

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

REPENTANCE AND KARMA	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	9
IDEAS AND WORDS	
REMEMBERING W. Q. JUDGE	14
EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS	15
MASTERS AND CHELASHIP—I	
THE SCIENCE OF SACRIFICE	19
THE MOON IN OCCULT PHILOSOPHY—I	24
SAINT TUKARAM—LIFE AND TEACHINGS—III	28
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	32

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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REPENTANCE AND KARMA

REPENTANCE is the activity of reviewing one's actions, and typically, requires an admission of guilt for committing a wrong or for omitting to do the right thing. It also involves making a promise or resolve to not repeat the offense, to make restitution for the wrong, wherever possible, or to reverse in some way the harmful effects of the wrong. In the religious context, it often involves an act of confession to God or to a spiritual elder, such as a monk or a priest. In almost every religion there is the concept of expiation of sins. In *Manusmriti*, repentance or *Anutapa* is considered to be an important form of expiation, whereby the person loathes the evil he did, and repeats to himself that he will never do it again. Such acknowledging of an unjust act is regarded as a step towards inner reformation. Some of these religious scriptures recommend remorse and repentance to be accompanied with austerity and reflection, as well as study to gain knowledge for redemption, so as to return back to righteous living. Jainas perform *Pratikraman*, or “returning from violation,” a ritual during which they repent for their sins and unwholesome activities committed, knowingly or unknowingly, during their daily life, through thought, speech or action. Daily performance of *Pratikraman* helps one to avoid committing the same sins in the future, and thus reduce karmic baggage.

“We are all human, and thus weak and sinful,” says Mr. Judge. But we need not remain so. When we sin, we temporarily move

away from our divine nature. But whenever we are ready to remedy the wrong, and re-establish the broken connection, our divine nature is delighted. There is the simple but poignant parable of the “lost sheep” in the *Gospel According to St. Luke* (Ch. 15, verses 3-7), bringing out the importance of repentance. Addressing a group of publicans and sinners, Jesus says that if a man had 100 sheep and if he were to lose one then he would leave the 99 sheep in wilderness and go in search of that one sheep. When he finds it he would carry him on his shoulder and bring home and rejoice. So also there is more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over the 99 just men who need no repentance.

We have the notion that the only way in which we can expiate our sins of omission and commission is by receiving in the future the precise penalties attached to our acts. There is the understanding that even when a person who has committed the sin regrets his action, tries to learn the lesson, he cannot avoid the consequences of his act in the future. His karma is bound to catch up with him sometime in the future, and that he will receive the punishment for his action.

The other understanding is that of sudden repentance, linked to the idea of vicarious atonement. Here, there is belief that it is possible, by profound regret and an act of confession, to set aside the working of the law of karma. In this belief we seem to be saying that it does not matter if one has sinned, as that person can cancel the consequences of past sins by invoking the compassion of the divine beings or by asking the divine within for forgiveness.

What is true repentance? There is the story of Ajamil in Book VI of the *Bhagavatam*. It would be easy to draw the wrong lessons from this story or to read into it our own preconceptions. Ajamil was a man who married a woman of evil ways and became very dishonest. Of his ten sons, his favourite was the youngest named Narayana. One day, when Ajamil thought he was dying, three demon-like attendants of the King of Death (Yama) appeared before him. He called his son Narayana, but as he uttered the name his mind became wholly concentrated on Narayana or Vishnu. While he was

thus intently meditating upon God, there appeared before him the attendants of Lord Vishnu, who confronted the attendants of Death. The latter asked the former why they were preventing the Law from taking its course. As a man sows, so must he reap. The attendants of Death reminded the attendants of Vishnu that in his earlier years, Ajamil was a devout and truthful man, kind, self-controlled and well-versed in the scriptures. But one day, while in the woods, gathering flowers for worship, he was aroused by the sight of a lustful couple, lost all control of himself, became greatly attached to the woman who was a wanton. As a result, he forsook his lawful wife for her and gave up the pure life that he had been living. He wasted his entire fortune trying to please this woman, and also began to earn his living by unfair means. So he would be taken to the King of Death, who would punish him justly, and that suffering would purify him.

To this, the attendants of Vishnu replied that Ajamil had expiated all his sins by uttering the name of God and surrendering himself to the Lord. Wrongdoing is not eradicated or expiated, they said, if the mind continues to follow wicked desires. But when the name of God and love of God have purified the heart, all sins are completely destroyed. The mere name of God has the power to save even the most depraved, argued the attendants of Vishnu. On hearing all this, the attendants of Death went away and Ajamil regained his consciousness and gradually got back his health. He felt that he had received a great blessing, probably owing to some good deeds stored up from the past. His whole life seemed to be transformed. He gave up his evil ways, practised Yoga for many years, attained self-control, and his mind was firmly fixed in the contemplation of the Divine Self. When death finally came to him, he gave up his body while chanting the sacred name of God, absorbed in meditation, and thus freeing himself from the bondage of Karma.

In the preamble to this story we are told that expiation and repentance are of no avail to a man who continues to commit sinful acts knowing them to be harmful. All sinful thoughts and evil deeds

are caused by ignorance, and true expiation comes from illumination. The fire of spiritual knowledge consumes all evil and ignorance, and complete transformation of the inner life can be accomplished by following and living the Truth. Even the most sinful man is purified if he surrenders himself to God, with complete devotion. The story and the message seem to imply that by intense and sudden repentance, one can earn for himself the right to expiate his sins, by engaging in devotion and meditation in that life, and may become free from the bonds of Karma. It may appear that such a view is contradictory to the doctrine that each one has to suffer the consequences of his evil actions.

What is the Theosophical view? Mr. Judge explains that “Karma is a doctrine too vast and complicated to be disposed of by set rules applied like balance-sheets to commercial enterprises; but one thing is certain—Karma is action viewed from every side and on each occasion.” Could *true* repentance wipe away our sin or lessen the effects of our wrongdoing or evil deeds? First and foremost, what do we mean by *true* repentance? Repentance could take the form of self-reproach or constant brooding over the wrong done, leading to despair. It may take the form of continual crying and asking for forgiveness of God. In the case of deathbed repentance, the person confesses his sin to a priest. The mere act of confession is not sufficient to wipe away the sin and its consequences. If we are forgiven, in the sense of being absolved of the consequences of sin, what happens to the person whom we wronged? The Law of Karma is the law of justice and of compensation, both for the sinner and the sinned. Referring to a case of murder, H.P.B. asks: “How about the victim, and his or her family, relatives, dependants, social relations; has justice no recompense for them?” She gives the example of the act of throwing a stone into the pond. She argues that it not only disturbs the water in the pond but also the birds on the trees and the air above the pond, and so on. Hence, if we could only retrieve this stone, roll back the ripples, obliterate the force expended, in short, wipe out every trace of the act, then we may

submit to the popular notion of forgiveness of sin through repentance or atonement. A Master of Wisdom wrote regarding mistakes made out of wrong concepts: “They cannot be obliterated, for they are indelibly stamped upon the record of Karma, and neither tears nor repentance can blot the page.” On another occasion, the Master wrote to an erring person that though he might shed oceans of tears, it would not move Karmic balance even by a hair’s breadth.

Our concept of repentance is that as a result of confession, crying or feeling of deep remorse we must be excused or given milder punishment. True Forgiveness is Mercy; it is an opportunity to mend one’s ways and grow. But what is “true forgiveness”? Professor C. S. Lewis suggests in his essay “On Forgiveness” that “there is all the difference in the world between forgiving and excusing.” He writes: “Forgiveness says ‘Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology.’ ... But excusing says ‘I see that you couldn’t help it or didn’t mean it, you weren’t really to blame.’ If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive.” Our false concept of “merciful law” is that it *excuses* our wrongdoing and allows us to escape the ensuing consequences. A sin, crime, or error disrupts the channel of communication with our divine nature, and true repentance establishes back this ruptured communication so that we can receive the necessary guidance to correct ourselves. It also means humbly submitting ourselves to receive the just retribution from the all-merciful Law.

The various methods of penance, called *prayaschitta* or “actions that destroy sins,” recommended by Hindu religious texts, include, austerities, performing charitable deeds, muttering of prayers, performing sacrifices, etc. True repentance, however, consists in resolving to mend the ways and acting in accordance with such resolve. If one has erred by lying, stealing or backbiting, one has to set into motion good causes by resolving and learning to abstain from repeating the same wrongs. True repentance must lead to inner transformation. We are then sowing new causes that can counteract or mitigate the bad effects generated by previous causes. What we

experience is the resultant or sum total of the old, bad karma and new, good karma.

We must remember that the whole of the future is in unbroken continuity with the present, as the present is with the past. *Light on the Path* says that “He who would escape from the bondage of Karma must raise his individuality out of the shadow into the shine....He simply lifts himself out of the region in which Karma operates.” This is precisely what Ajamil did. He learnt that there was no cure for desire, for the fear of death or the thought of reward and punishment, save in fixing of the sight and hearing upon the Divine within. He freed himself from the bondage of Karma by fixing his whole attention on that which is unaffected by Karma. The reason why the first time that death approached Ajamil he could invoke the name God, with devotion, must have been because he did not allow his misdeeds to corrupt his inner consciousness, or to destroy the line of his ideation in his early life and in previous lives.

Ajamil’s repentance may seem to us sudden or even easy, but we are mistaken. It appears that here we have the case of a highly evolved soul, who was working out a bad piece of karma from the past, but having accumulated great karmic stamina, by having lived many lives of spiritual pursuit and altruism, he was able to fix his thoughts with total intensity on his Higher Self, and thus rise to proportionately greater heights after sinking low. It is because we are not in a position to know the entire Karmic sequence in the previous lives of Ajamil, we are misled into believing that only remembering the name of God at the dying moment can save us from death and free us from karmic bondage. We have all within us the Divine Parent, our Higher, divine Self, which is not touched by Karma. Every time we remain deaf to the “Voice of the Conscience,” or the prompting of the inner God, we crucify the Christos within us. To resurrect the Christ *we* have crucified, we must allow the divine nature to control the terrestrial nature, and thus raise ourselves to the spiritual level.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT IDEAS AND WORDS

WHAT is the relationship between ideas and words, between ideas and the mind which formulates them? Have we here the triangle again, spirit-matter-force, spirit standing for the mind, force for spirit in action, and matter for that which makes the form?

It is certain that nothing can appear which is not already in existence in the subtler planes of Nature. Nothing can manifest except what is in the Divine Mind, since in It are embedded the seeds of future growth. All knowledge is contained in the Divine Mind. All evolution is the unfolding of the seed’s potentialities in the soil of life.

But, just as a seed struggles to burst its limiting wall, as the bird the shell which limits it, as the young of the animal or a human baby pushes itself out of the encircling womb, so innate in every limited form is the urge to express its potentialities and reach to the “beyond,” to bind itself to the outer world. Too often man becomes limited by the outer world and must struggle to free himself again and again.

Yet limitations, limiting walls, are necessary to protect from evil and to prevent absorption into the All. What is necessary for us is to learn what walls we want to create and what to break through.

It has taken Nature, through the process of evolution, countless ages to break through that form! But the form is very necessary at this stage of evolution, for only with a limiting wall can identity be maintained, and, without identity, experience cannot be built into the Soul. Evolution implies the recognition of the use of the limitations. Electricity is present everywhere, but it is of no use to man until it is limited and directed. Air, which is everywhere, is of no use to man until it is limited by the body through which it passes. Water can destroy unless it can be limited by land or directed into channels.

Limitations are, therefore, necessary. They are the forms in which life dwells, through which experience is gained. They are the Word

made manifest, the Divine Ideas printed on matter.

On the plane of mind man is a creator. When *Manas* was lit up, for the first time in his evolutionary journey he could express himself in words and not merely produce sounds. His higher mind ascends to the planes above, where Ideas are living Intelligences; it communicates these ideas to its lower representative, and we say we have a thought. These ideas man paints, carves in stone, expresses in music or in words. But man, always paints, carves, writes what he has caught of the archetypal idea in his mind, and hence the often-distorted result. Only a genius has the power to paint, carve, or write a clear and faithful representation of the true ideas. This is because he has perfected the idea in his mind; he has sought after the truth behind his ideas, hidden in matter, and, freeing himself from all limitations of matter and illusion, he is able to portray perfectly the Divine Ideas. The Great Teachers have developed this power of perfection. Their words remain alive for centuries because they are capable of stirring the mind and heart of the reader or listener who struggles to get at the life behind the form.

Here we come upon another factor: the capacity of the reader or the listener to get at the idea behind the words. As H.P.B. says in the Introductory to *The Secret Doctrine*, “Every reader will inevitably judge the statements made from the stand-point of his own knowledge, experience, and consciousness, based on what he has already learnt.”

What are words? A combination of letters. What are letters? It may be said that they are different strokes, but is that all? If we pronounce a letter aloud, a sound is produced, and each letter has its own sound. Sound is an audible vibration, but there also must be aspects of the sound which are imperceptible to our senses, for vibration is not limited to this plane of matter but affects the invisible planes as well and reaches the very boundaries of the universe. There is thus a relationship between every letter and the farthest star, the planets, other human beings and in fact all Nature. To utter a letter is to bring it to life and activity. Combination of letters also make

their distinctive sound and have an effect on the subtler planes of Nature as on the physical; *e.g.*, the effect of a song or any kind of music on the physical bodies of the listeners as on their emotional and mental states. Sometimes an idea cannot be expressed in one word but a sentence is needed. The poet uses his words sparingly, but it may take the reader hours to understand the words, to find out the idea which they clothe.

Therefore, apart from the difficulty of expressing ideas accurately in words—which, it must be remembered, limit the idea—it is necessary to search the words for the idea. The reader or listener must learn to look on the words as a means of contact with the author’s or speaker’s mind. Sometimes we give our own interpretation to what is written or said, and thus miss out the real meaning intended to be conveyed. We must learn to look upon the words we read or hear only as a means to direct our mind to the idea which they are intended to express. So much haggling takes place over whether an author or speaker has expressed his idea correctly, or whether it could have been expressed differently! The point is, can we get the idea he has tried to express? If so, that is all we need. It is most probably our own mind that needs adjusting, our own knowledge, experience and consciousness that need educating!

To grasp ideas clearly, we need a pure mind, unaffected by personal notions and uncoloured by prejudices and preconceptions. We need to develop the power of right ideation and imagination. This will bring our reflective mind in touch with true ideas. Catching them, building them up in the fabric of our own mind, requires constant effort. Finally, the capacity to express them faithfully in words comes through care and practice. It is our task to learn to use words until they become “words of power.” *Mantrams* are just that; they are words of power which embody true ideas. What often looks like a string of sounds or letters may strike a note which resounds through the world because it is the embodiment of a truth. At the other end of the scale, a slogan can rouse violent emotions in a crowd; revolutions often start from the idea expressed in a slogan.

Business people use this power to sell their goods, and we of the U.L.T. use it when we read the Declaration or give it in our own words, or when we express the great ideas of the Three Fundamentals.

It can be seen also that we coin new words to express new ideas. We have a scientific language, a poetical language, religious terminology. H.P.B. said that we should familiarize the West with many Sanskrit terms embodying spiritual ideas, for which there are no equivalents in other languages. Mr. Judge has asked us to “use with care those living messengers called words.” All students of Theosophy have a great responsibility in that they are the passers-on through words of the great spiritual truths handed down from age to age.

[Taken from *The Theosophical Movement*, February 1957, pp. 87-88.]

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Words, phrases and symbols are “vehicles” used for suggesting the ideas that are new to the mind. When there is insistence on words and symbols, irrespective of the ideas, they degenerate into dead letter dogma and lose their vitalizing power. They cease to be vehicles of spirit. “The mere familiarity with the sound of a word, or a phrase, or the mere familiarity with the appearance of a symbol, does not, of necessity, involve the possession of the idea properly associated with the said word, phrase or symbol,” says H.P.B. in the article, “Thoughts on Theosophy,” that appeared in *Lucifer* (October 1887). She mentions that the “letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Theosophy is the vehicle of the spirit that gives life; hence nothing *dogmatic* can be truly *Theosophical*. In other words, symbols and words are important only in so far as they convey the idea. Also, certain teachings are metaphorical, and accepting them in dead-letter form could be dangerous. *The Voice of the Silence* suggests: “Give up thy life if thou wouldst live,” which only asks us to give up the life of personality to be able to live the spiritual life. In the *Koran* and in the *Bible* there are incidents where the devotee is

asked by the god to sacrifice his beloved son or daughter. When this is taken in the dead-letter form, it leads to human and animal sacrifice, whereas what is suggested is to cultivate detachment towards people, places, or things we may be extremely fond of. Mr. Judge suggests that we must read the *Gita*, and which applies to all the scriptures, by the light of the spiritual lamp within, *i.e.*, with the help of spiritual intuition. We must read between the lines and within the words, to get the hidden meaning not conveyed by the words.

Mr. Judge observes: “Words are things.... Upon the lower plane of social intercourse they are things, but soulless and dead because that convention in which they have their birth has made abortions of them. But when we step away from that conventionality, they become alive in proportion to the reality of the thought—and its purity—that is behind them.” Very frequently, if not always, we use words like “thank you,” “sorry,” “all the best,” etc., only as a matter of convention. These words should be spoken meaningfully, backed by intense and pure emotions. The Buddha tells us: “Better than a thousand-word speech of empty words is one pregnant sentence hearing which one feels peace.”

In his article, “The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac,” T. Subba Row mentions that those who have studied to some extent the ancient “Mantra” and the “Tantra Sastras” (Works of Incantation and Magic) of India, would have noticed that very often Sanskrit words are made to convey certain hidden meaning, while their literal significance is something quite different from the implied meaning.

The rules for ferreting out deep significance of ancient Sanskrit words found in old Aryan myths and allegories are: (1) Find out the synonyms of the word used which have other meanings. (2) Find out the numerical value of the letters composing the word according to the methods given in ancient *Tantrika* works. (3) Examine the ancient myths or allegories, if there are any, which have any special connection with the word in question.

REMEMBERING W. Q. JUDGE

ON the day when the Spring Equinox marks the renewal of Nature, students of Theosophy will remember W. Q. Judge, for it was on that day, March 21st, 1896 that this trusted friend, disciple and co-worker of H. P. Blavatsky passed away. What was his contribution, not only to the Theosophical Movement of our age, but through it to humanity at large? In his writings he shows the mark of a true occultist and an honest disciple, who having checked the teachings, became a *transmitter* of those teachings. Though most self-effacing and humble, in times of struggle, when the Movement was attacked and attempts were made to discredit the Message, he was at his self-chosen post to defend with vigour the Message and the Messenger, and the Masters who stood behind. Mr. Judge's credentials lie in his potent writings and his exemplary life. Reflection upon the mighty example he set and study of his writings bring us inspiration, continuous and never-failing. From the occult standpoint, Mr. Judge is like a link between ourselves and that "trans-Himalayan Esoteric Knowledge." The very name of the magazine he edited, *The Path*—called by H.P.B. "pure Buddhi"—indicates his special task, for he showed the possibility of treading that Path of Holiness, at the other end of which are the Masters who live, work and watch.

He may be regarded as a perennial source of inspiration. Through the philosophy he reiterated, through the altruistic service he rendered, we are able to form a clear image of that server *par excellence*, that reiterator and simplifier of the Message, himself a trusted and faithful disciple. How futile, how small, look all the attacks that once revolved round his figure, all the charges of personal ambition falsely levelled against him! Our debt of gratitude to him may be discharged by learning as he learned, humbly and wisely, by teaching what he taught, by labouring as he laboured, neither elated by success and triumph, nor dejected by failure and uttermost loneliness. We pay him our reverential homage.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS MASTERS AND CHELASHIP—I

YOU will find that it is possible for us to know a great many facts about the Masters, *i.e.*, about Their real nature, Their powers, etc. Most people from the days of H.P.B. up till even now have tried to understand Them by the aid of their ordinary thinking minds, and the best of them have failed in comprehending Them. At our stage, They and Their Work have to be *apprehended*. It is a matter more of higher feeling than of philosophical thought. More of imagination should go into our ideation. Our study gives us the basis for our reflection. By this way Judge succeeded where Sinnett failed. So, don't try to reach out to Them with the mind, but, making study and service your basis, reach out to Them with your Heart. Strong search on the path of enquiry, gentle service of the souls of your fellows, humility in both study and service, will make Wisdom spring up spontaneously in you and you will *know* Them. Read the fourth chapter of the *Gita*. I tell you, Devotion does it; nothing else can. I agree with you: the starting point is within ourselves. So, find the starting point within yourself. In fact, you have found that starting point in recognizing this very truth. The next steps are in every direction. How very accurately you have found the key to the march forward by taking up Judge's *Letters That Have Helped Me*! You cannot find a better guide than those letters, written mostly to Jasper Neimand who succeeded in reaching Them by the heart.

It is a good sign indeed that our students seemed anxious to know what we should do to deserve the help and guidance of the Masters. This is of fundamental importance. What is implicit in this particular piece of instruction in the Message of H.P.B. is not generally perceived. The giving of it cost her tremendously. It brought doubt and derision, but she did it, and it is the most vital teaching of her philosophy. When we see what it means, the accepted order of evolution from animal savagery to the present "enlightened era"

reverses. The existence of the Adept Fraternity; Their silent, secret but far-reaching influence; Their method of helping mankind; Their Line of *Guruparampara*; the establishment of the Path of Chelaship—these are not only of academic importance; they are valuable to us now and here and have a practical bearing on the daily handling of our own incarnated existence.

As to how the Masters and the Nirmanakayas help humanity: They are channels of the Most High, the Logos or the Word. Each one of Them is a Mantra unfolding from the single impartite Word. Ideation and Imagination are a combined power, which uses sound and colour and number-language, and Their created thought-images, idea-idols, built in and by *Akasha*, are concretized till this plane of gross matter is touched. Like the air, all of us breathe it, but our mortal and faulty constitution is not able to inhale, retain and absorb more of that ozone. This being so, They have the institution of Divine Incarnations. Using Their knowledge of time-cycles, They take bodies of flesh and blood and become like unto us, wearing mortal garments. They teach, and Their knowledge arouses us from the sleep of *tamas* and ignorance, and we benefit here. The greatest benefit is increase in our capacity to inhale and absorb that *Akashic* ozone.

Then, each of us proceeds from the general and the universal to the particular and the personal. Here is where our treading of the Path of Chelaship comes in. You are at this point. You are inhaling more of that ozone by study and effort at concentration in application. The Gracious Guru creates the inner chela. The Guru uses our substances and essences and by His *Kriyashakti* creates a new Being out of the old puny and mortal self. Of course, we have to adopt exercises of silence and secrecy, ideation and imagination, work and worship—note the three pairs. Masters' work is with the masses and this work leads to work with persons and personalities who become "listeners" to Their Wisdom and servants of the masses. They are Complete Beings; we are "becoming." Now you have begun to become transformed. May your light shine more in your

brain and radiate through your eyes and hands and feet! Heart electricity manifests as personal radiation or magnetism. This is not fiction; it is fact. Thus, in the mire and scum of the earth-pond a lotus begins to emerge.

When the disciple is ready the Master appears. You *are* preparing yourself. Secrecy and silence are important ingredients in chela-life. How to hide oneself? By appearing "as nothing in the eyes of men." You need but to go on as you are doing and Karma will open the door. "Great man is he who is strongest in the exercise of patience," says Mahatma K.H. The Blessed Ones help the devotee. One may not know how help comes, but it *does* come. Longingly yearning for the Holy Ones will one day bring you the glimmer of the Lords of Light. But to perceive and to enjoy that Light we must have within us the spark of the Tathagata Light. Do not overlook that it is possible so to purify the mind and elevate the heart that the Tathagata Light may be kindled by us now and here. If in our waking hours we are with Their Teachings, learning them or promulgating them; if we keep the company of those who love Them and are devoted to Them, we shall transform our sleeping and waking life and make it rich. It is in the Hall of Wisdom, says *The Voice of the Silence*, that the Master can be truly found. So, it is in our heart consciousness that the influence and the inspiration will come. May you achieve and attain! Make Their existence real to you!

By elimination of what does not contain the Masters, by unfoldment, more and more, of what contains Them, we get nearer to Them. Can there be Masters in our anger? No. Therefore true devotion also cannot be there. Can we hear Their Voice when we are angry? Can we then create the face to visualize? No. Well, then, there can be no devotion. But, like Buddhi, *yagna*, etc. devotion also is tamasic, rajasic and sattvic, and it is by unfolding sattvic devotion that Masters are contacted. Pure or sattvic devotion has to be developed by study and by reflection. Devotion is the mother-virtue; it is *sui generis* in man. We can begin to give more and more to the Masters. But what offerings are acceptable to Them? How to

make the offering? *Light on the Path* has some most valuable hints and aids and suggestions.

And are you *sure* that in your own inner being you are not familiar with your revered Master? Do we know of Self the powers? How little we know of the Inner Ruler and how much of the personality, engrossed as we are in its doings! It is the “blessed mood” (recall Wordsworth) which we need to invoke—the Mood of the Light of the True. The sacred feeling of *Bhakti* is broken and diffused into rajasic and tamasic devotion. “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,” and also that seemingly terrible exclamation of Jesus to his mother, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” carry a profound truth in one-pointedness, in concentration—something we have as an innate idea. It was born in us with the lighting up of Manas. It is creative. You—the personal you—may not have seen or heard of Master but try to *feel* Him and Them— “the Master whom yet thou dost not see, but whom thou feelest,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. But we have also to try to *feel* the presence of the Inner God, the Higher Manas, in us at the same time. “Guru” is also the term used by chelas for the Inner Ruler. Knowledge of our true being and knowledge of Masters go hand in hand.

To BE robbed, cheated, deceived, ay, misled and trapped and then mocked, yet with it all to look down from the height of your larger self and smile, knowing that there is a spring that will come to your garden to dance in your leaves, and an autumn to ripen your grapes; knowing that if but one of your windows is open to the East, you shall never be empty; knowing that all those deemed wrongdoers and robbers, cheaters and deceivers, are your brothers in need, and that you are perchance all of these in the eyes of the blessed inhabitants of that City Invisible, above this city.

—KAHLIL GIBRAN

THE SCIENCE OF SACRIFICE

THE term sacrifice has various connotations depending on the context in which it is used. In mundane life it is often used to mean foregoing or giving up something very personal and precious for obtaining what is believed or perceived to be a greater good, either for oneself or for the good of another. It is a familiar phenomenon in the everyday life of common people. Strong family relationships are forged through mutual support and help among members of the family in the spirit of sacrifice, and lasting friendship is fostered among friends, or even with strangers, in the same spirit. This is so common in social life that it is needless to illustrate it with examples. It is however to be noted that where the virtue of sacrifice is prevalent there one finds stable and harmonious relationships which redound to the common good. On the contrary, where the spirit of sacrifice is wanting there can be sensed elements of discord, indifference, selfishness and conflict.

Every religion lays down rules of sacrifice to devotees to voluntarily restrain the cravings of the personal self through periodical fasting and mortification, and prescribe sharing a portion of one’s earnings with less fortunate fellowmen. The ancient religious practice of undertaking pilgrimages is a form of sacrifice when they had to venture on long arduous journey on foot or on horseback, attended with much physical exertion and risks, unlike the easygoing modern modes attended with all manner of physical comforts and conveniences. Devout pilgrims vow to give up undesirable personal habits and to strive to acquire virtues. To keep one’s vows requires strong motivation, determination and moral stamina. Thus, it can be seen that sacrifice is indispensable means of individual self-development, and every effort of individuals at self-improvement redounds to the good of society.

Animal sacrifice as a religious ritual is common in India as it is in many other old religions and cultures. Sacrificing animals and fowls at set times of the year and season to appease the presiding deities

of the locality for the preservation of the community and for oracular purposes is an abiding superstition in vogue in rural India as well as in many parts of the world. This practice, like many other superstitions, cannot be but an outgrowth of a true practice based on a knowledge of laws of nature which was well known in the past, but which is now obscure. It has to do with mysterious magical properties of blood. There are blood sacrifices and burnt offerings. These two kinds of sacrifices can be seen in the Old Testament (*Leviticus* 1:5-9; *Exodus* 10:25; 20:24, etc., for example). The question is whether these sacrifices have any meaning or efficacy.

Mr. Judge, while speaking of the science and the practice of sacrifice, which is taught in the third chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, draws the attention of students to what the mystic, Count St. Martin, said by way of explanation of Mosaic sacrifice, and asks them to work out for themselves what truth it contains. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 88). It is said there that the efficacy of sacrifice rested in the magnetic laws; that the priest gathered the deleterious effects of the sins of the people into his own person, and transmitted them from him to the sacrificial animal which exhaled them far away in the wilderness so as not to affect the people. Mr. Judge says that there is some truth in what St. Martin says: "Some substances, mineral, vegetable, and animal, retain a greater proportion of the living and powerful properties of their first estate" (*ibid.*, p. 90), which when released by offering them in the fire of the altar confer benefit on the populace. Mr. Judge says that the ancient Hindu ritualistic practice of oblations offered in the fire, or *Yajna*, was of this kind, which rests on the intimate magnetic sympathy between man and nature, and occult laws governing the reciprocal action between the two. In certain cycles of human progress when the spiritual element in man is predominant—which Plato refers to as "fertile periods"—the occult potencies of minerals, plants and animals magically sympathize with the divine soul of man, and man derived spiritual and physical benefit from this occult interaction through performance of prescribed magical rites. This is stated in the third

chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, thus:

When in ancient times the lord of creatures had formed mankind, and at the same time appointed his worship, he spoke and said: "With this worship, pray for increase, and let it be for you Kamaduk, the cow of plenty, on which ye shall depend for the accomplishment of all your wishes. With this nourish the Gods, that the Gods may nourish you; thus mutually nourishing ye shall obtain the highest felicity. The Gods being nourished by worship with sacrifice, will grant you the enjoyment of your wishes. (III, 10-12)

Gods spoken of here, we are taught, are occult powers and properties of nature with which the constitution of man and of all things have an intimate relation. In order that spiritual beings of higher spheres can remain as active potencies in our sphere, *i.e.*, in close proximity to our earth, they have to subsist in vital magnetic vestures, so to speak, consubstantial with vital matter of the earth, and they have to be sustained by food, in the same way that we have to sustain the body we live in by food we eat. The food by which they subsist and are nourished are the subtle essences of certain natural substances which are released when offered in the sacrificial fire. It is by the subtle essences so released that the gods subsist. "They enter into that colour, or sound, or savour, at the sacrifice; they rise in that colour, etc., and by it they live" (*Letters that have helped me*, p. 91). The powers so nourished by sacrifice reciprocate by conferring benefits on mankind. The felicity that man enjoys as the fruit of sacrifice he makes to the gods is illustrated in the *Gita* (III, 14), thus: "Beings are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice, and sacrifice is performed by action." Mr. Judge says that it is not that the natural cycle of occurrence of rain and production of fruit and grain do not take place if sacrifices are not performed, as is the case at the present time, but that the "*right food*, productive in the physical organism of the proper conditions enabling man to live up to his highest possibilities, alone is produced in that age where real sacrifices are properly performed."

(*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 90)

We are taught that in other ages when spirituality is on the decline and materialism is on ascendancy, as is the case in the present age of ours, called the *Kali Yuga*, the dark age, which Plato calls “barren period,” families with great spiritual leanings and noble lineage go out of existence, and the magical sacrifices of earlier ages become inefficacious, and the gods, so called, leave our sphere. Sacrifices of those times would then be useless at the present time.

But this does not mean that the law of reciprocity or Brotherhood ceases to operate. The revolution of the wheel of Duty can never cease. It is the principle of Universal Brotherhood. Man enjoys felicity or suffers the contrary just as he keeps the wheel of brotherhood continuing to revolve, or neglects to do it. In one case he progresses along the line of higher evolution, and in the other he retards. It is by knowledge of the dynamic reality of Universal Brotherhood, and thinking and living by a higher awareness of that principle, that all individual and collective progress towards emancipation and perfection can ever take place.

Therefore, every individual is obligated to keep this wheel of duty to continue revolving, by redeeming the debt he owes to beings by whose sacrifice he lives and is sustained, by performing obligatory duties pertaining to his station in life without the motive of self-interest in results of actions, in the spirit of devotion to the Supreme Spirit, his true Self. Such higher altruistic motivation naturally arises in man in the realization that inasmuch as Self is One our happiness and well-being is inseparably bound with well-being and progress of all. Devotion to humanity will then be the spontaneous motivation, more than considerations of self-interest, in all works.

“The Yajna exists from eternity, for it proceeded from the Supreme, in whom it lay dormant from *no beginning*” (*The Theosophical Glossary*). The famous hymn, *Purusha Sukta*, in the Rig Veda (10.90) sings how *Purusha*, or the Spirit, who is transcendent, pure, formless, sacrifices himself to become *Prajapati*, Lord of Beings, who creates all creatures of the world, and then

enters into all, comprehending all in transcendent unity of Self. Hence Krishna says in the *Gita*, “Adi-yajna is myself in this body.” This is another way of demonstrating the reality of Universal Brotherhood. Living by that principle, one must place in the scale of values of man, the highest good of all mankind, of all beings, above the interest of individual self in all one’s actions. That is the only way that every need and interest—material and spiritual—of the individual as well as of humanity as a whole is best served. Partaking of the remnant of the sacrifice is our true entitlement; we have no other right. “But they who partake of the perfection of spiritual knowledge arising from such sacrifices pass into the eternal Supreme Spirit.” Great is the loss, as the Upanishads say, of those who live not by the law of higher life. “But for him who maketh no sacrifices there is no part nor lot in this world; how then shall he share in the other, O best of the Kurus?” (*Gita*, IV, 31)

Duty is that which *is due* to Humanity, to our fellowmen, neighbours, family, and to the weaker sections of society especially, and that it is a debt we owe, which if unpaid leaves us spiritually insolvent and morally bankrupt in our future birth. But it has to be practiced with great circumspection and spiritual discrimination.

To sacrifice oneself blindly is folly, productive of great evil. We have to acquire spiritual knowledge in order to perform duty in the right way. Learning and doing go together. Theosophy is given to us for study of the mighty Science of Life and to apply the philosophy in all our relations and undertakings in order to be the better able to help and teach others. Self-forgetfulness in the performance of duty is the highest Yoga. Mr. Judge says:

He learns to do good and that which appears the wisest at the time, forgetting self so fully that he only knows his doing good to others—forgetting self so far that he forgets to think whether he is doing his duty or not—entering Nirvana to this extent that he does not remember that he is doing his duty. That *for him* is duty. (*W.Q.J. Series No. 14*, pp. 18-19)

THE MOON IN OCCULT PHILOSOPHY

I

Of all the heavenly bodies, the Moon seems to be the one to have received much attention from people in all ages, because the Moon is nearest to our Earth, it lights up the night, it has many different influences on the affairs of man. She is described as the Queen of night and is connected with tides in the ocean, vegetation, conception and moods. Science says that the Moon is an astronomical body that orbits the Earth and it is our Earth's only permanent, natural satellite. The origin of moon is still a mystery for science. Our modern science believes the moon to have formed some 4.51 billion years ago. The widely accepted explanation is as given in the "giant impact theory." Accordingly, planetary scientists believe that the moon formed from the debris left over after a planetary object, named *Theia*, hit the Earth. Neil Armstrong became the first person to walk on the moon, in the year 1969, as the commander of the American mission Apollo 11. Planetary scientists claim that knowledge about the origin of the moon has undergone a revolution since the first Apollo landed on the moon's surface. Most of the material that formed the moon was thought to have come from *Theia*, the impacting planetary body. Also, it was believed that the composition of the impacting body would have differed substantially from that of the earth, and would have left the earth and the moon with a different chemical composition. But it was not so. As the lunar rocks brought by Apollo had the same chemical composition as the earth.

Hence, new research funded by NASA Lunar Science Institute (NLSI) hypothesizes that our early Earth and moon were both created together in a giant collision of two planetary bodies that were each five times the size of Mars. After colliding, the two similar-sized bodies then re-collided, forming an early Earth surrounded by a disk of material that combined to form the moon. The re-collision and subsequent merger left the two bodies with the similar chemical composition seen today. This theory was proposed by Robin Canup,

an American astro-physicist.

Occult philosophy teaches that the Moon did not separate from the earth but is, in fact, the mother of our earth. "Had our wise men of science known as much of the mysteries of nature as the ancient Aryans did, they would surely never have imagined that the moon was projected from the earth" (*S.D.*, I, 398). The occult teaching is that the moon is far older than the earth, and that it is the earth which owes its being to the moon.

Theosophy points out that like man, every planet is constituted of seven distinct principles. There is a spiritual "something," a psychic "something," an intellectual "something," an astral "something," and a physical "something," in every planet. Our earth is not a lump of gross matter, but is an entity, and like man, earth too, is sevenfold. Our earth has six other companion globes, and together, these seven globes form Earth Chain. These seven globes of earth's chain, while differing from one another in the substance of which they are made, are united together in a single mass. They are not seven separate balls and can be seen when we are in a different state of consciousness. For the sake of convenience, we may refer to these seven globes as A, B, C, D, E, F and G. We occupy globe D, the fourth in the chain. Like the earth, the moon, too, is septenary.

It is stated that in a remote period, when there was no Earth, the Moon existed as an inhabited globe. When evolution on Moon was completed, she died, throwing all her energies into space and leaving behind the corpse or physical vehicle. The moon chain of globes gave birth to earth chain of globes. Each globe of moon, as it died out, sent out energies which worked on the cosmic matter, bringing about gradual condensation of matter in space and produced earth chain of globes, or our earth with six other companion globes.

H.P.B. explains that the *Laya* centre is the nucleus of primordial substance in undifferentiated state, and when that is informed or activated by "principles" of a deceased sidereal body, then that mass of matter, forms inhabitable worlds. Thus, all the worlds or sidereal bodies are born one from the other, which is explained by analogy.

The birth of the celestial bodies is compared to a crowd of “pilgrims” at the festival of “Fires,” wherein seven ascetics appear at the threshold of the temple with seven lighted sticks of incense from which the first row of pilgrims lights their own incense sticks. Then the ascetics whirl the lighted sticks around their heads and furnish fire to other pilgrims. Likewise, a *laya* centre (or centres) is lighted up or awakened by the fires of a “pilgrim” (deceased celestial body, in our case moon chain of globes) and that “centre” after being awakened rushes into space and becomes a comet, which after losing its velocity settles down ultimately as a sidereal body (forming in our case earth chain of globes). (*S.D.*, I, 203-4)

Also, there is an analogy between death of a man and death of a planetary chain. When a man dies his higher principles go to *Devachan*. These higher principles in man correspond to the “monads” or “Egos” on a planetary chain, which go to a state of rest called “Nirvana” after the planetary chain has gone into dissolution. They remain in that state till new planetary chain is formed. The lower principles in man which form the *kamarupic* shell disintegrate to leave behind *skandhas*, which in turn are used for preparing a new personality. Similarly, the globes of the moon chain, going into dissolution sent out energies in space to form globes of new planetary chain, of the earth.

Like our present earth, the moon we see in the sky is the fourth globe of the moon planetary chain, the other globes of earth and moon being invisible. This moon, visible to us, having transferred her powers and energies to the Earth, is now soulless and lifeless, and yet she is described as “a *dead yet living* body.” In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 149) we read that the moon is dead only as regards her inner “principles,” *i.e., psychically and spiritually*. But physically, the moon is active; it is like a semi-paralyzed body. The higher principles have departed from the Moon, and she is virtually a dead planet, being dragged after the earth, into which her living powers and “principles” are transferred. Thus, though the higher principles have departed from the Moon, the lower principles still hold together,

for she is only half way through the process of disintegration. She is “Sidereal lunatic” and an “insane mother,” because the higher or spiritual principles have departed from her body. In case of incurable insanity, the connection of the lower and higher man is destroyed forever and the lower mind functions on *astral plane*, and hence is not connected with the physical body. Our moon seems to be in such a condition.

Just like particles of matter are emanated from a corpse, so also, from the moon nefarious and poisonous influences emanate. These particles are full of active and destructive life. Thus, the moon’s emanations are both beneficent and maleficent. H.P.B. draws a parallel between the moon and its dual emanations, and graveyards on earth. On the one hand, emanations from the graveyard are unhealthy and they could bring about death and destruction, but it is also true that there is great vital energy at work in the decaying corpse, and therefore, grass and plants are nowhere juicier and thriving than those growing on the graves. Probably, that is how we can also understand the statement that earth or the child *vampirises* the moon. It appears that the moon also *vampirises* the earth. Here *vampirising* refers to the phenomenon of one individual robbing another of vitality, there being transfer of vitality from the stronger to the weaker person.

Our earth is much affected by the Moon. Dr. Richardson points out that animal vitality or “Nervous Ether” is diffused in all nature. The animal tissues only absorb it according to their more or less morbid or healthy state. It descends in a larger supply to vegetation through the *Sushumna* ray of the Sun, which lights and feeds the moon. It is through the moon’s beams that the animal vitality penetrates man and animal, more during their sleep and rest, than when they are full of activity. It accumulates in the nervous centres during sleep, bringing them, to their due tone, and therewith raising the muscles to awakening and renewed life. (*S.D.*, I, 537-38)

(*To be continued*)

SAINT TUKARAM—LIFE AND TEACHINGS

III

SAINT TUKARAM taught that one should devote oneself wholeheartedly to spiritual life. Those who want to fulfil the worldly and the spiritual life together shall accomplish neither. One needs to surrender one's life to God. There must be deliberation and earnestness on the part of aspirant. The Buddha says, "If anything is to be done let a man attack it unflinchingly. A lax ascetic scatters more and more the dust of his passions." Walking the spiritual path is not easy, as it involves constant conflict. It has been very well described by Tukaram in one of his *abhangas*: "*Ratri ani divas amha yuddha cha prasang*," meaning thereby, "We have to fight the battle throughout the day and night." It goes on to say, "In this battle, we have to take measures for the injuries every now and then. We have to perform this action continuously. Tukaram says that O God, I have faced these attacks, and defeated them using the weapon of your Holy Name." Keeping in mind all those who are earnestly trying to live the higher life, Mr. Judge says, "We are all Arjunas," and explains that Arjuna is a man or the soul struggling to the light, and being a man in this world of sense and matter, he is either always in a battle or about to begin one, and is also ever in need of advice. The battle is with the world outside and with the enemies inside. A spiritual aspirant has to face insult, isolation, ridicule, social boycott, and opposition from family members and friends. But the inner enemies, such as "desire, anger, greed, delusion, pride and jealousy," are more subtle and difficult to overcome. The contact of the senses with the sense-objects produces pleasant or unpleasant sensation, and that in turn produces attachment or aversion. To win a victory over one's self is to experience the feeling and yet check the desires. Tukaram advises using the weapon of "Holy name" of Vithal or Krishna, to defeat the foes and achieve victory. It means turning within for guidance and help to the Higher Self or Divine nature. The *Gita* says, "There dwelleth in the heart

of every creature, O Arjuna, the Master—*Ishwara*... Take sanctuary with him alone... with all thy soul; by his grace thou shalt obtain supreme happiness, the eternal place."

A true saint, he declares, "devotes himself entirely to the happiness of others, his worship consists of helping his fellow beings." There is this very beautiful *abhang* describing the qualities of a true saint, which begins with the words, "*Je ka ranjale gaanjale*." It goes on to say that "Know him to be a true saint (*sadhu*) who takes to his bosom those who are in distress. His heart is gentle and soft like butter, and he accepts and sympathizes with those who are forsaken. He bestows on his servants the same affection that he shows to his children. Tukaram says, what need is there to describe him further? He is the very incarnation of divinity." Spiritual teachers down the ages are forced to give characteristic marks to enable the lay people to distinguish a truly spiritual person from the false pretender. Every teacher has shown that it is the inner attitude, behaviour and motive which determines the holiness and spirituality of a person and not the outer appearance. Thus, a true Brahmin is said to be the one who has realized the Brahman within. Altruism and selflessness is the hallmark of a spiritually advanced being.

It is very difficult to distinguish between good and bad, meritorious (*punya*) and non-meritorious (*paap*) action or karma. We must reject *categorical morality*, drawing a cut and dried boundary between good and evil, which leads to self-righteousness. One may give out large sums of money to earn merit (*punya*) or with the intention of gaining name and fame, or make a charity to wrong persons at the wrong time. Perfect goodness stems from perfect wisdom. Hence, we say "good" and "evil" are relative terms. Mr. Judge describes good karma as that which is pleasing to the *Iswara* within and bad karma as that displeasing to the god within. Tukaram's definition of merit and demerit is, "*punya par-upkar, paap te par pidaa*." "Merit consists of doing good to others, while sin consists of doing harm to others. There is no other pair comparable to this. Truth is the only religion or freedom; untruth is bondage,

there is no secret like this....God's name on one's lips is itself salvation, disregard of that name is known to be perdition. ...It is clear, what is good and what is evil. Let people choose what they will."

Being guided by God, he carried on his work patiently with the firm conviction that it was possible to build a better world. He succeeded to a remarkable extent in inspiring his fellow men with a genuine desire to enter into the secrets of love divine. He saw God in all beings and therefore could not be indifferent to their lot. In one of his *abhangas* he points out that the saintly cannot bear to see the laity sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of sin and sorrow, and therefore they show the cure for the same. Thus: "In charity we declare these remedies. Or else what are we interested in? We cannot bear to see with our eyes these people in disaster. Therefore we feel intense compassion." Like all other saintly beings, Tukaram also desired that the whole humanity should be liberated and attain to lasting bliss and peace. He suggested that people in the world should follow the way of *bhakti* (devotion).

The *Gita* speaks of four kinds of devotees who worship Krishna: those wanting wealth, those who suffer, those who want knowledge and the Wise men. Tukaram says that ignorant people worship God for getting wealth, or for the fulfilment of desires. They concentrate on the result of their work, and are tied up with sense-objects. How can they get true knowledge or know *Parabrahman*? Most of the sufferings have their root in the assumption that the real bliss will come from external, worldly objects. When we assert our personal will and want things to happen in a certain manner, we are in the grip of ignorance. There is no difference between an ignorant man and an animal, who lives for food, reproduction and is afraid of death. We are holding on to the evanescent instead of going after the permanent and the changeless. Tukaram gives the example of a parrot that sits on a string laid by the hunter. The string inverts its position and so is the parrot. Due to high voltage fear the parrot firmly grasps the string and forgets that it has two wings to fly away.

The parrot is caught ultimately. Tukaram says that it is not surprising if creatures without brains behave like this. It is surprising to see human beings forgoing their greatest interest for a pittance.

As an eye witness relates it, in 1650, God came in person to carry Tukaram away to Vaikuntha (Heaven) in His heavenly chariot. Tukaram took leave of all present and called on his wife to join him on his exile from this world, but the bewildered lady asked in anguish where she would be able to fill her water-pots and who would take care of their buffalo! We are reminded of a line from *Zanoni*: "An eagle can raise but an eaglet to the sun." Before the astonished devotees, Tukaram was lifted bodily from the banks of the Indrayani river, and carried away into space from where he entirely disappeared. Some of his disciples and friends remained three days on the river bank singing devotional songs, and requesting Tukaram to give them a token of his presence where he was. On the third day, Tukaram's cymbals and *asana* fell down from the skies, and the devotees sang in joy "Vithala, Panduranga."

We may take Tukaram's bodily going to heaven, metaphorically. *Through the Gates of Gold* says that within us there are two definite directions in which we grow, one good and other evil; but this growth is not a straight line. To sink to the lowest depths is as difficult as to reach the greatest heights. The divine spark always comes to our aid if we turn to it, and prevents us from bringing great harm on ourselves. Man's duality is so deep-rooted that he neither gives himself wholly to pleasure, nor does he give himself wholly to pain. He lives on a zigzag line—oscillating between the two. Hence it is said that it is not so easy to go to heaven, but it is also not easy to go to hell. Dostoevsky said: "I want to take *whole* of myself to heaven." Only when there is cessation of inner conflict, can you take whole of yourself to heaven or whole of yourself to hell. When you are divided between the two equally desirable things, you end up making only intermittent and half-hearted efforts in either direction.

(Concluded)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Advances in neuroscience have enabled children to train their brains in a manner that helps them to be far more intelligent, observant, focused, intuitive and emotionally stable, writes Vinita Dawra Nangia. She writes about her visit to Kanha Shanti Vanam in Mehboobnagar, recently, where, as part of their “Brighter Minds” demo she met a 13-year old boy who told her that he was able to learn his lessons in half the time once he was taken through the programme, which enhances the sense of observation, intuition and cognitive abilities in children between the ages of 5 and 15. This boy demonstrated that by touching or smelling a crayon he could accurately tell its colour and also likewise solve the Rubik’s cube. He could read complete sentences from a page by just touching. It seems thousands of students are being trained to enhance their existing intuitive and creative capabilities. “Advances in neuroscience and brain neuroplasticity have proved that continuous learning is possible. This happens as a result of the connections and interconnections between the 80 billion brain cells (neurons) we possess. So, the brain is very plastic and flexible, though this neuroplasticity keeps reducing as we leave it unused. The capacity of these interconnections is greatest in a child but depletes as we grow older,” writes Nangia.

The process of Brighter Minds was started by Daaji Kamlesh D. Patel, the spiritual head of Sahaj Marg and founder of Heartfulness, when he saw a child who had trained his sense of touch to see, and therefore could identify the downturned playing cards by merely touching with his foot. The explanation given is that it is our brain that perceives and not the senses, and hence, one can train his sense of smell or hearing to see. We may hope to improve the intelligence and emotional quotient of the future generation, leading to better focus, comprehension and intuition, writes Vinita Nangia. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, February 24, 2019)

The real perceiver and interpreter of the data brought by our five senses, is our mind, which uses the brain as its instrument. There are those whose perceptions range beyond the five senses and they are called “sensitives.” They have developed astral senses. The real centres of sense organs for seeing, hearing, etc., are within the astral body. “The whole scale of senses is susceptible of correlations,” writes H.P.B.

In the magazine *Theosophy* (Vol. 11, pp. 495-496), the case of one Ms. Huggins is printed. At the age of ten, she began losing the sense of sight and hearing, and completely lost them within a year. Having reached the age of reason before the disabilities set in, she could hear others by using auditory apparatus by touching the diaphragm with her finger tips or by her fingers touching the throat of the speaker. She said that she could not hear the sounds but could *feel* them. Similarly, she could determine as many as thirty different colours by her sense of smell. The article concludes by saying that all the senses are *astral*, distinct from the physical *organs*, and are *interchangeable*. H.P.B. remarks that when a person is deprived of one or more senses, then it is compensated by greater development of other senses. A blind person recovers his sense of sight through touch and hearing. So also, a deaf person seems to hear through eyes, by looking at the lips and mouth of a speaker. (*S.D.*, I, 534)

Occultism explains these phenomena by saying that physical sense organs are not the real organs of perception. The perceptive faculty proper belongs to astral plane. All the senses are but differentiation of the One Sense Consciousness. Every sense pervades every other, there being only one sense acting through different organs of sensation.

William Kingdon Clifford, a British philosopher, once made a seemingly exaggerated claim that “it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence, is

no longer hyperbole but a technical reality,” in an essay “The Ethics of Belief,” written some 150 years ago. He gives three arguments as to why we have a moral obligation to believe responsibly, only after diligent investigation and when we have sufficient evidence. Our behaviour is shaped by our beliefs. False beliefs about physical or social facts lead us into poor habits of action that in the most extreme cases could threaten our survival. We live in a digital global village, in which about everyone’s beliefs are instantly shareable, at minimal cost, to a global audience, so that every single belief has the capacity to be truly consequential.

The second argument as to why it is wrong to believe on insufficient evidence is that it turns us into careless and credulous believers. Even a trifling thing believed without evidence, prepares us to receive more of its like, and strengthens our faith in similar beliefs held before by us, turns us into easy prey for fake-news peddlers and charlatans, gradually building a firm foundation at thought level, which may someday explode into overt action, and leave its stamp upon our character.

Clifford’s third argument as to why it is wrong to believe without evidence is that, in our capacity as communicators of belief, we have the moral responsibility not to pollute the well of collective knowledge. This claim is not far-fetched. Today, we truly have a global reservoir of belief into which all of our commitments are being added, and it is called Big Data. What we do in the real world is being recorded and digitized and from there it is easy to infer what we believe in. “And it is the same reservoir that search engines tap into when we seek answers to our questions and acquire new beliefs....If there was ever a time when critical thinking was a moral imperative, and credulity a calamitous sin, it is now,” writes Francisco Mejia Uribe, an executive director at Goldman Sachs in Hong Kong, in his article that appeared in *Aeon* magazine.

“Believe nothing unless it conforms with reason and common sense,” is one of the most important teachings ever given. It throws

the whole responsibility on the person who holds the belief, and the very fact that one needs to verify every belief shows that one’s beliefs could be wrong also. When a person applies the light of mind to his own beliefs, he finds out which of his beliefs are false and which can be justified. Normally, we move from blind belief to reasoned knowledge till we come to enlightened or intuitive faith. Unenlightened faith is similar to blind belief. Enlightened faith arises in the mind freed from passions and prejudices, in the mind that is eager to consider true and ennobling ideas. Blind belief passing through the fire of reason emerges as enlightened faith.

It is our mental laziness which prevents us from questioning our beliefs. Our belief system consists of ideas that are suggested as true, by those surrounding us. We should follow the middle path, avoiding gullibility and cynicism. A gullible person accepts without question, while a cynic rejects *a priori* without question or investigation. There is an element of truth in many traditions and so-called superstitions. Many superstitions result from lack of knowledge of causality, and others from unenlightened fears. Our perceptions are coloured by our conceptions. H.P.B. says that we have no right to believe in evil until we get undeniable proof of the correctness of the statement.

How much can we know? More specifically, how much can science know? Science possesses limited knowledge partly because of the limitations of the tools used, and due to manner and method of scientific approach. German physicist, Werner Heisenberg pertinently remarked, “What we observe is not nature in itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.” The methodology of science is to observe the system, measure its properties and build mathematical or conceptual models. In order to explore the realms that are beyond the five senses; to study the small, or that which is very fast or very distant or virtually inaccessible, science needs tools

that extend beyond the reach of the five senses. The virtually inaccessible may include, trying to know what is inside the mind or brain, or buried in the earth's core. We do not observe nature but discern nature through the data we have collected, using instruments, machines or tools, which being themselves limited, our view of the world is necessarily myopic. "Our ever-shifting scientific worldview reflects this fundamental limitation on how we perceive reality," writes Gleiser. It is evident that scientific theories and worldview change, as the tools of exploration improve, as was the case when telescope and microscope were discovered.

However, understanding the limitations of the scientific approach to knowledge should not make us give up our efforts to get to the bottom of things, but rather it should change in us the belief that no question is beyond the reach of scientific discourse. In fact, there are things, such as, the origin of the universe, of life and of the mind, which are "unknowables" for science, and science would be unable to find answers to such and similar questions without violating some of the currently accepted laws of nature. Understanding consciousness, for instance, involves a jump from the material to the subjective, from firing neurons to the experiencing of pain or the colour red. How do we establish that something is conscious? It is through our consciousness that we make sense of the world. That being the case, can we fully understand something (consciousness, say) of which we are a part? "We cannot detach our description of reality from how we experience reality," and therefore we are able to see only to a limited extent what lies beyond, writes Marcelo Gleiser, Appleton Professor of Natural Philosophy and a professor of physics and astronomy at Dartmouth College. (*Scientific American*, June 2018)

Ordinarily the term "Science" is used to denote natural sciences or those fields of knowledge connected with the study of facts in nature observable by five senses. The scope of such knowledge is

necessarily narrow. The field of scientific investigation is bound by *physical nature*. Science, in the widest sense, encompasses every concept related to concrete or the abstract, the seen or the unseen world. Esoteric Philosophy does not stop at physical realm but goes beyond and thus speaks of the existence of astral, psychic and spiritual realms. Both man and nature are threefold. There is visible, objective nature; an invisible, indwelling energizing nature, which is the model for the physical; and above these two changing aspects is the *spirit*, which is unchanging. Similarly, man has physical body, within which is the astral body (or soul) but above these two is the *spirit*. It is by first accepting, as a working hypothesis, the presence of the astral and spiritual, in man and nature, and then using astral senses and intuitive faculty that science can hope to possess the knowledge of unseen realms, which are beyond the reach of even the most sophisticated scientific machinery, as also, the scientific methods of observation, rationalization and experiment. Science needs to use both inductive and deductive methods, of going from the particulars to universals, and *vice versa*.

What is also important is the attitude of mind, to arrive at Truth or Absolute knowledge. Says Narada: "Never utter these words: 'I do not know this—therefore it is false. One must study to know, know to understand, understand to judge.'" There must be readiness to let go preconceptions. There must be an ongoing quest for Truth. There is never any need to accept or reject a piece of knowledge or information, but there must be readiness to put it aside, because "unripe fruits get ripe." Aldous Huxley says, "Knowledge is a function of being," and therefore, as one changes in one's *being*, there will be a change in the quality and quantity of knowledge that one is able to acquire. True knowledge cannot be acquired in any other way except through the regions of the higher mind. Hence unless one lives the Higher life of chaste morality, spiritual perception cannot be developed.

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