may slay father and mother, wound a *Rahat*, overthrow the assembly, draw the blood of Buddha, and yet escape the punishment of the lowest hell (*avichi*.)” And in order to explain and enforce this more fully, the World-honoured One added the following stanzas:

“Lust,” or carnal desire, this is the Mother,
 “Ignorance,” this is the Father,

The highest point of knowledge, this is Buddha,
 All the “*Kleshas*,” these are the *Rahats*,
 The five *Skandhas*, these are the Priests,
 To commit the five unpardonable sins
 Is to destroy these five
 And yet not suffer the pains of hell.”

7. *The disciples of Gotama who are truly awake always think, by day and by night, of the Buddha. (296)*

8. *The disciples of Gotama who are truly awake always think, by day and by night, of the Dhamma. (297)*

These verses are beautifully explained in the magazine *Theosophy* for April 1957. We are told that those who were disciples of Gotama, because *their* teacher had no desire to become an idol or an object of reverence, were directed to think about the *nature* of a Buddha rather than to worship one manifestation of wisdom and saintliness—in other words, to think of the Buddhas, as “the Buddha” potential in every striving soul. And here we come to a crucial distinction between Christian theological emphasis and the teachings of Gotama—there is no Buddhist parallel to the orthodox Christian insistence upon the uniqueness of Christ. In Buddhism the natural transition from meditation upon the nature of the “Buddha” is meditation on those laws of life which every Buddha must understand in order to attain his high state. The “*Dhamma*,” or Path of the Law, is the same for every man, and a great teacher simply points out a way one may follow to discover that Path.

(*To be concluded*)

A MAN’S inability to moderate and control his passions I call servitude. Most people seem to believe that they are free just in so far as they may obey their lusts.

—SPINOZA

NUMBERS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

III

THE NUMBER *seven* was considered sacred by all the cultured nations of the East and West from ancient times. The planets were numbered as seven, which were transformed, in the course of time, into seven deities. The ancients mention only seven planets—Sun, Moon, Mars, Venus, Mercury, Saturn and Jupiter, of which Sun and Moon are substitutes for two hidden and sacred planets—because these alone are principal or *primary* planets considered to be sacred, while the remaining must be regarded as *planetoids* or *secondary* planets, writes H.P.B. They are primitive or primordial houses of seven *logoi*, *i.e.*, Regents or presiding deities.

The number seven is the most sacred of all. Everything of importance was calculated by and fitted into this number by the Aryan philosophers—ideas as well as localities, writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 407). Thus, they have *Sapta-Loka*, the seven superior, celestial abodes or worlds, and seven inferior regions or *talas*, which are states of consciousness more than actual physical localities. They have the *seven* sages—the *Sapta-Rishis*, which represent seven races of humanity. They mention the *Sapta-Dwipas*—the *seven* holy islands, *viz.*, Jambu, Plaksha, Salmalia, Kusa, Krauncha, Saka and Pushkara. Primarily, these seven *dwipas* must be regarded as referring to sevenfold earth, or earth planetary chain with its seven globes. Jambu-*dwipa* refers to our globe or present earth, while six others refer to six other globes. These seven *dwipas* are said to have been surrounded by seven oceans, namely, *Lavana* or sea of salt-water, *Sura* or ocean of wine, *Dadhi* or ocean of curds, *Dugdha* or ocean of milk, *Jala* or ocean of pure water, *Sarpi* or ocean of clarified butter and *Ikshu* or ocean of Sugarcane juice. Ocean of milk and curds is only metaphorical description of Milky Way and Nebulae, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 320-21). The names of seven *dwipas* may well refer to the dry lands covering the whole face of the earth during the period of a particular human race. These may also refer to localities

which after cataclysm will enter into the formation of new *universal* “continents,” peninsulas or *dwipas*. Each continent may be regarded as smaller or greater region of dry land surrounded by water. For instance, two *dwipas*, Saka and Pushkara do not yet exist, but in their formation will enter the lands pertaining to America, Africa, Central Asia, with the Gobi region (*S.D.*, I, 404 and fn.). Saka and Pushkara seem to refer to future continents.

The people of India, Arabia, Syria and Egypt observed weeks of seven days, which the Romans later borrowed from these countries. The Jews reckoned their days by number, as day the first (*yom ahad*); day the second (*yom sheni*), and so on. The seventh day was called *yom shaba*. When Moses mentions that the Lord God rested on the seventh day or Sabbath after creating the world for six days, it was a *blind* to hide the true meaning. H.P.B. points out that the Hebrew word SHABA has several meanings. It may be translated as *old age*, as well as rest. *Sab* also means *gray-headed*, and hence, *Saba-day* was the day on which the gray-headed men or “aged fathers” of a tribe were in the habit of assembling for councils or sacrifices. We may compare it to lunar festivals in India where meetings are known to have been held on every seventh day. Moreover, lunar month can be divided into four quarters of seven days each, and with every new quarter of the moon there are changes in the atmosphere, as also all throughout the universe. Hence, on the seventh day, which is the most powerful of the prismatic days, the Adepts of the “Secret Sciences” meet, as they met thousands of years ago, to become the agents of the occult powers of nature, and commune with the invisible worlds. This explains the real reason of the significance attached to the seventh day of the week. In fact, the *Sabbath day* was not observed as the day of rest by the early Christians. They said that the elements are never idle and keep no Sabbath. If one is guilty of fraud, let him reform; if one is an adulterer, let him repent, *and then he will have kept the kind of Sabbath truly pleasing to God.* (*Isis*, II, 418-19)

The creation of the world in six days by God mentioned in

Genesis should not be taken literally. In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 446-47), while explaining the *seven creations* of *Vishnu Purana*, H.P.B. mentions that in the Hindu philosophy there are seven *primary* “creations” which pertain to the forces *self-evolving* from the one *causeless* FORCE; seven *secondary* “creations” refer to the manifested universe emanating from the already differentiated divine elements. These seven creations represent seven periods of evolution. Thus, in the Hindu philosophy, when the active Creator has produced the world of noumena, the Universe remains unaltered for a Day of Brahma, a period of 4,320,000,000 years. This is the *seventh* passive period or the “Sabbath day” of Eastern philosophy, that follows the six periods of active evolution.

H.P.B. points out that number seven plays an important role even in the department of physiology. Physicians are at utter loss to explain the septenary cycle observed in organisms. It has been observed that birth, growth, maturity, vital functions, change, diseases, decay and death, of insects, reptiles, fishes, birds, mammals, and even men, are controlled by a law of completion in *weeks* or *seven days*, writes H. Grattan Guinness, in his work, *The Approaching End of the Age*. Dr. Laycock mentioned in *Lancet* of 1842-43, that in animals, changes occur every *three and a half, seven, fourteen, twenty-one or twenty-eight days*, or at some definite number of weeks,” or septenary cycles. He says that whatever type of fever may be, there will be a paroxysm on the seventh day, and the fourteenth day will be remarkable as the day of amendment, *i.e.*, either cure or death would take place. Dr. Stratton states as a physiological and pathological fact, that “in health the human pulse is more frequent *in the morning than in the evening for six days out of seven*; and that on the *seventh day it is slower*” (*S.D.*, II, 622-23 fn.). In his “Descent of Man,” Darwin mentions that it is a mysterious fact that in the higher and now terrestrial Vertebrata many normal and abnormal processes involve a duration of one or more weeks, such as, gestation of mammals or duration of fevers, etc. The eggs of the pigeon are hatched in two weeks (or 14 days); those of the

fowl in three weeks; those of the duck in four weeks; those of goose in five weeks, and those of the ostrich in seven weeks. (*S.D.*, II, 595)

Mr. Judge explains in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that microbes, bacilli and bacteria are not the ultimate units of life, but they in turn are made of still more minute “lives.” Each cell is made up of these infinitesimal “lives.” These lives are of two classes: *destroyers* and *preservers*, and in the struggle between them the destroyers win and thus it is life that kills. In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 262-63 fn.) H.P.B. mentions that the physical body of man undergoes a complete change of structure every seven years, and its destruction and preservation are due to the alternate function of these lives, as “destroyers” and “builders.” During the first half of a man’s life (the first five periods of seven years each) the “lives” are indirectly engaged in the process of building up man’s material body. After this period is passed the age of retrogression commences, and, the work of destruction and decrease commences. From the esoteric standpoint the 70 years of man’s life, as pointed out in *Theosophy*, Vol. XIII, have great significance. The seventy-year period can be divided into ten periods of seven years each. The first five of these cover the cycle of growth: (1) The birth of the body. (2) The Ego assumes charge of the body at the age of seven. Probably that is why the child is not held responsible for any crime till he is *seven*. (3) At 14, there is adolescence, involving a change in the *kamic* (desire) principle. (4) At 21 there is a Manasic change when the youth attains manhood and should attain discrimination. (5) At 28, there is, or should be, a spiritual unfoldment through Buddhist illumination. In the five further seven-year cycles there is maturity and cyclic decline. From 35 to 42 spirituality should further unfold; from 42 to 49 there should be the maturing of the corresponding manasic period of 21 to 28, and so on; bringing second childhood from 63 to 70—a state of innocence but not of ignorance.

The ancients divided the human frame into *seven* parts; the head, the chest, the stomach, two hands and two feet; and man’s life was

divided into *seven* periods. A baby begins teething in the *seventh* month; a child begins to sit after fourteen months (2×7); begins to walk after *twenty-one* months (3×7); to speak after *twenty-eight* months (4×7); leaves off sucking after *thirty-five* (5×7); at *fourteen* years (2×7) he begins to finally form himself; at *twenty-one* (3×7) he ceases growing.

Even in chemistry we find that chemical elements are ruled by the law of periodicity governed by number seven. If chemical elements are arranged in groups according to their atomic weights, as in Mendeleef's table, it is found that first, second, third, etc. elements bear close analogy in *all* their properties with the corresponding members of the next period or series. It was also observed that *in each period* (or series) the general properties of these elements vary one from the other, with approximate regularity, until we reach the seventh member of that period, whose properties are found to be in striking contrast with the first element of the same period, as well as with the first element of the next period. For instance, Chlorine, the seventh member of Mendeleef's third period contrasts sharply with both sodium, which is the first element of the same period, and with potassium, which is the first member of the next period. However, sodium and potassium being the first members of two different series, are closely analogous. Thus, given the contrast in properties between the first and the last elements of each series, we may expect the *fourth* element in a series—Silicon for example—to show mean variation in properties, and constitute a *transition-element*. H.P.B. points out that this is the law in *Occult Sciences*. In the septenary chain of globes or septenary constitution of man, animal, plant or mineral atom, the fourth and seventh members, always play a distinct part in the septenary system. Everything in the universe, from great to small, in its physical and spiritual evolution proceeds cyclically and septennially, showing its seventh and fourth member behaving in the same way as shown in the periodic table. (*S.D.*, I, 585-86 fn.)

To attempt to cite all the things included in this mystical number

would require a library, writes H.P.B. Not only does number seven govern periodicity of the phenomena of life, but even the world of sound and colour. Both colour and sound are rates of vibrations. There is a correspondence between seven colours of the spectrum and seven notes on the musical scale. Each colour of each octave corresponds to same colour of another octave. The Law of correspondence is a very powerful law. Man is sevenfold. Every principle in man is correlated to a plane of matter and consciousness, as also, to a planet and a race. Also, human principles are correlated to the sevenfold occult forces on every plane. The occult forces on higher planes have tremendous occult power, which if misused could cause incalculable harm to humanity. Hence, the knowledge of the sevenfold nature of earth and seven races of humanity was withdrawn during the early centuries of Christian era, because that would have provided the clue to the sevenfold nature of man, and during that period, when people believed in occultism but were morally degraded, there was a possibility of misuse of the occult powers leading to sorcery of worst description, writes H.P.B. in the *Secret Doctrine*.

The number *seven* consists of a union between the number *three*, which is the symbol of the divine triad—in man and cosmos—and of *four*, which is the symbol of the cosmic forces or elements. Hence, number seven symbolizes the union of the Deity with the Universe. This Pythagorean idea was applied by the Christians, by using the number seven in the symbolism of their sacred architecture, such as, the famous Cathedral of Cologne, writes H.P.B. “We can grasp seven easily enough in lower things, such as mathematics, the days of the week, and so on, but I doubt if the undeveloped man can, with this unregenerated mind, grasp *seven* when applied to the unknown quantities of the higher nature,” writes Mr. Judge. For instance, it is difficult to grasp that there are seven states of matter and consciousness, and that our Ego uses seven different sets of senses to think, act and feel on these seven planes of consciousness.

(*To be continued*)

PRACTICAL CHARITY

CHARITY is defined as the “the voluntary giving of help, typically money, to those in need.” The concept of charity is not new. All religions inculcate this virtue and its importance, and it is thus an integral part of many cultures and traditions. *Zakaat*, or alms-giving, is one of the five pillars of Islam. Interestingly, the word means “that which purifies.” It is an important aspect of Buddhist and Christian religions, too.

Does money alone hold the key to the problem of human misery? Many philanthropists, who have dedicated their lives in the service of humanity, have discovered for themselves that it is scarcely the case. A philanthropist who has worked for decades on livelihood betterment and revival of traditional water management systems in Rajasthan, when asked about his views on poverty, remarked that “poverty has scarcely anything to do with deficit of money, but is an attitude of mind—a mind which has lost self-reliance, and is dependent on others, is poor indeed!” A study of the results of many social interventions shows us that either they did not succeed in bettering the conditions, or succeeded partly but introduced new complexities.

A vital aspect of any human endeavour, including charity, is the *motive* for action. The *Gita* has this standard: “Gifts given out of place and season and to unworthy persons, without proper attention and scornfully” are of the nature of darkness, and those “given with the expectation of a return from the beneficiary or with a view to spiritual benefit flowing therefrom or with reluctance” is bad and untrue, whereas, only those gifts which are “bestowed at the proper time to the proper person, and by men who are not desirous of a return,” are good and true. With this as the standard, let us enquire of what nature our donations and charities are. The Buddhist text *Anguttara Nikaya* enumerates eight motives behind helping others: (1) One gives with annoyance, or as a way of offending the recipient, or with the idea of insulting him. (2) Fear also can motivate a person

to make an offering. (3) One gives in return for a favour done to oneself in the past. (4) One also may give with the hope of getting a similar favour for oneself in the future. (5) One gives because giving is considered good. (6) “I cook, they do not cook. It is not proper for me who cooks not to give to those who do not cook.” Some give urged by such altruistic motives. (7) Some give alms to gain a good reputation. (8) Still others give alms to adorn and beautify the mind. Acts of charity will not bear good fruit if the underlying motive has any of the unwholesome traits. Even deeds done with altruistic impulses, if not guided by wisdom, often do much harm.

All popular philanthropic efforts rightly aim at finding the source of social iniquities and misery, but make the mistake of assuming them to be the outcome of external circumstances. All efforts are made to mitigate them. The deep rooted moral causes and the laws governing the evolution of human soul are not understood, and therefore, are completely overlooked. What is necessary is a *Sattvic* perspective, which “perceives in all nature one single principle, indivisible and incorruptible, not separate in the separate objects seen.”

It is in this unitary, inclusive view of the whole of man and the universe that one can ever get a glimpse into the true cause of human afflictions and their permanent remedy. At present, man is viewed as merely a correlation of chemical and physical forces, and as a result, all efforts are directed towards amelioration of physical conditions and manipulation of external factors. Here we may recollect the three levels of perversions of mind (*chitta*), which is the result of wrong view of life, mentioned by the Buddha in his *Vipallasa Sutta*. First and the deepest level of perversion is “Perversion of Perspective” (*Dhitti Vipallasa*). Once our perspective on the nature of man and the world, their relation and purpose, is distorted, it leads to thinking along wrong lines (*Chitta Vipallasa*). Thinking wrongly naturally leads to its consequence—wrong actions due to distortion of senses (*Sanna Vipallasa*).

Man is not just a physical being. The consciousness in us, which

is nameless and formless, is our real identity. Each one of us is a spark of the same divine essence. If our true nature is divine, then why don't we know it? What stops us from realizing the complete Goodness within each one of us? Yunus Emre, the sufi poet of thirteenth century answers thus: "Only the word 'I' divides me from God." Elsewhere, he says:

Don't boast of reading, mastering science
Or of all your prayers and obeisance.
If you don't identify Man and God,
All your learning is of no use at all.

The first implication of this idea is that Universal Brotherhood is a fact in nature and that we are all connected. It means that we affect each other, through our thoughts and actions, consciously or otherwise. Scientists observe the interconnectedness of physical, social and economic conditions. What they are yet to learn is the mental, moral and spiritual interconnectedness, which was so well understood by the ancients. Understanding the responsibility that we hold towards other lives, and of our own, is the first step in spiritual progress and happiness. If this obligation towards others, especially those who are less fortunate than ourselves—whether in physical, mental or moral conditions—is neglected, then our collective life becomes diseased, analogous to cancerous growth in human body. Like a cancer cell which grows abnormally, neglecting its obligation towards the health of the whole, and neglecting its "duty" towards other cells and the organs, our selfish life becomes a cancer in the society. The worthiness of the life of a person is proportional to the degree of goodness, and his self-transcending and sacrificial labour.

Buddhist texts illustrate interdependence and connectedness by using the metaphor of *Indra's net*. Francis Cook describes this wondrous net, this way: "Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely

in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each 'eye' of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number...If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring." Here we see the reason why true spiritual teachers insist on individual transformation, since that alone is the lever for societal transformation.

A correct idea of charity is way beyond mere financial help, though it may include the latter, too, when carried out with wisdom and spiritual insight. Emotional and blind response to suffering only deals with the effects of the problem, and not the cause. "It takes a very wise man to do good works without danger of doing incalculable harm," teaches H.P.B. One who is moved by pity and compassion towards suffering fellow-beings must first enquire into the root cause of suffering. Is poverty the root of all problems? Are physical conditions the cause of misery? The intricate chain of causes set up in the past, have resulted in the present condition. If suffering is our lot today, it is the result of the causes sown by us in the past, and we must learn to regard it as our best teacher. Many who have gone through adversities in life say that it strengthened their character and developed their discrimination.

This does not imply we should not lend a helping hand to those poorer and weaker brothers. The very fact of our interdependent existence makes it our bounden duty to be of help to all around us. Besides monetary or material help, charity implies charitable attitude towards others, *especially* towards those who may be inimical to us. It is comparatively easy to give money to the poor or to render service to those who are affected by natural disasters. But it is difficult to forgive those who offend us, or to not be revengeful towards those who may stab us in the back, and yet, that is what constitutes

practical charity, and what is more, it is our duty to be so charitable. We need not go in search of poor to be charitable. Our station in life is wisely chosen for us. The best we can do is to first develop a feeling of kindness, love and non-revengefulness towards our family members, our colleagues, and the immediate society around us. It is unwise to neglect our obligations towards them and rush to ameliorate the conditions of those far away.

To help mankind we must understand the root cause of misery. Physical and mental conditions are the effects of *moral* and spiritual causes. It is the corruption that is inside that manifests outside. The latter is but the mirror and outcome of the former. In the mystical book, *The Dream of Ravan*, Sage Ananta is made to say this to King Ravan:

Oh tragic man! whence is all this death in thy life? Alas! it is because an inward moral death reigns throughout all, that it must have this outward manifestation also. Men's souls are dead when they are born: this life is the autopsy, and the disease is made manifest to all. One died mad of pride; one phrenetic with anger; one leprous with sensuality; one had the fever of ambition; one suffered from the insatiable craving of greed; one from the malignant venom of revenge; one from the jaundice of jealousy; one from the eating cancer of envy; one from a surfeit of self-love; one from the paralysis of apathy. Many were the diseases, but death into this world the common result of all.

Yes, death is triumphant here—death, physical and moral. The dead bring forth the dead; the dead bear the dead to the funeral pyre; the dead walk about the streets and greet each other, and bargain, and buy and sell, and marry, and build—and know not all the time that they are but ghosts and phantasms! That land of silence and shadows; of desolation and ruins; of sorrow and death, in which thy soul walked in the vision, oh Titan! is the WORLD in which thy dead body now walks waking. Renounce and annihilate it, oh king! by asceticism and divine gnosis, and thus return

to real life. (pp. 229-30)

Gnosis, or spiritual knowledge is the key to end human misery. When we seek outside for the cause and cure of suffering, either we fail in our attempt or at best succeed in bringing temporary relief. After many such recurrent bitter experiences, we are compelled to seek for a permanent solution. This is when one becomes a *Jignasu*—a seeker of spiritual wisdom. This is one of the purposes of pain and sorrow—to awaken the human soul from its animal proclivities, to its divine possibilities. Each one of us is learning this lesson through the school of life.

Buddha said that “of all gifts, the gift of *Dhamma* is the highest.” He says further, “Let each man first establish himself in the way he should go and then let him teach others. Thus, the wise man will not suffer.” This is at the crux of all reforms. Self-transformation is the key. We cannot help others when we ourselves are spiritually poor. In order to help others wisely, without harm, one needs spiritual insight. A truly philanthropic person first establishes himself in spiritual knowledge, before involving himself in “practical” work, since he sees the importance of the former, without which the latter may not bring the desired results.

Once a man understands the scientific basis of non-separateness of all beings, demonstrated by ancient teachings, he cannot help but sacrifice himself for the good of others. Universal love and charity for all mankind, without distinction of race, colour, caste or creed, is the first and spontaneous impulse which follows acquisition of wisdom. He knows that by the very law of interconnectedness, transforming himself will gradually transform others around him.

THE BEST way to know God is to love many things.

—VINCENT VAN GOGH

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

Question: What is Divine Will? Can we do anything on our own without sanction from the Divine? At what spiritual level our “personal will” becomes Divine Will?

Answer: Will is the colourless force—force of spirit in action. Will is a spiritual power present in every portion of the Universe. We see the action of will in automatic activities of the body, such as, digestion, blood circulation, in the movement of our limbs, etc. In *human beings*, will is most developed and powerful. Man alone can give conscious impulse to the force of will.

We say, “Behind Will stands Desire.” Desire is the mover of the Will. At the cosmic level, *divine desire* is the same as *divine will*. It is *Kamadeva* or Eros, which is described as an all-embracing desire for universal good. It is the first feeling of infinite and tender mercy that arose in the consciousness of creative ONE FORCE, for all that lives and feels, needs help and kindness. It is the divine desire to create happiness and love. Divine Will, we might say, works in terms of infallible and impartial Law of Justice.

We experience will at two levels. There is the *personal will*, displayed markedly by a strong-willed or stubborn person. What we consider a strong-willed person is the one with strong and intense desires, which move the will into action for bringing about the wished for personal ends. Will is the divine power of the Spirit within—illimitable and exhaustless. We have limited that power by entertaining small, mean and selfish desires. Moreover, the ideas give the direction to the power of will, but what we lack are universal ideas.

Choice and free will go together. Divine Will expresses the desire

for complete harmony, and is also described as *general will of nature*. Only when mind is free from passions and lower desires, it becomes an organ of free will in us. It is only at the level of the will that *karma* begins. Evil may arise in our mind but only when “will” says “yes” to it that we create *karma*. Man has a free will to act so as to maintain or break the harmony in nature. When we are selfish and self-centred we act against the general will of nature. A Black Magician is someone who has used his free will to gain knowledge and powers, but uses them selfishly, thus going against the divine will. An Adept has equal knowledge and power as the black magician but he works in harmony with nature. Mr. Judge mentions in *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* that when fight ensues between the black magicians and Adepts, the latter have the assistance of the great general will of nature, and hence it is inevitable that good should always triumph.

Divine Will or Spiritual Will comes into play, when we stop asserting our personal will. We can begin by denying ourselves small whims and fancies during the day. Some people develop will power through various Yoga practices. But development of *Spiritual Will* or *perfected human will* requires cultivation of unselfishness and readiness to be assisted, guided and instructed by our divine nature. In other words, spiritual will could be developed only when we have learnt to drink, to the last bitter dregs, what the cup of life holds for us, without a murmur, and realize that the adverse and painful circumstances are for our experience and discipline. When the attitude is, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,” and when the lower, personal nature is purified so that it is brought closer to the divine nature, then our prayer becomes *Will prayer*. It seems that for a brief space of time the mind is unfettered and becomes one with the divine, and we find our thoughts and desires being translated into action.

At Cosmic level there is no difference between desire and will. That is what happens for the spiritually advanced person, who no longer has to control his desire, but his desire flows harmoniously

in the direction of his will. For this to happen, Mr. Judge suggests that we must gradually purify our desires and at the same time make our “will” absolute ruler. A time must come when our whole nature must be intent on achieving union with the divine in us. Then “will” becomes free from the domination of desire.

Question: Animals are able to foresee a natural disaster or calamity, and they move themselves to safer places, but man does not have this faculty. What is nature’s secret in providing animals this “sixth sense” and depriving man of it?

Answer: Whenever there is a natural disaster like tsunami or earthquake, it has been observed that birds and animals move away to safer places, so that not a single animal carcass is found at the end of the natural disaster. Many scientists say that animals have a sixth sense that alerts them to natural danger. It is claimed that animals can sense impending danger by detecting subtler or abrupt shifts in the environment. Earthquakes tend to bring about change in vibrations on both land and water, while storms cause electromagnetic changes in the atmosphere. Animals with acute sense of smell and hearing are able to sense the impending danger.

Theosophy describes this sixth sense in animals as instinct. Animal instinct is a form of psychic clairvoyance. There is a mysterious sympathy between all things in nature. Animals being psychically more sensitive than humans, it is only natural that they should sense the impending quake in advance and move to a safer place. We are told that corresponding to astral body in man there is astral light, a kind of universal photographic plate, which is a storehouse of not only past events but also of events to come—those events for which the causes are sufficiently well marked and made. Animals are able to perceive the same with their clairvoyant faculty. Paracelsus wrote that certain animals have instinct which enables them to become aware of certain other future events besides change in weather or impending natural disasters. “The peculiar cry of a peacock or the unusual howling of a dog indicates the approach of a death in the house to which they are attached, for

every being is a product of the universal principle of life, and each contains the light of Nature.”

We may wonder why it is that animals have keener instincts than man, because it is not that we have lost our instinct completely. With the development of reason, our instincts are mostly in terms of automatic reflexes. Many of our physiological activities have become instinctive or automatic. Animals act from automatic or instinctual impulses, whereas man can use reason. We reason about both our instinct and our intuition. If we start with wrong premises we are bound to come to wrong conclusions, however faultless the reasoning. H.P.B. tells us that in man, reason developed at the expense of instinct. However, besides reason, man has the voice of conscience telling him to “do this” or “do not do that.” Some of us have a gut feeling or hunch as to the right course of action, even though we are not able to explain why. We just *know*. If there is genuine and persistent love of purity and integrity, the frequent promptings one gets are of a still higher nature akin to the “still small voice” of *intuition* which directs one to a definite action or an idea, and which must be answered with a positive response in order to keep alive this higher faculty of perception. The latter is available to a student-aspirant who subordinates his personal needs to the general good and reflects on universal ethics.

Intuition is considered in Theosophy as “Divine Conscience,” or “divine instinct.” The human principle of *Manas*, when freed from *Kama* or lower desires, turns toward the still more luminous faculty of *Buddhi* for illumination, and becomes increasingly receptive. It manifests as intuitive “flashes,” and at times as a direct vision. Often, pure-hearted individuals are able to foresee and foretell a future event. Humanity as a whole had the faculty of intuition in the distant past but due to moral degradation we lost the third eye or spiritual intuition. Through altruism and devotion we may get back the “deva-sight” (spiritual clairvoyance) and “deva-hearing” (spiritual clairaudience), which was ours in former births.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Recently, a 30-year-old, first-time mother, gave birth to a healthy boy along with a headless baby, at a hospital in Mumbai, India. The malformed foetus, known in medical terms as acardia monster baby, was still-born. The incidence of acardia that occurs mainly in twins, is one per 40,000 live births. Dr. Ambekar said the baby only had an abdomen and no head, neck or face. “It had one limb as well as fingers emerging directly from the abdomen,” she said. Acardia is a rare malformation that occurs mainly in monozygous twins who develop from a single egg. The condition is characterized by the absence of a functioning heart. (*The Times of India*, February 15, 2013)

In *Isis Unveiled* Madame Blavatsky gives examples of infants born with missing limbs—cases of imagination of mother affecting the child in womb. In one case, a woman witnessed the beheading and went into premature labour, giving birth to a headless child. Physiologists have recorded such incidences. While some have described them as ‘curious-coincidences,’ only a few have been honest enough to admit their ignorance. Many others have said: “*There is no reason to believe that imagination of mother can have any influence in the formation of these monsters; besides, productions of this kind are daily observed in the offspring of other animals and even in plants.*” (*Isis*, I, 387)

Writing in 1877 in *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.B. points out that in scientific opinion most varieties of monstrosity may be accounted for on the theory of *arrest* and *retardation* of development of the foetus. The causes of monstrosities could be traced to early stages of embryonic life. According to another view the malformations result from a deficiency or abnormal condition in the generative matter from which the foetus is developed. It is maintained that the generative matter represents in its composition every tissue, structure and form, and that there may be such a transmission of *acquired* structural peculiarities as would make the generative matter incapable of

producing a healthy and equally-developed offspring. H.P.B. points out that we might, perhaps, admit that in defective generative matter, the head of the embryo might not be represented, or any other part of the body be deficient; but, it hardly seems as if the generative matter should carry one, two or more representatives of a single member, such as, two or more heads or hands or abdomens, etc. If the generative matter has hereditary taint then *all* the resulting progeny should be equally monstrous, which is not the case, as in many cases the mother gave birth to a number of healthy children before the monster child was born, and all the children being progeny of one father. (*Isis*, I, 390 and 392)

Occult Science, on the other hand, shows that there are abundant proofs that the violent maternal emotions are often reflected in tangible, visible and permanent disfigurement of the child. Occult Science explains that pregnant women are physically and mentally in a highly impressible state, and become particularly receptive to influences of the astral light, which assists them in the formation of the child and constantly presents to them the images of the forms with which it is filled. The creative faculty of imagination can fashion the coming child into whatever form she likes. The image of the object, making strong impression on the mother’s mind, is instantly projected into the astral light. Her magnetic emanations then attract and unite themselves with the descending current which bears the image upon it. It rebounds, and re-percussing more or less violently, impresses itself upon the foetus. (*Isis*, I, 395)

Our physical body is built on a design body called astral body, which is the model for the physical body. The astral body is made up of matter of very fine texture, with great tensile strength and it is electromagnetic in nature. The astral body of the child in the womb is connected with mother’s imagination. If the mother vividly imagines that her child would be born without a leg, then her strong imagination would act on the astral leg of the developing baby in her womb, so as to cut off or shrivel it up.

We are given examples from the animal kingdom where the

power of imagination can produce monstrous deformities. There is the case of a tame dove that was frightened daily by a parrot, and in her next brood of young there were two squabs with parrots' heads, and with green feathers. Animal breeders have affirmed that by exciting the imagination of the mother, the external appearance of the offspring can be largely controlled. (*Isis*, I, 397-98)

Love lies in the eyes of the beholder. Are we able to see the love that exists in the world? Finding love is our responsibility. The deepest yearning of human life is to love and be loved. At the end of the day we want to come home to someone who loves us and someone we can love—it could be a spouse, a parent, a friend, a cat or a plant, writes Megha Bajaj, a spiritual seeker. She asked herself, “why do we find ourselves without love? Has the world really become a bad place to live in?” As she asked these questions, that day she saw, while walking down the lane, an old lady lending her hand and helping an even older looking man to walk, a boy with his puppy and a grandfather with his granddaughter. Somehow, no matter where she looked all she could see was love, or at least a touch of warmth and compassion. The lesson she learnt was that each of us finds exactly what we are looking for. A person who believes that the world is a very miserable place to live in, all he finds is misery. For a policeman, everyone is a potential criminal. For a teacher, everyone is a potential student. For some of us life is hell and for some others it is pure heaven, and often, it has nothing to do with the situation but the way we look at the situation. “My endeavour, from now on, will be to see love—to find love—wherever I look,” writes Bajaj. (*Life Positive*, February 2013)

“Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder,” seems to apply even to one's perception of good and evil, happiness and sorrow. All depends upon our attitude of mind. Our perceptions are coloured by our conceptions. Also, there is the story of a man who was leaving his

village to settle in another village. On the outskirts of this new village he met a saintly person. On inquiring with him as to whether the people of that village were good, the saint asked him whether the people in the village he left were good. When the man said that they were good, the sage said that *then* he will find the people of this new village also good! We find similar incident in the *Mahabharata*. Yudhisthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, a person of great integrity and honesty, could not find a single *bad* person in the congregation of people while, Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, a person of meanest character, could not find a single *good* person in the same congregation. It shows that as a person is, the world appears to him to be like himself. However, it also shows extremes in perception. It is good to be honest and upright and try to see good in others, but one must also be able to distinguish between good and bad. Shri Krishna had that discernment, which both Duryodhana and Yudhisthira lacked. We ought to be able to see evil as evil and good as good.

Could human language have evolved from birds' singing? Nearly 142 years ago, Charles Darwin suggested that sounds uttered by birds offer the nearest analogy to language. Researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have now found that bird songs closely resemble human speech. Researchers believe that human language is a grafting of two communication forms found in animal kingdom: first the elaborate songs of birds, and second the information-bearing types of expression seen in diversity of other animals. Shigeru Miyagawa, a professor of linguistics in MIT's department of Linguistics and Philosophy suggests that it is this adventitious combination that triggered human language. In his previous work Miyagawa has suggested that there are two layers in all human languages: an “expression” layer, which involves

changeable organization of sentences, and a “lexical” layer, which related to the core content of a sentence. The new paper “The Emergence of Hierarchical Structure in Human language” was co-written by Miyagawa, Berwick and Kazuo Okanoya, a biopsychologist at the University of Tokyo, who is an expert on animal communication, and it was published in the journal *Frontiers of Psychology*. These authors say that birdsong closely resembles the expression layer of human sentences, while the communicative waggles of the bees, or the short, audible messages of primates, are more like the lexical layer. At some point between 50,000 and 80,000 years ago, humans may have merged these two types of expressions into a uniquely sophisticated form of language. (*The Times of India*, February 23, 2013)

The difference between “expression” layer and “lexical” layer has been explained by means of a simple sentence, such as, “John saw a car.” We can create variations of this sentence by rearranging the elements; ask questions and add complexity. For instance, we can rearrange the sentence as “When did John see a car?” In this sentence the “lexical” layer remains the same, because it involves the same core elements: the subject “John,” the verb “to see,” and the object, “car.” A Nightingale can recite from 100 to 200 melodies. By contrast other types of animals have bare-bone modes of expression without the same melodic capacity. Humans fruitfully combine both these systems, so that we can communicate essential information, like bees and primates, but also like birds we have melodic capacity and an ability to recombine parts of our uttered language.

Language is a collection of sounds. Languages have their “cyclic evolution, their childhood, purity, growth, fall into matter, admixture with other languages, maturity, decay and finally death” (*S.D.*, II, 199). In a footnote on the same page H.P.B. states that “*Language* is certainly coeval with reason.” The whole of human race was at one time of one language, taught to it by Divine Instructors.

H.P.B. tells us that “it is almost certain that the great linguistic

families pass through three stages” (*S.D.*, II, 662). In the first stage, all words are roots and merely placed in juxtaposition, creating what are called radical languages. In the next stage, one root defines another and becomes what is called a “determinative element.” This is the stage of agglutinative languages. Finally, this determinative element unites into a whole with the formative element, and we have inflected speech. This agrees with the scientific explanation of the origin of language, but science has no idea where the original roots come from. The early mankind (first three races) did not possess articulate speech. Some scientists assert that “human speech was developed from a few simple sounds,” but that is not true. Professor Max Muller contended that no plausible explanation has been given as to how the “roots” of language came into existence. Theosophy asserts that “a *human* brain is necessary for *human* speech.” When we compare the brain of an ape with that of man we find that a great gulf separates the two. It has been observed that the brain of the largest ape, the gorilla, measures only about 30.51 cubic inches; the average brain even of the Australian natives—one of the least developed races, measures about 99.35 cubic inches. Thus, the brain-size of the ape is not even half the size of the brain of the new-born child. (*S.D.*, II, 661)

To understand the development of language we must take into consideration the development of speech in various races of man. The First Race was speechless. The Second Root Race communicated by chant-like sounds composed of vowels only. During the second half of the Third Root Race, after the sexes had separated and mind was awakened, speech developed. This speech, at first, was a kind of language which was slight improvement on the various sounds in nature. It was monosyllabic, *i.e.*, consisted of vowels mixed with consonants. The Fourth Root Race developed what is known as agglutinative language, *i.e.*, consisting of loosely connected words. In the Fifth Root Race our modern languages were developed.

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