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**A Magazine Devoted to
The Living of the Higher Life**

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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KARMA—NOT FATALISM

KARMA is a well-known and familiar term to all in India, its literal translation is action. Unfortunately for most people today it conveys not the idea of action, but that of fate, of destiny, of *kismet*. Men and women, instead of energizing themselves to deal with their own difficulties, instead of standing up and vigorously facing the battle of life, sit down in passive resignation, and refuse to act under the plea: “What is there to do? This is my Karma. This is my fate, this is *kismet*.” This is entirely a wrong and false view of Karma, which is the Law at the very base of manifestation, and without which the conditioned existence could not be.

Evolution means and implies action, and all things in nature evolve through their own motion or action. Karma then is the Law of Becoming. Hence, no one can ever be inactive because Karma is the law of our own being, for our very existence implies action. “No one ever resteth a moment inactive,” says Krishna, but “every man is involuntarily urged to act by the qualities which spring from nature.” From the moment one wakes up in the morning until the time one retires for the night, one is engaged in the performance of action. During the night, one is still active on a different plane.

Karma is both action and reaction, therefore, if a man is an actor it stands to reason that he also must be subject to the reaction from his own actions. The tendency of humanity to look upon Laws of Nature as personal forces, and attribute to them personal qualities and motives of interest, of revenge, of pleasure, or anger has been a

curse throughout history, and from this has been derived all doctrines of propitiation, of atonement, of forgiveness of sins, of obtaining special dispensation, or privileges. The Law of Action and Reaction cannot be altered to suit all our requirements and, it cannot be prayed to, or appealed to by this or that means. It cannot be deviated from its appointed course—it simply is—the reaction must inevitably and without fail follow the action because that reaction is already existent in the action.

Let us take an example in nature to illustrate the impersonality of the Law. We know for instance that the Law of fire is to burn—that is its own activity and it cannot be changed or altered. Fire burns. If a child approaches the fire and puts, let us say, his fingers near the flame, he gets scorched or burnt, the fire being impersonal cannot make an exception in favour of the child; or take into account its ignorance, his innocence, and his sweetness.

Each cause must germinate, unfold, and ultimately produce its legitimate effect. The cause is like unto a seed, the effect is the unfolded plant already contained in the seed. And just as the plant gives birth to new seeds, so too each effect in its turn becomes a cause for further effects. Thus, the past, the present, and the future are intimately connected and interrelated; the past has produced the present, the present in its turn moulds the future. Cause, effect, cause; action, reaction, action again, a mighty chain in which each link plays the twofold part of being both effect and a cause. And all the time the underlying principle is that of mathematical accuracy because the law works impersonally. Karma does not punish, nor does it design or create anything, it simply is the operation of an impersonal law, which ever tries to readjust the natural harmony of the universe, which man is forever disturbing through his own actions.

In every case, it is man who plans, who acts, and thus creates effects and reactions. The law adjusts those effects. When we throw a stone into a pond of water, for instance, we find that the falling of the stone disturbs the equilibrium of the water. Oscillations are

produced, which move backwards and forwards, and this motion must continue until the force is dissipated and the water returns to its condition of rest. What happens in the physical world also takes place on all other planes—Nature forever tends to restore equilibrium and harmony in all of its kingdoms by adjusting each effect to its cause. Any disturbance must necessarily start at some particular point, it therefore follows that equilibrium and harmony can only be restored by the returning of the energies set in motion to that same point. That is why each actor must himself experience the reaction of his own actions, that is why the effects of man's deeds are felt and must be faced by man himself.

The Law is universal, that is everywhere present, operating unceasingly in all departments of Nature. One great distinction must however be made, it is this, that man is the only being in the whole Universe, endowed with the power of free will and self-choice, for man is the highest product of evolution. He and he alone is a free agent in Nature. Below man, the evolution is not in terms of self-efforts but simply in terms of natural impulse. Changes take place in the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms through actions generated by Nature's own impersonal energies, by natural impulses, hence reactions are merely physical and do not entail moral or ethical responsibility for any one particular being. Not so in the human kingdom where each person is the free actor, hence must also be the receiver of all effects and reactions brought about by the causes he himself set in motion. Thus, the physical law of Cause and Effect becomes, when applied to man, the Law of Retribution or the Law of Ethical Causation. Man produces causes and these causes cannot be eliminated until and unless he himself compensates them by experiencing their adequate and legitimate effects.

In the Human Kingdom then, Karma presents two important aspects: first, the merely physical and mechanical one, which results in the reaction of his own action. Secondly, the ethical aspect which makes that reaction an educator by providing valuable experience. Take again the example of the child who burns himself because he

is ignorant of the property, or the *dharma*, of fire. That pain brought upon him by his own foolish action becomes a means of his learning a most useful lesson, namely, that the action of fire is to burn. His own experience enables him to register the fact and become wiser and more careful in the future. This makes us look upon pain and suffering in a very different light, as the legitimate consequences of our own deeds, and wonderful opportunities to gain knowledge and widen our field of understanding. Thus, suffering should be welcomed by the wise man as an avenue for growth and progress. “Woe to those who live without suffering,” writes H.P.B.

Thus, each one of us is responsible for whatever sorrow afflicts him, for whatever difficulty he encounters as well as for all good that comes his way and all pleasurable experiences. Suffering then can be a reaction from one of these types of actions. (1) Action which is of the nature of ignorance. We do not know the law, in any one particular instance, we break that law, we disturb Nature’s equilibrium and must pay the price. (2) We possess knowledge, we know the law to be thus, and yet we deliberately choose to break the law and act wrongly. Both these types of action are simple and understandable. In reference to food, for example, we can either eat wrongly because we know no better, and suffer the consequences in our bodily health, or knowing that such and such a food disagrees with us we choose to eat it and so pay the price. (3) The third type of action that results in suffering is more difficult to understand. We know that such and such a thing is wrong. We resolve to abstain from it, and yet, despite our resolve, as it were, we fall into it again and again.

We all have experienced this particular phenomenon. Arjuna refers to it in the Third Chapter of the *Gita*. He asks Krishna, “By what is man propelled to commit offences; seemingly against his will and as if constrained by some secret force?” And Krishna’s answer explains that the cause lies in the existence of *Kama* or passion, “insatiable and full of sins.” And he goes on to show how it is this passion or desire which is the enemy of man on earth. The

cause of suffering can be traced back to the principle of passions and desires. The Buddha also teaches that the cause of sorrow is desire. And by desire is not only meant lust, evil passions, wrong desires, but every and all desires that are rooted in the personality. People generally try to fight what are known as gross and evil desires only and continue to indulge in gratifying good or indifferent desires, and hence find it difficult to resist their evil desires. Indulging in likes and dislikes gives added power to the principle of desire in us.

The whole basis for acting has to be changed, says Krishna. Instead of acting with a view to the results of action, we must act without personal or selfish interest in action, or because we wish to attain or wish to avoid such and such a thing. It is our attachment to our actions based on our own desires that bind us to the reaction. Become detached. The wise man “who is acquainted with the nature of the two distinctions of cause and effect, knowing that the qualities act only in the qualities, and that the Self is distinct from them, is not attached in action.” (*Gita*, III)

This is a most important teaching that answers the question: Must we forever be bound by this unbroken chain of action, reaction, cause, and effect? Krishna gives the remedy, and it is the same that Buddha gave. It is in changing our basis for action entirely, in performing actions not for the sake of personal man but for the sake of the ALL, the Supreme Self, the Universal Life present everywhere. That is what Krishna means when he tells Arjuna to throw every deed on Him, on the Higher Self, and with his meditation fixed on that Self, begin to act without any anxiety, any personal desire, or any selfish concern. The action then becomes a very different proposition, it is no longer a means of satisfying our own desires, it is no longer a means of bringing about certain results, it is not even a means of satisfying our sense of duty or right and wrong but it is the performance of duty as an offering to the Higher Self, it is a sacrifice which we lay on the altar of One Self.

It demands a complete change in our inner attitude and implies that we have found the Self in us, and have been able to know

ourselves as that innermost principle. Our centre of consciousness has expanded, and instead of thinking of our own good and our own happiness, we think of the good of ALL. Then it is that we are able to follow the advice Krishan gives us in the Ninth Chapter of the *Gita*, where he says: “Whatever thou doest, O son of Kunti, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me.” And the next verse is full of meaning, for he says: “Thus thou shalt be delivered from the good and evil experiences which are the bonds of action; and thy heart being joined to renunciation and to the practice of action, thou shalt come to me.” In other words, “If you renounce all selfish concern in the results of action and perform your deeds as sacrifices to me, then you will not be bound by those results.”

How is this possible in the light of what we have been studying about Karma? Karma restores equilibrium and harmony in nature by adjusting the effect to the causes, whereby all energies must return to the point at which they have been generated. When a person learns to act in harmony with the prevailing unity of Nature, so that instead of acting personally from his own limited point of view, he begins to act impersonally in accordance with the law itself, then his actions will not bring about personal reactions, but such a man will simply generate good forces which will affect the whole of nature for good. Nothing will come back to him as the central point. Then it is that he becomes one with Krishna, the Supreme Self, united to all things. Such men, who have attained this union through action are known in Theosophy as the Elder Brothers of Humanity, the Perfected Men, and the Teachers of Mankind. They have become co-workers of Nature and it is of Them that Mr. Judge speaks when he says that there are beings higher than ourselves “who take an active part in the governance of the natural order of things.”

It may take years, and perhaps lives, before we come near enough to the goal to be even worthy of the attention of the Great Ones. But it is not unattainable, and each one of us can through persistent

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efforts fulfil his glorious destiny and become a Servant and a Teacher of Mankind. Each one of us can begin right here and now. Krishna does not expect Arjuna to change himself overnight. But he does expect Arjuna to take the first step, which is the control of the senses. Let us restrain ourselves, let us not indulge in mere appetites and gross desires. Let us try to know ourselves as separate and distinct from the body and its senses and organs. Then we can begin to fight the desire nature more efficiently, and centering ourselves more and more in the Higher Self, conquer the foe of man “which is formed from desire and is difficult to seize.”

Through an understanding of what Karma is, man is awakened to the sense of his own responsibility, to the realization of his own divinity, he knows that neither God nor the devil can be blamed for what comes to him, but he himself has made his own life what it is through his own past actions. By purifying and transmuting the lower, he may become one with his Spiritual essence. Our future is in our own hands. The present is preparing that future, let us then put aside all despair and discouragement, and give our best attention to the present without expectation, for the one-and-only purpose of becoming better able to help and teach others.

EACH being is a Centre and each Centre is the same as the One Great Centre. Proceeding from the same Source, necessarily, all beings proceed under the same laws. The same Law rules all beings. The power to act and the subsequent reaction—the law of laws which we know as Karma—is brought into operation by all beings to produce the manifested universe and all the differentiations in forms and substance. Thus, there is a connection between each being and every other being. There is a correspondence between each being and every other being. There is a correspondence between the constituents of each being and the constituents of every other being.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE LOTTERY

THE LOTTERY is the short story by Shirley Jackson that was first published in *The New Yorker* on June 26, 1948. The story describes a fictional small American community that observes an annual tradition known as the “lottery,” which is intended to ensure a good harvest and purge the town of bad omens. The story has been described as one of the most famous short stories in the history of American literature.

The story begins by telling us that the villagers begin to gather in their town square for the annual “lottery” on a beautiful summer morning. The village has a population of only three hundred people. The locals are in an excited yet nervous mood. The children are enjoying their summer vacation. As they arrive, they fill their pockets with stones. Then men and women arrive and stand talking and gossiping in groups. Ultimately, family members come together so that each family stands separately as a unit. Some nearby villages have already discontinued the lottery, and rumours are spreading that others are considering to take the same step. However, some people in this village feel that the lottery has always been conducted and should continue every year. An elderly villager is convinced that the lottery is not only beneficial but essential because if the lottery is not drawn, the crops will fail and people will starve as a result.

Mr. Joe Summers who conducts the lottery as well as other village events brings with him the black wooden box. Mr. Martin and his oldest son Baxter come forward to hold the black box on the stool while Mr. Summers stirs the papers inside. The box is old and worn out but is not being replaced because the villagers do not wish to upset the tradition by replacing the box. Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves have prepared slips of paper and put them in the box.

Mr. Summers is about to start when Mrs. Tessie Hutchinson arrives. She is late because she had forgotten that it was lottery day.

She joins her husband, Bill. When it comes to drawing the slips, since Clyde Dunbar is absent due to a broken leg, his wife will draw on his behalf and likewise, in another case, a son is going to draw on behalf of his absent mother. One by one the family heads are called to draw a slip, which they will refrain from looking at until everyone has drawn.

Once the process of drawing the slips is over, the slips of paper are unfolded simultaneously. Everyone wants to know who it is. The word spreads through the crowd that Bill Hutchinson has the *marked slip of paper* and he stands quietly. However, his wife Tessie protested that her husband was not given enough time to take any paper he wanted. Her husband asks her to remain quiet.

There are five members in Bill Hutchinson's family. All five slips belonging to the Hutchinson family are returned to the box. All other slips are dropped to the ground. Now, the Hutchinson family has to draw one by one, a slip from the box. When they have finished drawing their slips Mr. Summers gives the word to open the slips. The slips drawn by the three children and their father Bill are blank. Only Tessie's paper has a black spot on it. Mr. Summers says, "let us finish quickly."

The villagers have forgotten much of the original ritual, but they remember to use stones, which they gather up as they run at Tessie. The pile of stones the boys had gathered is ready. Mrs. Delacroix selects a stone "so large she had to pick it up with both hands," and she encourages others to do the same. Tessie cries, "it isn't fair, it isn't right." The other villagers are relieved that they have not been selected, and hence speaking from the position of security they remind Tessie that "all of us took the same chance," and then soon she is overwhelmed by the villagers and stoned to death. It is interesting to note that though some parts of the tradition have changed or been lost over the years, "they still remembered to use stones," showing this murderous act to be an unforgettable human tradition.

The story has been subjected to considerable sociological and literary analysis. The author and *The New Yorker* were both surprised

by the initial negative response from readers. After its first publication much “hate mail” was received, wherein Jackson received at least ten letters per day. She writes: “Of the three-hundred-odd letters that I received that summer I can count only thirteen that spoke kindly to me, and they were mostly of friends.” The Union of South Africa banned the story because some parts of Africa still used stoning as a punishment. When many readers demanded an explanation of the situation in the story, a month later, Jackson responded in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, thus: “Explaining just what I had hoped the story to say is very difficult. I suppose, I hoped, by setting a particularly brutal ancient rite in the present...to shock the story’s readers with a graphic dramatization of the pointless violence and general inhumanity in their own lives....Curiously, there are three main themes which dominate the letters of that first summer—three themes which might be identified as bewilderment, speculation, and plain old-fashioned abuse. In the years since then, during which the story has been anthologized, dramatized, televised, and even—in one completely mystifying transformation—made into a *ballet*, the tenor of letters I received has changed.”

It is clear that the main theme of “The Lottery” is the power of tradition and ritual, as one can see that even though the original meaning and significance behind the event is lost, it is still continued, just because it has been followed by earlier generations for a number of years. The story brings out the weakness of human nature to perform seemingly irrational rituals, without questioning, simply because they have always been followed. The author seems to convey that every age and culture has its own illogical and harmful traditions.

According to sociologists, traditions and social customs are the *cement* of society. Traditions are often used by leaders of the society to keep their hold on people. Typically, we have religious traditions. *Pandits* and *purohits* expound the *shastras* and tell people to do things with a view to making money. For instance, a *pandit* in the village will advise that one can be absolved of the crime of killing a

cat if he makes a cat of gold and offers it to the deity. Often, a profound truth is hidden beneath a meaningless tradition, such as the one mentioned in *The Light of Asia*. When Buddha was walking by the rajagriha, in the morning, he beheld Singala, a brahmin, who was bowing down to earth and sky and was scattering rice, red and white, in all four directions. When Buddha asked him the reason, he replied: “It is the way Great Sir!” He explained that it was the tradition followed by his ancestors to ward off evil from all directions. The Buddha said, “Scatter not rice” but offer loving thoughts and acts in all directions.

There is some truth in the belief of evil coming from the four directions. H.P.B. explains that there are four Maharajahs or *Devas* who preside over four cardinal points. They are Regents or angels, which rule over the cosmical forces of North, South, East and West. These beings are also connected with Karma but they need *material agents*, such as four kinds of winds, to carry out the Karmic decree. Science admits that some of these winds have evil while others have a beneficent influence on mankind. So also, the Bible says that the glory of God comes from the East while wars, epidemics and calamities come from the North and West. But is it the Maharajahs who punish humanity by sending calamities? No. Man himself, acting individually and collectively, attracts every calamity. *We* produce causes by our thoughts and acts and they awaken corresponding powers in the sidereal world. And these powers are magnetically drawn to and react upon those who produced the causes. (*S.D.*, I, 122-24)

Smriti are traditions imparted orally. *Manu-Smriti* is the most important. It lays down the code of conduct for individuals, societies, families, etc. It is these traditions which prepare a person for a higher spiritual life. “Tradition” may symbolize the constraints imposed by the self-interest of those who have a vested interest in society, and may stand only for special privileges accorded to social class. Yet tradition may also be a symbol of deep knowledge—knowledge passed on orally or by way of example, by those who are called

Teachers of humanity. The question then arises: How are we to determine, which tradition represents genuine wisdom? The ancients always advised that one should not pay attention to popular opinion when a principle is at stake. There are true and false traditions. Some traditions are false from the beginning while there are those which were originally pure but have become confused with the distortions which emphasize only externality. Tradition can become the “cement” of mutual assistance on a spiritual path.

How and why did the tradition of *Sati* or “widow burning” take such a firm hold? It is because people *blindly* follow the traditions. The woman dying on the funeral pyre of her husband is made to understand that she will get “freedom” if she becomes *Sati*. The rite of “widow burning” is not sanctioned in the Hindu scriptures. Professor Wilson was the first to point out that by changing “*yonim agre*” to “*yonim agne*” (womb of fire), the practice of *Sati* was introduced. According to the hymns of the *Rig Veda* and Vaidic ceremonials contained in the “*Grihya Sutras*,” the wife accompanies the corpse of her husband to the funeral pyre, but she is addressed with verses taken from the *Rig Veda* and ordered to leave and go back to the world of the living (*Isis*, I, 541 and fn.). One of the ways to distinguish between good and bad, or true and false traditions is to use our reason and discrimination. We have to follow the intuitive feeling from within which says, “This must be true.”

Although the word “sacrifice” is not used in the story, it seems to hint at the regular performance of human sacrifice in order to ensure good crops. Are human and animal sacrifices mere religious superstition that gods must be propitiated in order to get desired results?

Animal sacrifice as a religious ritual is as 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 now obscure. It has to do with the mysterious magical properties of blood. There are blood sacrifices and burnt offerings. Both 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.

The Indo-Iranians of old believed that the world was created and sustained by many gods and goddesses and that these divinities must be propitiated by prayers, sacrifices, and offerings. Says Shri Krishna: “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...nourish the Gods, that the Gods may nourish you....The Gods being nourished by worship with sacrifice, will grant you the enjoyment of your wishes.’...Beings are nourished by food, food is produced by rain, rain comes from sacrifice, and sacrifice is performed by action.” (*Gita*, III)

In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, Mr. Judge explains that it is not as if food will not be produced if sacrifice, according to Vedic ritual, is not performed, but that *right food*, leading to bodily conditions enabling man to live up to his highest possibilities, will not be produced. It is produced only in the age when the real sacrifices are properly performed. We may conclude that if the sacrifices that thus nourish the gods are omitted, these “gods” must die out and go to other spheres. Moses being an initiate recommended certain sacrifices to the Jews, purely for sanitary reasons. The efficacy of the sacrifices rested in magnetic laws, as the priest collected into his own person the *bad effects* of the sins of the people, and communicated those deleterious influences to the animal—the scapegoat—by laying his hands upon it. The animal was then driven into the wilderness to exhale these influences. The killing of certain clean animals was recommended, as the death of clean animals attracted wholesome preservative influences. (p. 88)

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 intimate relation. In order for spiritual beings of higher spheres to remain as active potencies in our sphere, *i.e.*, in close proximity to our earth, they have to subsist in the vital magnetic vestures, so to speak, consubstantial with vital matter of the earth, which have to be sustained by food, as we have to sustain the body we live in by food we eat. The food by which they subsist and are nourished is 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. The powers so nourished by sacrifice reciprocate by conferring benefits on mankind.

In certain cycles of human progress when a 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 the performance of prescribed magical rites. In other ages when spirituality is on the decline and materialism is on the 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.*

It is important to grasp that the sacrifices mentioned in sacred texts like the Vedas are symbolic, to be performed by the one who aspires to live the Higher Life. Animal sacrifice refers to the killing of animal passions or sacrificing one’s own lower animal nature by *Viveka* or Spiritual Discrimination. At a certain stage of development, the aspirant performs *Nara-medham* or sacrifice of *Nara* (man) which represents “Individuality.” In order to reach the goal of self-realization, first the personality is destroyed or is merged into Individuality and then the Individual “I” is lost in the Universal “I,” or *Nara* is absorbed in *Narayana*. (*The Theosophist*, April 1890)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS THE PARAMITAS—I

YOU are right—Compassion is the mother of the *Paramitas* and we have in our higher nature the Creative Power which everywhere produces the mighty magic of *Prakriti*. You have it in your soul and with its help you must make *Vairagya* your first-born child in the present personality. Also in you is Wisdom, the other side of Compassion. Each one of us is *Purusha*, Wisdom; and also each is the Feminine Power, Nature, *Shakti*; these two as parents produce the first-born, who brings to us the new Life rooted in *Vairagya*. Think along this line and the Great *Vairagis*, the Blessed Holy Ones, will bless you with the gift of more than vision, the touch of *Vairagya* in your consciousness.

Turning to your remark about compassion: you will please study carefully the definition and description of compassion given on pp. 75-76 of *The Voice of the Silence*, Note that compassion is described in very precise terms. We cannot develop it by intellectual study only. We have to take into account the study of what are called the Divine Virtues or *Paramitas*. What Logos, Verbum or Word is to metaphysical knowledge, that compassion is to ethical science. It has seven great aspects which are called the seven *Paramitas*. These *Paramitas*, like the metaphysical pairs of Simon Magus, go two by two. Please consult *The Voice of the Silence* and put down your *Paramitas* like the seven globes of the planetary chain. You will thus find that *Dana* and *Prajna* make a pair; *Shila* and *Dhyana* make another pair; *Kshanti* and *Virya* make the third pair. Remains the middle *Paramita*—*Vairagya*, desirelessness, dispassion, detachment, but which is also the higher desire and the spiritual attachment to the parent and the source of all seven *Paramitas*, namely, Compassion Absolute, This again is a matter of practice. We will not be able to develop these divine qualities or virtues without trying to live in terms of these virtues, not in their lower, but in their higher or divine aspect.

Yes, *Vairagya* is the starting *Paramita*. The *Bhagavad Gita* speaks of *Dana*, *Tapas* and *Yagna* later, but the very second discourse on *Buddhi Yoga* demands detachment—not caring for the results or fruits of actions. We must act; we must not be inactive, but be detached from consideration of the fruits of deeds. All men possess charity as all men possess *Buddhi*, but it is, in most cases, *tamasic* or *rajasic*. The inner spiritual life cannot truly commence without a base, a foundation of *Vairagya*.

The light of daring, of *Virya*, follows *Vairagya*—dispassion. We become fearless because we develop desirelessness. With a simultaneous unfoldment of patience, daring becomes *sattvic*. The order of the *Paramitas* is: *Vairagya* first and then *Kshanti* and *Virya* as a pair. This should be understood and deliberately practised. Begin with daring and patience as mental-moral qualities. Action on the outer plane will follow naturally. That is always the principle of inner application—mind-feeling the cause, speech-action the effect. The reverse is what is ordinarily called *Hatha-Yoga*. The next pair is *Shila* and *Dhyana*, and the final one is *Dana* and *Prajna*. The ordinary kindness, charity, etc. of the good need to be handled deliberately, according to plan, to become spiritual.

Remember that real detachment or *Vairagya* comes from and through attachments and we have to use those very attachments to loosen the fetters of personal Karma by the right performance of duties. Look upon your present circumstances as very suitable avenues to unfold real and universal understanding, true and impersonal sympathy and affection.

High aiming is a protection against egotism. We grow, have to, humbly looking at what remains to be achieved. For earnest students who aspire and also sincerely apply the principles it soon becomes necessary to acquire something of the starting *Paramita*, *Vairagya*. But for the worldly-minded good man the starting *Paramita* has to be *Dana*. Knowledge makes the difference in the very formulation of our aim and ideal—high or low. Once a Master wrote words to the effect that negative goodness will not do for chelaship. So, without knowledge, men and women cannot become good.

(To be continued)

WILLIAM JUDGE: A PERFORMER OF GOOD WORKS

THE spring Equinox seems related in some way to the death of W. Q. Judge. His passing away on the 21st of March 1896 appears significant to the student of the Esoteric Wisdom. Next to his teacher and colleague H.P.B., William Quan Judge emerged in H.P.B.'s movement as the greatest of the Esotericists of his age in the public world—a profound scholar of the Secret and Sacred Science who fired many noble hearts to serve the Theosophical Movement inaugurated in 1875 in the city of New York. There have been expounders of Theosophy whose style of writing was more polished, whose lips were more eloquent, whose deeds appear more indefatigable. But he was a reader of men's hearts and knew their depths. This he did in his own very peculiar way: from his own loving Heart streamed forth the radiance of his Soul's Light. It touched all who came in contact with him, but most make-ups were such that only the shallow surface was affected. Many among them were touched in their psychic goodness and such became his affectionate admirers. Among these were some whose minds also were penetrated by Mr. Judge's radiance and they admired and praised his knowledge and spoke reverently of his noble character in which Gentleness and Patience predominated. But Mr. Judge's Light penetrated the real Hearts of the few who became as those Newly Born.

In his own personal life W. Q. Judge worked with his Soul's strength and those who knew him intimately were amazed at his power to turn adversity into richness, darkness into light. His love saw, understood and helped many and most of them did not even know how he served them.

W. Q. Judge was a performer of Good Works—a true *Karmayogi*. His deeds hid his knowledge as well as his devotion. His patience hid his strength. His gentleness hid the Divinity of Being. His mental charity was so profound that his visible charities

looked small. Only in casting off his mortal body did he reveal the meaning of the Spring Equinox.

The Spring Equinox symbolizes Resurrection. The gods, who are beings of Light, express their radiance in the renovation of Nature. But we often forget that the aspect of death is hidden in the joy of resurrection. Without death there can be no birth and rebirth. Human beings are not always able to perceive the brightness and colourful balm of Spring as the work of the renovating gods, who die somewhere to offer in sacrifice to mortals this joy of birth. Can it be that W. Q. Judge performed his last bodily act in the spirit of a Silent Teacher, demonstrating to those who have eyes to see that Sacrifice in Death, of Death that implies Resurrection?

Such a line of meditation makes one seek for an appropriate message from Judge's teachings. This man of action, who performed deeds inspired by Wisdom and energized by Prana of Bhakti, the Energy of Devotion, what did he say about Karma—the Law which compensates by Death all whom It brings to birth, which renovates what It destroys, resurrects what It crucifies? How can one work with that Law? Mr. Judge's teachings on that subject seem most appropriate to quote on this occasion: "To the worldly man Karma is a stern Nemesis, to the spiritual man Karma unfolds itself in harmony with his highest aspirations. He will look with tranquillity alike on past and future, neither dwelling with remorse on past sin nor living in expectation of reward for present action."

But how to achieve this? "The manas (mind) is the knot of the heart; when that is untied from any object, in other words when the mind loses its interest in any object, there will no longer be a link between the Karma connected with that object and the individual." Only a man, a *Nara*, can do it successfully. To achieve this, we must become Listeners, and resolve upon the task of developing our better natures, by overcoming the opposition from friends and from all the habits we have acquired.

[Taken from *The Theosophical Movement*, March 1953]

ON HEAVEN AND HELL

I

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA advises meditation upon birth, death, decay, sickness, and error. In the Second Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna tells Arjuna that “Death is certain to all things which are born, and rebirth to all mortals,” and therefore, not to grieve about the inevitable. Life is related to form, and form must die. The permanent spiritual aspect in us—the Soul—feels imprisoned during life. For that Soul, “Death comes as a deliverer and a friend.” Generally, it is felt that death comes as an END. Everything—all our aspirations and achievements—vanish with the death of the body, like a torch dipped into the water.

The states after death and the concepts of heaven and hell depend upon one’s understanding of the nature of man. Dr. J. Paul Williams, in his essay on “Belief in a Future Life” observes that the arguments regarding rebirth revolve around the fundamental question: What is man? There are three possibilities. (1) Is man just a body? (2) Is he a body that has a soul? (3) Is he a soul that has [or uses] a body? If we accept that man *is* a soul, then what is the relation between the soul and the body? William James gives an analogy. Light is produced by a candle; if the candle is put out, its light disappears. But light is reflected by a mirror; if the mirror is taken away the light still continues. So also, we may suppose that the body reflects the soul, therefore it is rational to believe that the soul can exist apart from the body.

We may argue that we do not have a *direct* experience of the soul existing independent of the body. Yet, there are innumerable instances of people who have had OBEs [Out-of-the-Body-Experiences]—in which they describe rushing out of the body, observing their own body from a distance, and re-entering it—showing that the soul can exist independently of the body. Just as a person throws away old, worn-out garments and puts on new ones, so also the soul takes up a new body at every birth, says the *Gita*.

ON HEAVEN AND HELL

Most religions speak of surviving “Soul” or “spirit.” However, they disagree as to what happens to it after death. Present-day Christianity speaks of Last Judgment in which the sinners are cast into *eternal* hell and the good and righteous are awarded *eternal* heaven. Mohammedans believe in Judgment Day or *Kayamat ka din* when Allah would judge all human beings and ordain for them *Jannat* or *Jahannam*. Zoroastrians believe that the soul at death waits for three nights to be judged, and on the fourth day goes to the “Bridge of the Requiter” or “Chinvat Bridge,” where his deeds in life are weighed. If the good outweighs the evil, the soul crosses the bridge and goes to heaven; if the evil deeds are greater, the bridge becomes too narrow to cross and the soul falls into a terrible hell to suffer torment and chastisement until the Resurrection. Hinduism and Buddhism both speak of heaven and rebirth. Logic demands that something in man must survive and be conscious, in order to enjoy in heaven or suffer in hell.

The popular understanding of heaven and hell, in different religions, seems like an extension of what we enjoy and suffer on this earth. Traditionally, Hell and Heaven are spoken of as locations or places. But, they should be interpreted metaphorically. “*Crimes and sins committed on a plane of objectivity and in a world of matter, cannot receive punishment in a world of pure subjectivity. We believe in no hell or paradise as localities; in no objective hell-fires and worms that never die, nor in any Jerusalems with streets paved with sapphires and diamonds. What we believe in is a post-mortem state or mental condition, such as when we are in a vivid dream. We believe in an immutable law of absolute Love, Justice, and Mercy,*” writes H.P.B. She mentions that in Christian Theology we get the description of the immaterial Soul “doomed to burn in a material hell without ever being consumed [being of an asbestos-like nature],” by some most amazing intellectual jugglery. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 135-36 and p. 183, *Indian edition*)

In order to have a clearer understanding as to what survives after the death of the body, it is necessary to know that man is sevenfold.

These seven constituents are: the Physical Body, Astral Body (*Linga Sarira*), Life (*Prana*), Desire (*Kama Rupa*), Mind (*Manas*), Wisdom (*Buddhi*), and the Higher Self (*Atma*). In the theosophical parlance the former four elements or lower quaternary is termed the “Personal Man,” which is destructible and subject to change, whereas the *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* trinity is termed as Reincarnating Ego or the “Real man” because it is Immortal and Indestructible.

Generally, when the heartbeats and pulse stop, we say that the person has died. But from the theosophical point of view, this is only the beginning of death. It can be said that out of the seven constituents, the physical body has died, and the process of death moves forward from the physical to other planes. When a man is externally or bodily dead, the inner Real Man, who is imperishable, is busy internally. Before permanently leaving this body, he sees his entire past life, like a movie. The Ego or *Sutratma* views the life just ended, as it was, like a spectator, without any praise or self-deception, and understands the causes set in motion during his lifetime, and sees the justice in whatever he had to suffer. This “review” enables one to understand the power and the justice of the Law of Karma.

As soon as the Real Man’s task of “reviewing” the past life is over, the five constituents, minus the physical body and the life energy, pass on to the astral region called *Kamaloka*. *Kamaloka* is the world or plane of passions and desires. In Theosophy, it is also termed as the “Desire plane” because it is related to, and dominated and controlled by desires. In a relative sense, this world is an invisible astral region, surrounding and penetrating our earth. It is beyond our *physical senses* to know or understand it and yet it does exist. In *The Ocean of Theosophy*, we read that *Kamaloka* is the Christian “purgatory,” and is compared to a slag-pit, meaning a pit into which the waste material separated from the heating of metals is dumped. *Kamaloka* has many gradations since the people in the world differ from each other in their character and many other aspects. These degrees are known in Sanskrit as *lokas* or places in a metaphysical

sense. The gradations not only provide for the natural varieties and differences but also for those caused by the manner of death, which includes natural and unnatural death.

The death of the physical body marks the “first death” but the process of death continues in *Kamaloka*, wherein there is separation of the astral body, lower desires and lower mind from the higher trinity of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* or the Real Man, which goes to *devachan*, *swarga* or paradise after the separation. This is termed as “second death.” After the dissociation of the three higher elements, the astral body, desire nature and the lower mind combine with each other to form an entity called the *Kamarupa* or the *Desire body*. This Desire body is akin to the “soiled garments,” thrown away by the real man while moving towards *Devachan*, and hence our ancestors termed it a Satan or Devil. It is variously termed as a *bhuta*, *Pisacha* in India, and as a spook or ghost in the West.

Where is hell? All the most terrible suffering reminds us of hell. Our earth is considered to be a hell. But for some, there is suffering in the after-death state called *Kamaloka*. The state of the ego and its stay in *Kamaloka* depends upon the quality of life led on earth. Some suffer during their stay in *Kamaloka* while others may remain in a dreamy state. The Ego departs to *Devachan* or *Swarga* or Paradise, taking with it the spiritual aroma or the noble qualities of the last personality. Hence the important question is, how long does the Ego remain in *Kamaloka*? It could be a few minutes, a few hours, sometimes a few days, or even a few years. In ordinary cases, for averagely good people, the Ego leaves the *Kamaloka* practically at once to enter the *Devachanic* state. We may take an analogy. Just as a morally good person dreaming of a murder or crime or theft or sensual scenes would wake up with a start, as it would revolt his moral sense, the same is true for the Ego in *Kamaloka*. An averagely good person who only occasionally thinks of revenge, crime, or lust will be revolted by the pictures of these things in *Kamaloka*. The moral shock to him is such that the Ego immediately leaves the *Kamaloka* state and flies to *Devachan*.

On the other hand, a person who had thought of murder, cruelty, and all sorts of abominations during his life, and dwelt on such things, whenever his mind was free, then after death, when he sees visions of murder, crime, gluttony, lust of every kind, it does not shock him at all. He is used to it. He might stay there for many years. Likewise, if the person was materialistic, *or* if he had some strong unsatisfied desire, *or* if he wanted to convey something to someone on earth, then the Ego of such a person would be detained longer in *Kamaloka*. Similarly, the Ego of a person who has begun to take the first steps toward black magic is also detained in *Kamaloka* for a longer time. It may be a few hours, days, months, or even years. The reason behind the ceremonies for the dead is this belief that the soul may be detained in the *Kamaloka* by the enormous force of some unsatisfied desire and cannot get rid of the astral and *kamic* clothing until that desire is satisfied by someone on earth or by the soul itself.

We may say that *Kamaloka* becomes a “hell” or plane of intense suffering for some of the individuals dying unnatural deaths, such as suicides, cases of accident and those who are given capital punishment. The occult reason why theosophy is against Capital Punishment is that an executed criminal though physically dead, is astrally alive. He is full of feelings of hatred towards society and all those who were responsible for his trial and execution; as also strong feelings of revenge. He can inject into the minds of sensitive and mentally weak people the pictures of his crime and punishment, thoughts of hatred, malice, and revenge, and incite them to commit crimes.

Suicide is a sin because it defeats nature. Nature exists to give the soul experience and self-consciousness. By ending our life, we feel that we are able to escape the pain but actually one is only leaving one well-known house with familiar surroundings to “go into a new place where terror and despair alone have a place.” It involves a change of mode of existence and “perhaps more active form of misery,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*. For, suicide is not

death. The one committing suicide is able to put an end to his physical body only while the inner man continues to live on the invisible plane.

The separation of the lower principles from the higher is comparatively quicker in case of a natural death. But in case of a violent or unnatural death such as suicide, death by accident or murder, or that of an executed criminal, the cohesive force holding together the remaining principles has not come to a point of natural destruction, and hence such a person enters the *Kamaloka* state, only partly dead. If the person committed suicide at the age of thirty, and if the natural life span was of seventy years, then minus the physical body, the partly dead person waits in *Kama loka* for the remaining period of forty years, during which nature slowly brings about the separation, and the personal man, mostly in case of suicides and executed criminals, being conscious, have to suffer and feel the pain. Thus, many years of the lifetime of an Ego are wasted in case of unnatural death.

Those who commit suicide, are consciously alive and awake in *Kamaloka* or plane of desire, with all their cravings and desires, and find that they do not have a body through which these can be enjoyed or satisfied. Such a suicide continually repeats mentally, the act by which he or she brought an end to life. Some of them try to project into the minds of those on earth, who are sensitive and susceptible, the thoughts and pictures of suicide that they have committed, and thus influence the minds of such people on earth to likewise commit suicide. They are able to see the people and places they have left behind but are not able to communicate with them. Thus, their suicide has not only failed to help them escape their suffering but has also intensified it. It should therefore be considered how far it is proper to commit suicide to escape the sorrows and difficulties of life.

Hell is also regarded as that state, plane or place where the Ego receives its punishment. H.P.B. says that no matter what misdeeds were committed by the personality, the Ego never receives

punishment in state after death, except in very exceptional and rare cases. One such exception has been explained by a Master of Wisdom, who says that even a person, who may be a monster of wickedness, sensuality, ambition, avarice, pride, deceit, etc., has still in him the spark of divinity “smouldering under a heap of dirt.” He is then punished in *Avitchi*, “uninterrupted hell,” which could well be a state or place on our earth, “where the culprits, *die and are reborn without interruption—yet not without hope of final redemption.*” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

Mr. Crosbie explains it thus: “A being in *Avitchi* is one who loves evil for its own sake, does evil for its own sake; his only happiness is in inflicting evil on others. Any such being is in *Avitchi* whether he is incarnate or disincarnate. There are such beings alive in human bodies. H.P.B. says that we elbow such soulless beings at every corner. But if one has great knowledge and the kind of nature which loves evil for its own sake, he may be clever enough to keep out of incarnation himself and make use of the bodies of incarnated beings for his own purpose.” A Master of Wisdom describes such a being as “a strong, positive, maleficent energy, fed and developed by circumstances, some of which may have really been beyond his control. There must be for such a nature a state corresponding to *Devachan*, and this is found in *Avitchi*—the perfect antithesis of *Devachan* [or *Swarga*].” It is *Avitchi* which is referred to in the Sixteenth Chapter of the *Gita*, when Shri Krishna says, “Indulging in pride, selfishness, ostentation, power, lust, and anger, they detest me who am in their bodies and in the bodies of others, Wherefore I continually hurl these cruel haters, the lowest of men, into wombs of an infernal nature in this world of rebirth. And they being doomed to those infernal wombs, more and more deluded in each succeeding rebirth, never come to me, O son of Kunti, but go at length to the lowest region.”

(*To be continued*)

KNOWLEDGE—RECEIVING AND GIVING

EBB MUST follow upon a tide, endlessly. The law of action and reaction is universal. Take, for instance, the student-life of the U.L.T. Associate. From being a man of the world, he steps across a threshold and enters a world of ideation quite different from the one to which he was accustomed. He starts receiving a knowledge which previously he did not possess. As he progressively applies that knowledge to life and life's problems, he starts drawing upon a force that was hitherto latent. Albeit in small measure, he has a new knowledge and a new force released to him. It is there and he has used it and experimented with it. There was no ostensible giving and receiving, yet the inflow is unmistakable. It cannot be denied. But here the law steps in. He cannot go on receiving all the time. He has to copy nature and so set a good law moving. He has now to give. The receiving constitutes one arc of the circle which has now to be completed by the other arc of giving. The student's progress depends to a considerable extent on his ability and willingness to complete the circle. All receiving and no giving is as lop-sided and uncouth as its opposite of all-giving and no receiving. Both are wrong and cause a malaise of the Soul. The student of Theosophy has to realize that he is not playing a game of philosophic make-believe. He arouses powerful forces and he must qualify himself to control and use them.

If the student has benefitted aught from the gift of knowledge, the law demands that he give in his turn, and that too in the same coinage and currency. Very seldom is the true assessment made of the fact that the student is receiving knowledge which is in the direct care and custody of the Masters of Wisdom. If he has been the fortunate recipient of it, it becomes his duty to promulgate it to those who are less fortunate than he and have not heard of its existence.

That this receiving and giving is qualitatively different from the ordinary acts of taking and offering is readily recognizable. Yet, the student may, through force of habit, take them in their materialistic

connotation and forget to spiritualize his efforts. To receive without gratitude is to offend against the very spirit of the gift. The man of little vanities and the worldly wise who is usually spiritually dormant do not bow their stubborn knees to divinity nor see in the gift its intrinsic merit and benevolence. There are still others who receive the flame, yet minimize its value and are not grateful. In their case the psychic bonds that bind the teacher and the pupil are loose and may weaken and break through indifference and sloth. The true student alone reverences his teacher, for it is he who fills the want of the pupil. He guides and he adjusts. If the pupil at all appreciates the sacrifices being undertaken for his welfare, he merges himself in the Guru's task—becomes a part of him; a projection of the Teacher who will touch minds and hearts which through psychic idiosyncrasies are not able to reach his beloved Preceptor.

The student in school and college feels no gratitude to the institution and the teacher. He lightly assesses their value and his attitude to them is marked by indifference. This attitude makes the gift paltry and the giving of the knowledge a mockery. No lasting psychic bonds are forged and the relationship of pupil and teacher hangs by a slender thread. The act of receiving, if given its true value, becomes sanctified by gratitude and exalted by devotion. Benedictions are receivable by no lesser sentiments.

Between the acts of receiving and giving, the gratitude and devotion of the disciple gets tested. Is he destined for all time to be a mere impersonal channel for the passing on of knowledge? Has he to be content to act as an agent, a servant, when in fact he can himself become the great dispenser? Will he pass on the knowledge unadulterated; or will he water it down, dilute and mayhap poison it by adding here and subtracting there and passing off in its name what he considers to be the acme of his own exaltation? Selfishness and delusion have thrown many a good and promising student out of the enchanted circle of pupil-teachers. They may not know it and their vanity may blind them to the fact that they are rejects from the school of life.

If the act of receiving is hallowed, so is that of giving. The pupil finds that his taking from the gift has neither diminished nor diluted it. In fact, its lustre is increased by the sanctity with which he has invested the gift. In the act of giving, he can claim no rights of service and expect no returns. It is no light task this: the act of giving. It requires the exercise of discrimination, perspicacity, tolerance and humility. Riding the high horse is alien to the Theosophic spirit. Further, the knowledge is not to be given away to all and sundry, to be scattered like chaff before the winds of chance.

The worldly teacher is apt too often to make a show of his authority; to, as it were, throw his weight about. The teacher of Theosophy dare not yield to the seduction of his high office without shame. “Thy strength is in thy Soul; and thy Soul’s strength is in the storm and not in the calm revealed” is a truism that proves itself in all spheres of life. It applies to the teacher. It applies as comprehensively to the pupil also. That teacher discharges his obligations well who remembers that he in fact cannot “give” that which he cannot claim, that which was never his property and did not bear his label. Yet is his position exalted. For, he becomes a passer-on of a boon—a channel created on earth through which higher influences can be made to flow unimpeded and untouched by pollutants. His high estate comes from the degree of his own merger in the hierarchy of Teachers that has one mind and one heart. The individuality of the teacher has to be lost in the individuality of his group. There is no lesser alternative. His own effacement has to be total.

It is on such lines that the institution of pupil-teachers was based. They receive and they give. Their action is hallowed by the sanctity of the knowledge to which they give life by providing it hands and heart, speech and light.

BEFORE you speak, it is necessary for you to listen, for God speaks in the silence of the heart.

—MOTHER TERESA

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

In the article, “My Fasts” Gandhiji says that his religion has taught him to fast and pray whenever there is distress which one is unable to remove. “What the eyes are for the outer world, fasts are for the inner.” Curiously, he mentions that these fasts undertaken by him are not undertaken for amusement or fame, but because “they are imposed upon me by a higher Power and the capacity to bear the pain also comes from that Power.” The fasts [unto death] undertaken by him are not to be undertaken lightly. “I, must, therefore undertake the fast only when the still small voice within me calls for it....A genuine fast cleanses the body, mind and soul. It crucifies the flesh and to that extent, sets the soul free....Purity thus gained, when it is utilised for a noble purpose, becomes a prayer.” He seems to suggest that fasting and prayer go hand in hand. When one abstains from food and water, it marks the beginning of the surrender to God.

Fasting is only useless starvation unless it is the result of God’s grace. There must be right mental attitude. Just as a prayer could be mechanical repetition of words, so, too, a fast can become a mechanical torture of the flesh. Neither will touch the soul within. Mortification of flesh or body is necessary so that it can be used as an instrument of service. The strength of the soul grows in proportion as one subdues the flesh. However, fasting can prove useful in gaining back the health of the body without taking medicines, if for instance, one is constipated, anaemic, rheumatic, suffering from indigestion, headache, depression, etc.

It is very important to bear in mind that fasting can be resorted to reform a person one loves, but not to extort rights. Gandhiji says that his fasts at Bombay and Bardoli were for the purpose of reforming. However, fasting can be coercive “when undertaken to wring money from a person or for fulfilling some such personal end. I would unhesitatingly advocate resistance of such undue influence....Like all human institutions, fasting can be both legitimately and illegitimately used. But as a great weapon in the

armoury of Satyagraha, it cannot be given up because of its possible abuse. The weapon of fasting, I know, cannot be lightly wielded. It can easily savour of violence unless it is used by one skilled in the art. I claim to be such an artist in this subject,” writes Gandhiji. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, February 16-29, 2024)

Physical body is called *Annamaya Kosha* or the sheath made up of food or sustained by food. Our body is the instrument of the soul and it must be kept strong and healthy. Fasting is one of the oldest and most sacred of spiritual practices which has been used by sages and *rishis* for bringing about purification of the body, mind and soul. Fasting as a spiritual discipline is called *Upvas*. *Upvas* means to dwell closer to God. If true fasting means nearness to the divine within, then it cannot be achieved by merely restricting the intake through the mouth. We need to restrict and purify our sensory intake also.

Mind and body are intimately connected, and when we refrain from eating food, or even heavy food, the mind tends to become more focused and alert. When the physical is paralyzed or weakened, the psychic and spiritual nature of man manifests itself. The custom of fasting is said to have arisen from the observation that in times of war and famine starvation brought on religious ecstasy accompanied by dreams, visions and the hearing of voices. When this austerity was seen to subdue passions and clarify the mind, it took on a religious significance.

Gandhiji’s rite of fasting is commented upon at length in *The Theosophical Movement* for April 1939. It says that Gandhiji’s fasts have been puzzling only to people devoid of spiritual discrimination. Gandhiji’s fasting was a real expression of Soul Force. However, Gandhiji himself discouraged fasting for those not pledged and trained for mental and moral *ahimsa*. He said, “Fasting like some very potent medicine can only be taken on rare occasions and under expert guidance. It is wrong, it is sinful for everybody to consider himself an expert.” The prerequisite for the fast to be efficacious is years of self-purification. Moreover, a pure and true moral outlook is also absolutely necessary.

As for the philosophical basis for fasting, gluttony is considered to be one of the seven deadly sins. When severe strain is put on the vital energies by overtaxing the digestive machinery, the best and only remedy is to let it rest for some time and recoup itself as much as possible. Fasts were instituted simply for the purpose of correcting the evils of overeating. The Buddhists do not have the practice of fasting but they seem to fast daily, and all their life, by following the injunction of moderation in eating. The idea is to learn to control the desires. Hence, we are told that *it is no use fasting so long as there is desire for food.*

Dream engineers, *i.e.*, neuroscientists and psychologists, are using sensory stimuli, such as sounds, smells, touch and even bodily movements to influence the content of people's dreams. As a result, they have succeeded in improving sleep quality and mood, as well as boosting learning and creativity. They have developed dream-induction devices which could be used by individuals to achieve the same results. Though "dream engineering could open many minds, heal others and help us to understand one another more clearly," the researchers are aware and worried about the potential for misuse.

Dream engineering involves dialogue with a self we cannot access while awake, so efforts are being made to find a way to "talk" to the inner voice by influencing dreams without the dreamer's conscious awareness. Research has shown that dreams occur in all four stages of sleep. In the first stage of transition from wakefulness to sleep, we experience "microdreams" which are brief and integrate real events such as the sound of a window slamming, with recent experiences and associated memories. "Stage two, which plays a role in assimilating facts and learning from experiences, and stage three...in which memories are reorganised." These dreams are more prosaic and shorter than those in stage four, or rapid eye movement (REM) sleep.

In its earlier stages, the work of influencing dreams relied on

experiences and interventions right before sleep. In one study, students were asked to think about a personal problem for fifteen minutes before sleep. About half of the students reported that they had a dream that was related to their problem and many believed that their dream contained a solution. Likewise, people who suffered from recurring nightmares were advised to spend five to ten minutes each night visualising a positive end to their recurring nightmare before going to sleep. Another study exposed a group of smokers, who wanted to quit smoking, to the smell of rotten eggs plus the smell of cigarettes during stage-two sleep. They were found to smoke thirty per cent less cigarettes on average the following week.

There is a technique called Targeted Memory Reactivation (TMR), which works by tricking the hippocampus, a region of the brain that is important for memory. TMR can boost the learning of foreign vocabulary and help to tackle implicit social biases.

The idea that we can interact with a sleeping person's brain to influence what they dream about and what they learn is scary. A particular researcher has been approached by numerous businesses that are eager to know how they might use dream incubation for commercial gain. A paper published on "Dream Marketing" says that the methods used for dream incubation allows marketing practitioners to penetrate the sleeping brain and access the dreamer's thoughts with the goal of impacting subsequent behaviour when awake. "It is this type of potential use that worries many in the field," writes Emma Young. (*New Scientist*, February 17, 2024)

It appears that primarily, dream engineering is concerned with having a dialogue with the "self," which we are unable to access while awake, by influencing dreams. To an extent, the dangers of this method have been brought out in the Hollywood film, *Inception*, which is all about "extracting" and "implanting" ideas and thoughts in the minds of others through the medium of dreams. In the film we are shown that instruments like computers, sedatives, timers and "kick" machines are used to reach and implant ideas in the deeper layers of consciousness of the sleeping person.

In the waking life, a hypnotizer can paralyze the will and hypnotize a person of weak will. He can implant a suggestion in his mind. Such a person is known to act on the suggestion of the hypnotizer, even after he has come out of the hypnotic state. Crimes have been committed under hypnotic suggestions. Implanting a suggestion can also be done during sleep, because the will of the person is generally dormant or inactive during dreams. It is possible to give a certain bent to the will of the sleeping person, to produce desired results. It is only the spiritually advanced people whose will can act consciously during his sleep. It can also act on the will of another sleeping person, so as to be able to control his dreams and therefore, control his actions during the waking state (*Transactions*, p. 66). Our dream state is influenced by our waking state, so also, our waking state is affected by our dreams.

There are “ordinary” dreams and real dreams. What are described as ordinary dreams or idle visions are caused by physiological, biological and we might say, even psychic activities of man. The real dreams are the reflections of the activities of the real man, or Higher Ego on its own plane when brain and body are paralyzed during sleep. From the dream state we pass into *Sushupti* or dreamless sleep. In *Sushupti* we exist as our true individuality, unhindered by personality. In this state our ego acts on its own plane and is fully conscious and omniscient. In *Sushupti* state we find solutions to our problems. Many artists and inventors have found inspiration or solution in their dreams for a problem that they were struggling to solve while awake. It is possible to receive an answer in a dream, from our divine nature, if, before falling asleep, a *strong desire* is formulated to receive an answer. But that desire must be high and altruistic because our divine nature has no concern with material things and temporal affairs.

To be able to bring back the experiences of a dreamless state, the channel of communication from *Jagrat* to *Shusupti* and back should be clear like a lens. What and how much our brain can remember of these dreams, depends upon how porous our brain is. For our brains

to become porous we should lead a virtuous life, have fewer desires, and lead a life along non-materialistic lines. The state of mind immediately before going to sleep also affects this. If we are unable to do anything elaborate, then let us say a small prayer which might help to calm the mind.

In Buddhist philosophy emptiness is not the same as nothingness and hence the Heart Sutra speaks of walking the path from emptiness to compassion. According to HH Dalai Lama “emptiness is the way to dissect and dissolve the heart of hatred.” Both love and hatred stem from our mind. We need to rise above delusion and projection. “When we get attached to what we think is real, we are unable to think clearly, as the mind gets clouded.”

It is only when we empty ourselves that we give the chance to our true self to emerge free of all conditioning and programming. In other words, when we are able to free ourselves from the past memories, present involvement and anticipations of the future, we get a chance to connect with Pure Consciousness. The self is essentially empty, because it represents temporary coming together of constituents. The self exists till all that constitutes it act in harmony and thus shows interconnectedness and interdependence. In that sense emptiness applies to all the phenomena in the world because nothing exists in isolation.

In man, *anatma* has form and constituents but cannot exist independent of *Atma*, which is formless, without attributes (*nirgun*) and its true nature cannot be known. A seeker becomes liberated when he knows the difference between *Atma* and *anatma*.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn observed, “You only have power over people as long as you do not take everything away from them. But when you have taken away everything from a man, he is no longer in your power. He is free again.” If we express this in spiritual terms, we can say that the one who can empty himself and become free from all conditioning such as fears, attachments, emotions and

anxieties, cannot be overpowered by any one because he is then *Jivatma* who can connect with *Paramatma*, the transcendental Self, writes Narayani Ganesh. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, January 6, 2024)

“Thou hast to study the voidness of the seeming full and the fullness of the seeming void,” says the *Voice of the Silence*. Here the terms “void” and “full” are used symbolically. The fullness of the world is not intrinsic fullness. We human beings have attributed this fullness to the manifested world. It is as is imagined by human mind. We do not see things and people as they are but we see them from our own perception. Education helps us to surrender our own projections, our own *adhyasa*, our own superimposition of security and values upon situations, things and people. When we renounce our prejudices, or our own notions about the world, we are able to experience freedom, understanding, love and compassion.

The more we build a rapport with our higher nature the better we are able to appreciate the fullness and richness of the spiritual life. When we compare the intrinsic worth of worldly life with spiritual life, we find the worldly life to be empty and void, and spiritual life to be full of meaning and purpose. When we are able to appreciate that we live in the world of projected fullness, which is nothing but emptiness, *i.e.*, it is only when we realize the voidness of the seeming full that we are able to appreciate *intrinsic* fullness or the fullness that resides in the seeming void. Sage Uddalaka asks his son Shvetaketu to bring the fruit of a fig tree and when the boy opens the fruit, he finds atom-like seeds, and within the seed he finds nothing. The Sage says, “That soul that you perceive not at all, dear—from that very soul the great fig-tree comes forth. Believe then, dear, that this soul is the Self of all that is, this is the Real, this the Self. THAT THOU ART, O Shvetaketu.” Thus, the void or emptiness is the *Brahman* that pervades everything and every being, and resides in man as the SELF or *Atman*, the reservoir of all Wisdom and Power, and which is the basis and substratum of the seemingly full universe.

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