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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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THE POWER OF CHOICE

WE know that from the time we wake up in the morning, till we go to sleep at night, we are making plenty of choices—what to eat for breakfast, what dress to wear, what work to give priority, and so on. These are simple choices. But there are also deeper or moral choices such as, to choose to remain calm when someone speaks harshly or insults. To choose to *always* be truthful and honest is a difficult moral choice. In whatever work we undertake, whether it is one’s daily duty or the duty towards humanity, there are plenty of choices which are of the higher nature.

Viktor Frankl, the psychoanalyst, very comprehensively puts this idea of choice when he says: “Man is not fully conditioned and determined but rather determines himself, whether he gives in to conditions or stands up to them. In other words, man is ultimately self-determining. Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become the next moment.” If one is born in poverty, is handicapped, or is surrounded by inimical people, they have the choice, either to rise above the condition or get determined by it. He adds: “Every human being has the freedom to change at any instant. . . . How can we dare to predict the behaviour of man? We may dare to predict the movements of a machine; of an automaton; more than this, we may even try to predict the mechanisms or 'dynamisms' of the human *psyche* as well. But man is more than *psyche*.” Since machines work in a mechanical way, we can predict the way our washing machine or a mobile phone

works. Often, a person who knows well the likes and dislikes, temperament, etc. of another person can predict their choice of colour, food, clothes or even their reaction or response in a given situation.

When a college professor met a student, after a few years, who he knew was crazy about bikes during his college days, he said, “you are the one who was crazy about bikes.” The boy who had grown up replied that he was no longer crazy about bikes. The professor was set to thinking and realized that we tend to look upon people as if they are going to remain the same even after several years. The fact is that we change, physically, mentally, emotionally and even morally. A change comes because we choose to change, either voluntarily or forced by circumstances. Thus, change really shows that we have the power of choice.

Theosophy says that it is the prerogative of man to exercise the power of choice because man has a mind, while in animals it is in a latent state. An animal seems to make a choice when it comes to food, its response to attack, migration to a certain place in a certain season, etc. However, an animal is guided by his instinct, an intelligent higher impulse called the Dhyan Chohanian impulse, in making choices, and it is not comparable to the choices made by man, guided by his mind. Theosophy teaches that eighteen million years ago man was given the light of mind by Divine Beings—*Manasaputras*—in a manner comparable to one candle lighting many. As a result, man was endowed with self-consciousness and the power to think and choose. There are three aspects of the mind: (1) When involved in desires and emotions, the mind is *reactive*, making man an animal-man. (2) When the mind functions on its own plane—thinking and reasoning—it is mind *per se*. (3) When the mind works in conjunction with spiritual nature, it is *creative*—making man divine.

We are more familiar with what the Buddhists call, the “everyday mind,” which is guided by emotions and desires. We gradually discover that it is not wise to act impulsively, based only on emotion. Often, we extend help, overcome with love, pity, or kindness, but end up making that person dependent on us instead of making him

self-dependent. *Light on the Path* puts it thus: “Remember, O disciple, that great though the gulf may be between the good man and the sinner, it is greater between the good man and the man who has attained knowledge; it is immeasurable between the good man and the one on the threshold of divinity.” We are, at best, *good* people but that is not enough to make “enlightened” choices. We need to move on towards becoming spiritual people. To be able to extend help in the right way requires knowledge and discrimination.

If we go a step further, we realize that our choices should not only help another to make progress but also enable us to grow spiritually. Therefore, in addition to choosing to do good works, we must choose to drop the desire for reward, for praise, for earning merit or *punya*, and the feeling of doership or *kartabhav*. Spiritual choices are like choosing between two good things. In “*Because—*” *For the Children Who Ask Why*, a young girl tells her aunt that it is not hard to choose between doing what is right and what is wrong. But when you have to choose between two things that seem good, does it make any difference which way you choose? The answer given is that whenever we make a choice, one way is always better than the other, whether we are able to see it or not. We can arrive at the *right* choice by asking ourselves some questions: “Which would I *rather* do? Why? Is it easier for *me*? Which way will bring the most happiness to others, and least inconvenience and discomfort to others?” This is also the way of choosing between right and wrong, because it is not always easy to apply a moral principle.

When we are emotionally entangled, we tend to *think* emotionally and therefore fail to see things as they are. At such times, if someone can make us see the situation rationally, we are able to make the right choice. However, even rational choices are not always reliable. We find that when we are able to rise above emotions and reason and turn to our divine nature, guidance can come from our higher nature in terms of the “Voice of Conscience.” H.P.B. writes that whenever the lower mind “disconnects itself, for the time being, with *kama*, becomes the guide of the highest mental faculties, and is the

organ of the free will in physical man.” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

When simple reasoning is not enough to help us differentiate between right and wrong, we must watch for the heart response. Also, there are situations in which quick decisions have to be made, such as, in the profession of fire-fighting. One has to then rely on intuition or gut feeling. When the mind works in conjunction with spiritual nature, it is a creative or intuitive mind, guided from within to make the right choice. If the mind is not completely receptive to guidance from the divine nature, then we would experience what is known as a *hunch*, which is partial reception on the part of *manas*. Something within tells us to “do this” or “do not do that.” Some of us have a gut feeling or hunch as to the right course of action, even though we are not able to explain why. We just *know*. Intuition soars far above reason as the vision of the high-flying eagle soars far above that of the ant crawling on earth.

However, we rarely turn within for help. From our childhood our choices are based on the suggestions made by people around us. We follow these suggested ideas which come from our family, our elders, our parents, our surroundings, our society, our customs, our traditions, and our religion. We rarely take the trouble to verify these suggestions. We should analyse and ask ourselves “Am I really making the choice, or am I just being pushed into making a choice guided by one of these factors?” There is very little original thinking, writes Mr. Crosbie. In his book, *The Fear of Freedom*, Dr. Fromm points out that we accept ready-made goals and pursue a career that has approval of the society. Modern man thinks he knows what he wants, while he actually wants what he *is supposed to want*.

“Choices are the hinges of destiny,” says Edwin Markham. It is the hinges in the door that allow us to open and close the door. It seems to suggest that our destiny revolves around our choice of thoughts, desires and actions. We must cultivate the power of positive thinking by learning to displace negative thoughts with positive thoughts. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale writes that when we succeed in casting out old unhappy or unwholesome thoughts the mind

becomes empty. We need to immediately start filling the mind with creative and healthy thoughts. “Then when the old fears, hates and worries that have haunted you for so long try to edge back in, they will in effect find a sign on the door of your mind, reading, ‘occupied.’” They may struggle for admission, but the new healthy thoughts will become stronger and be able to repulse them. Thoughts are the seeds of Karma. We act according to our thoughts, and repeated actions result in a habit, whereby we helplessly do things which we know to be unwholesome. The choice has to be made at the thought level.

However, we should be aware that our choices in the present are influenced by our past choices in the same or earlier lives. The choices we made in the past lives, in the right or wrong direction, survive as tendencies, or *skandhas*, *vasanas*, and *samskaras*. Thus, for instance, we often find that we helplessly repeat some negative behaviour or remain slaves to anger, greed, envy, etc. We are in the same predicament as Duryodhana of the *Mahabharata*, who says: “*Janami dharmam na cha me pravrittih, Janmi adharmam na cha me nivrittih*” meaning “I know what is dharma, yet I cannot get myself to follow it! I know adharma (unrighteous), yet I cannot retire from it!” When we persist and fight against the burden of our karma and karmic tendencies, that is when we make a real choice. Otherwise, what we call “making a choice” is simply getting carried away by the force of past choices. H.P.B. points out that man is a free agent during his stay on earth, but “there are *external and internal conditions* which affect the determination of our will upon our actions.” In other words, the exercise of free will is conditioned or limited by the *external* circumstance, as well as, the *inner* capacities and conditions—both being the result of past Karma.

In the ultimate analysis, for those who want to grow spiritually, there is no alternative to making choices. It is by exercising the sovereign power of choice that we learn how *not to make mistakes*. We crave freedom of choice, but many people go through life, without doing their own thinking or making their own choices. They

THE POWER OF CHOICE

are happy if someone else will tell them, what to do and what not to do, in matters moral or otherwise. It is not suggested that others should not be consulted while making any choice, especially moral, but after taking inputs the final decision must be ours. It could be a suffocating experience when all our choices are made by someone else.

“The more decisions that you are forced to make alone, the more you are aware of your freedom to choose,” says Thornton Wilder. It is a profound thought, because many of our decisions are made for us, or are influenced by our education, beliefs, ideas, culture, etc. Our progress depends upon making choices. Theosophy says that in the lower kingdoms, evolution proceeds by natural impulse. But once the human stage is reached, evolution takes place by “self-induced and self-devised efforts,” checked by Karma. Arjuna does not want to fight, but after the eighteenth Discourse, having given him the knowledge, Krishna tells him to “act as seemeth best” to him.

It is useful to turn to the passage in *Light on the Path* which says that masses of men go through life waveringly, not having definite goals and hence their Karma operates in a confused manner. But those who wish to walk the path of occultism have to make “a definite choice between what are familiarly called good and evil.” No longer is he capable of the indecision of ignorance. Knowingly we take steps on the right or wrong path and every step produces great karmic results. Hence, the portion of humanity that has not decided to walk the path of occultism and therefore make a definite choice between good and evil is the lay majority. But those who knowingly choose good, life after life, walk the Right-hand Path to reach Adeptship, while those who knowingly choose evil walk the Left-hand Path and become sorcerers. “He who would escape from the bondage of Karma must raise his individuality out of the shadow into the shine,” says *Light on the Path*. (pp. 86-87)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE SMALL MIRACLE—I

THE small miracle is a short story by an American writer Paul Gallico, first published in 1951. It is about an orphan boy, Pepino, who is ready to do anything to nurse his sick donkey back to health. At the root of this story is faith, hope and love. Pepino lives in a stable with his donkey, Violetta, in the town of Assisi, a hill town in Italy. It is the birthplace of St. Francis, one of Italy's patron saints. This small boy and his strong and willing beast of burden worked hard to earn enough to buy food and pay for their lodging. Although Pepino was ten years old, in self-reliance, wisdom, and demeanour he was much older. Violetta was a good, useful and docile donkey, having a curious expression about the corner of her mouth, as though she were smiling gently. Hence, no matter what kind of work, or how much she was asked to do, she appeared to be performing the same with a smile of quiet satisfaction.

Pepino and Violetta were everything to each other. For Pepino, Violetta was more than just a means of livelihood. She was mother, father, brother, playmate, companion and comfort to him, as often during winter he slept with his head pillowed on her neck. He lavished affection on her and rarely beat her with the donkey stick. Then, one day, Violetta fell sick. It began with an unusual lethargy and later there was visible loss of weight. Pepino called in a vet who tried his best, but she continued to lose weight and grow weaker. Pepino cried and was afraid of losing his only companion in the world. He decided to take Violetta into the crypt beneath the lower church of the Basilica of St. Francis, where there was a tomb of St. Francis who had loved God's creations, including birds and beasts. He would beg St. Francis to heal her, and had faith that he would do so. Pepino had heard of these things from Father Damico, the priest of their parish. Moreover, his friend had taken his sick kitten into the crypt and asked St. Francis to heal her, and her health had improved.

Pepino persuaded his sick donkey to somehow get up and walk and took her to the Basilica of St. Francis. He sought permission of Father Bernard, a new monk on duty, to take his donkey into the crypt, so that she could be made well again. He was told that it was forbidden to bring livestock into the church, and even to think of taking one's donkey into the crypt was a desecration. Moreover, the staircase leading to the crypt was narrow and winding.

However, Pepino was not at all discouraged because a corporal in the United States Army, who had been stationed in the vicinity of Assisi, for six months, had told him, "If you want to get ahead in this world, kid, don't ever take 'no' for an answer." Hence, Pepino met his friend and advisor, Father Demico, who advised him to see the Supervisor, who had the power to grant or refuse his request. Father Damico encouraged Pepino to meet him, firstly, because he was aware that the Supervisor was too much concerned that the twin churches that formed the Basilica and the crypt should become spots of tourist attraction, and secondly, he wished him to come face to face with an example of pure and innocent faith. He told Pepino that if his donkey cannot be "got in from above, there is another entrance from below, through the old church, only it has been walled up for a hundred years. But it could be opened."

When Pepino went to meet the Supervisor, he was in conversation with the Bishop, who was saying that the lesson of St. Francis's life was plain to all who can read but few were willing to do so. The Supervisor said that St. Francis's tomb in the crypt attracted many to Assisi, but in a Holy Year, we must also have relics. "If we but had the tongue of the Saint, or a lock of his hair, or a fingernail..." The Bishop shook his head gently and said, "It is a message we are in need of...a message from a great heart that would speak to us across the gap of seven centuries to remind us of The Way..." Just then he noticed that Pepino was waiting.

Pepino told them that his donkey was very sick and that the doctor had said that he could not do anything more and perhaps she will die. "I would like permission to take her into the tomb of Saint

Francis and ask him to cure her. He loved all animals, and particularly little donkeys. I am sure he will make her well.” The Supervisor was shocked to hear about taking the donkey into the crypt. He asked how the boy got that idea. Pepino explained how his friend had smuggled a kitten into the tomb by hiding her under his coat. The Supervisor refused to give permission saying that soon there will be people bringing in a sick dog, or a goat or even a pig. The boy said that he would take care so that no one would come to know about it.

The Supervisor was thinking that if the boy was permitted to take the donkey and if she died, then this news would spread and “the shrine would suffer from it.” To discourage the boy he said that even if we gave permission “you would never be able to get your donkey around the turn at the bottom of the stairs. So, you see, it is quite impossible.” The boy reminded him of another entrance that was not opened for a long time, but could be opened just once. The Supervisor told him that it would mean destroying church property, “as the entrance has been walled up for over a century.” The Bishop suggested to the boy to go home and pray to Saint Francis to assist him. “If you open your heart to him and have faith, he will surely hear you.”

The boy stifled his sobs and said that it was important to take her where St. Francis can see her, especially her sweet smile. He was confident that once St. Francis saw her smile “he would not be able to resist her, and he would make her well.” However, the Supervisor stood his ground and told the boy he cannot be allowed. The boy was not ready to give up. He met Father Damico and asked him who was above the Supervisor and the Bishop who might tell them to allow him to take his donkey into the crypt. He was told that above them was the Pope, a great and good man, and if Pepino could tell him about his donkey, his heart would be touched. However, it would be impossible for him to see the boy as he would be busy with important and weighty affairs.

Pepino was determined to meet the Pope, so he left behind his donkey in his friend's care and took a lift in a lorry to go to Rome, to see the Holy Father. At last, he reached Rome and seeing huge buildings and monuments all around, he felt discouraged. But as soon as he visualized his sad donkey who did not smile any more, and would surely die without some help, he gathered courage and approached one of the smaller side entrances to the Vatican. He requested the guard at the entrance to take him to see the Pope. "I wish to speak to him about my donkey Violetta, who is very ill and may die unless the Pope will help me." The guard who was used to having people with such requests, smiled but told the boy emphatically that His Holiness was a very busy man and could not be seen. But the boy decided to come to the Vatican again. The next time he came there he saw an old woman selling little bouquet of flowers, and recalled that Father Damico had told him that St. Francis had loved flowers. Pepino concluded that if St. Francis, a holy man, was fond of flowers, then the Pope, too, would love them. He bought a bouquet of flowers and then borrowing a pencil and paper wrote a note:

Dear and most sacred Holy Father: These flowers are for you. Please let me see you and tell you about my donkey Violetta who is dying, and they will not let me take her to see Saint Francis so that he may cure her. I live in the town of Assisi, but I have come all the way here to see you. "Your loving Pepino."

The boy once again approached the guard and requested him to take the note and the bouquet of flowers to the Pope. The guard had planned to throw away the flowers and the note into the wastepaper basket and return after a while and tell the boy that His Holiness thanked him for the gift of flowers but had an important business to attend and was unable to meet him. But he found to his amazement that he was unable to do that and thus occurred the *minor miracle*, and the flowers and the note got passed on from one person to another till at last they got delivered to the Pope. The boy was allowed to see him and after he narrated the facts, the Pope granted him

permission and gave him two letters, one addressed to the Supervisor and the other to Father Damico.

In the letter addressed to the Supervisor it was written that a mason should be called to break open the old door and the boy should be allowed to take his donkey into the tomb and pray for her recovery. There was something written in the note for the boy which Father Damico explained to him. The boy was asked: “Will you go to the crypt only to *ask*, Pepino, or will you also, if necessary, be prepared to *give*?” The boy understood that it implied the possibility of losing his donkey. He shuddered, but mustered up courage and answered: “I will give—if I must. But, oh, I hope he will let her stay with me just a little longer.”

The masons began the work of breaking the walled-up door of the passageway leading to the crypt. When the side of the archway collapsed it exposed a small leaden box, with the year 1226 engraved on the side, the year St. Francis died, and also the initials “F.” The supervisor was anxious. He said “Let us see what is inside. It may be valuable.” The Bishop hesitated. “Perhaps we had best wait. For this is in itself *a miracle*, this finding.” But Father Damico, to whom St. Francis was a living spirit, said, “Open it, I beg of you! All who are here are humble. Surely Heaven’s plan has guided us to it.”

When the box was opened, they could see a piece of hempen cord, knotted as though, once it had been worn about the waist, a single sprig of wheat, a primrose and a feather from a bird. The Bishop said with tearful eyes, “Ah, what could be clearer than the message of the Saint? Poverty, love and faith. This is his bequest to all of us.” Father Damico cleared the tears from his eyes and said, “Yes, Pepino. You may enter now. And may God go with you.” The watchers saw boy and donkey as they went forward to *complete their pilgrimage of faith*.

(To be concluded)

THE ONLY true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.

—SOCRATES

SOUND AND ITS POWER

IV

MUSIC is defined as the combination and modulation of sounds, and sound is the effect produced by the vibration of the ether, writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 275). Pythagoras had learnt music from the Egyptians. Those who sought admission into the school of Pythagoras “were required to have already studied, as a preliminary step, the sciences of arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and *music*, held as the four divisions of Mathematics.” (*The Theosophical Movement*, Vol. 22, p. 68). Mr. Crosbie writes that (East) Indian Music is of a higher and purer nature. He seems to suggest that music is an expression that is based upon or flows from feeling, and feelings are based on ideas. Thus, “When we realize that fundamental teachings of the East were based upon the knowledge gained by highly evolved beings, and that this great knowledge necessarily points the way to a higher and purer life, it follows that specific applications of this knowledge would be made in every department of human expression. Both speech and music are based upon feeling; all beings ‘feel,’ but there is a wide difference in the ideas upon which feeling is based. A Religion which teaches original sin, separateness and irresponsibility, would inevitably bring about in the minds of its adherents correspondential feelings and expressions; whereas in a Religion which teaches non-separateness, unselfishness and service, speech, music and all expressions of life would flow from the feeling which those qualities engender. It is the ideas upon which the faith of beings is fixed that make all the difference in human expressions....The higher the ideals, the higher and purer will be thought, speech, actions and expressions of every kind.” (*Theosophy*, Vol. X, p. 138)

The ancient Egyptians “understood well the effect of musical harmony and its influence on the human spirit....They had their sacred music, domestic and military. The lyre, harp, and flute were used for sacred concerts; for festive occasions they had the guitar,

the single and double pipes, and castanets; for troops, and during military service, they had trumpets, tambourines, drums, and cymbals....They understood thoroughly well how to extract harmonious sounds out of an instrument by adding strings to it, as well as the multiplication of notes by shortening the strings upon its neck; which knowledge shows a great progress in the musical art," writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 544). In the Healing Department of their temples, music was used for the cure of nervous diseases.

The potency of music and *mantrams* was known to the ancients. The question arises: Is there any scientific basis behind the power of music? It is being rediscovered by researchers in the field of music. In his article, "Miracles of Music," Ramesh Parida observes that a large number of our body processes such as beating of the heart, breathing, shutting and opening eyelids, the menstrual cycle of the females, and many others, repeat at regular intervals. They constitute the "biological clock" of the body and a slight disturbance in their movement can have an effect on the body. However, music can influence the "biological clock," as for instance, it has been observed that a fast, exciting beat can increase the pulse rate by 22 per cent and the breathing rate by over 50 per cent; while slow music can have the opposite effect. There could also be an increase or decrease in the rate of metabolism, blood pressure etc. According to the British Society for Music Therapy, "the effects of musical tempo on breathing can be used to stimulate a proper respiration pattern in asthmatic lungs. Similarly, patients with difficulty in co-ordinating their muscles can also be helped by music with carefully selected rhythmic patterns that stimulate the correct movements." According to Dr. William Saugant, a London psychologist, in simple repetitive tasks, the right music can increase the speed of production and cut down mistakes. "Music too fast or exciting can be damaging, while slow music may mean a loss of production."

In *Psychology Today* for December 1985, we read that "music can move us to tears or to dance; to fight or to make love. It can inspire our most exalted religious feelings and ease our anxious and

lonely moments.” Although there is a great similarity between music and language, music is more than a language. “No matter how meticulously people analyze music and its power over our emotions, it remains elusive, evading verbalization and...largely slipping through the net of scientific enquiry.”

Both colour and sound being vibrations, have a definite impact on the human nervous system and psyche. “Certain kinds of music throw us into frenzy; some exalt the soul to religious aspirations.” writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 275). In an article that appeared in *The Times of India*, a doctor, who is also a practitioner of alternative therapies, remarked that the “body is made up of vibrations, which get disturbed during illnesses. Eventually, only vibrations can balance vibrations. So, along with *ragas*, I also use different *laya* (beats) for each patient. A *vilambit* (slow) beat works for a hyperactive person, while a *dhрут* (fast) beat is more suitable for a dull person.”

The fact that music can influence the inner state of the person has been used by doctors to control mental conditions of patients. In fact, scientific investigations have shown that music can be a powerful tonic both for mind and body. However, experts agree that certain genres of modern music do more harm than good. Loud music excites the nerves, which is dangerous especially for children, and in adults speeds up the pulse and respiration.

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) is concerned with the interactions between the central nervous system (CNS) and the immune system. The nerves in the brain and spinal cord make up the CNS, while the immune system is made up of organs and cells that defend our body against infection. Researchers point out that the CNS and the immune system can communicate with each other. PNI deals with the connections between moods, the nervous system, and the immune system. Music can influence our brains and bodies. Nancy Butcher wrote in an article in *The World and I*, that perhaps PNI explains why music seems to ease some physical symptoms like the pain associated with surgery, childbirth, and cancer and improves some cases of high blood pressure and gastric disorders.

SOUND AND ITS POWER

Though music has a more marked effect on sick people, even healthy people can be energized, entertained and balanced.

“Harmonious rhythm, a melody vibrating softly in the atmosphere, creates a beneficent and sweet influence around, and acts most powerfully on the psychological as well as physical natures of every living thing on earth; it reacts even on inanimate objects, for matter is still spirit in its essence, invisible as it may seem to our grosser senses.” (*Isis*, II, 411)

Yehudi Menuhin, the famous musician, writes about the mysterious influence exerted by music on man’s mind and body and sees it and other arts as a means of overcoming the debasement of human values threatening our civilization. According to him music “creates order out of chaos; for rhythm imposes unanimity upon the divergent, melody imposes continuity upon the disjointed, and harmony imposes compatibility upon the incongruous....As I tried to convey, music is an effort to express through our senses all that is within and beyond their reach. Music is a call, a union—like love—with that which, while within and part of ourselves, is also and by this same token greater than ourselves. This is why music and deep religious feeling have so often been inseparable.” (*The Theosophical Movement*, Vol. 40, pp. 39-40)

The sacred scripture of the Sikhs, “Guru Granth Sahib,” is a collection of hymns, arranged under different *ragas* or musical modes of the Indian classical music system, because it is strongly believed that one can have a spiritual experience through a combination of words and music, *i.e.*, *Shabda-kirtan*. The *Shabda-kirtan* creates an atmosphere of sanctity and helps to establish a link between the almighty and the devotee, writes Kulbir Kaur, a professor of Sociology at Delhi University.

(*To be continued*)

THE WORLD is full of sounds. We just don’t usually hear them as music.

—RYUICHI SAKAMOTO

A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

(Reprinted from *Letters That Have Helped Me*, pp. 289-90)

HIS life was an example of the possibility of presenting new ideas with emphasis, persistence, and effect; without becoming eccentric or one-sided, without losing touch with our fellows; in short, without becoming a “crank.”

Those who have heard him speak, know the singular directness with which his mind went to the marrow of a subject, the simplicity of his words, the unaffected selflessness that radiated from the man. The quality of “common sense” was Mr. Judge’s pre-eminent characteristic. He had the gift of words, but also the far greater gift of a sense of proportion, of a co-ordinating faculty which reduced those words to their proper place, as mere tools or agents, attracting no attention to themselves. His sentences were short and plain; his manner cool and quiet; but what he said was remembered, for his words appealed to the sense of truth; they seemed to “soak in,” like the showers which the farmers prize, while a “torrent of eloquence” would have run off, leaving dry ground.

Whether true or not, it might well be that Wm. Q. Judge was, as has been said, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. His qualities were those which characterized the leader of that period. There was energy on the one hand, and intellect on the other; but there was also a dominating and tenacious common sense, which was not a dull conservatism, but a balancing quality which converted intellect into clear judgment, and blind expansive energy into cool steady work.

For the lack of this, we find that the intellectual element of the French Revolution furnished only a chaos of visionary schemes, while its emotional and animal energies were expended in destructive heat, fury, and froth.

—W. MAIN

Students of Theosophy will remember W. Q. Judge, on March 21st, for it was on that day, in 1896, he passed out of the body.

THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE

FRAGMENT ONE—II

THE word “Yoga” is derived from the Sanskrit “*Yuj*,” meaning union. True Yoga is supposed to bring about the union of the Higher (Divine) and the lower (personal) nature in man. To achieve this, one has to rigidly observe the integrity of purpose and purity of intention in his desires and actions throughout life. To keep his passions and animal propensities in entire subjection is the vow he has to make at the very threshold of the sacred science of Yoga. The *Raja Yoga* tradition emphasises purification of motive and altruistic life so as to prepare oneself for the right use of powers that unfold at the subsequent stage of development. Since there is no higher being than the Spiritual Ruler within ourselves, which is the possessor of all powers and faculties, the first great proposition which *Raja Yoga* lays down is that, the method of the true Yogi is to look within himself for that inner Lord and to let him govern his life. This is the real meaning of “constant meditation,” which the *Gita*, the book of *Yoga par excellence*, enjoins us to practise.

The quotation from the fifteenth chapter of *Srimad Bhagavatam* certainly refers to *Raja Yoga* system. In this chapter, Krishna elaborates on the method required for concentration and list of *siddhis*, and how they work. He says that there are eighteen mystical perfections or *siddhis*, and also meditations leading to them. There are eight “primary” and ten secondary *siddhis*. The eight primary *siddhis* have been enumerated in *Isis Unveiled* (II, 93). They are *anima* or ability to shrink and assume the smallest form; *mahima* or ability to expand and assume the gigantic form; *laghima* or “the faculty of assuming levity [lightness],” which is illustrated in a *Purana* as rising and descending along a sunbeam to the solar orb with its mysteries; *garima* or the ability of assuming heaviness; *prakamya* or the power of converting old age into youth; *prapti* or the power of predicting future events, understanding unknown languages, curing diseases, divining unexpressed thoughts,

understanding the language of the heart, of transporting oneself from one place to another, instantaneously, by the mere force of will; *Vasitwa* or the power of mesmerizing human beings and beasts, and making them obedient; it is the power of restraining passions and emotions; *Isitwa*, or divine power is the spiritual state, and presupposes the absence of the above seven powers, as in this state the Yogi is full of God. These are the eight powers or *siddhis* of *Raja Yoga*.

In *Bhagavatam*, Krishna reveals what particular type of meditation should be performed for obtaining a particular kind of *siddhi*, out of the eight *siddhis*. It is significant that in order to acquire each *siddhi* one must fix one's mind on the Supreme Lord, and those who pursue such *siddhis* without fixing the mind on the Supreme Lord acquire a gross and inferior reflection of each mystic potency.

At the end of chapter fifteen of Canto 11 of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, we read that no doubt it is possible to obtain various *siddhis* through various meditations. For a sage who is self-controlled, having subdued his senses, breathing and mind, and is always absorbed in meditation on Krishna it would be easy to achieve these *siddhis* through meditation. Hence, the essence of advancing in the yoga system is that one must meditate on the transcendental form of the Lord, which is free from any material designation. Such an one would automatically achieve these *siddhis* or mystical powers.

We may perhaps correlate this with the concept of *Sanyama* mentioned in Book III of Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms, which is defined as: "When fixedness of attention (*Dharana*), contemplation (*Dhyana*) and meditation (*Samadhi*) are practiced with respect to one object, they together constitute what is called *Sanyama*," which Mr. Judge describes as "perfect concentration." We are also given a list of powers that can be acquired by practice of such concentration. Thus, for instance, we read that "By concentrating his mind upon minute, concealed or distant objects, in every department of nature, the ascetic acquires thorough knowledge concerning them" (Aphorism 26). However, Aphorism 38 warns that the powers

“described are liable to become obstacles in the way of perfect concentration, because of the possibility of wonder and pleasure flowing from their exercise, but are not obstacles for the ascetic who is perfect in the practice enjoined,” which partly refers to the practice of concentration of the “mind upon the true nature of the soul as being entirely distinct from any experiences, and disconnected from all material things.” (Aphorism 36)

While these powers are extraordinary there are also spiritual powers. We may perhaps understand spiritual powers in terms of six Saktis mentioned by T. Subba Row, which has been quoted by H.P.B. in the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 292-93). Thus, *Parasakti* has been defined as the great or Supreme Force or power. “It means and includes the powers of *light and heat*.”

Jnanasakti is the power of intellect, or real Wisdom or Knowledge, and has two different aspects:

(1) When the power of intellect functions under the influence or control of material conditions, it manifests in following different ways: (a) Senses are responsible for the data or sensations, but it is the power of mind which interprets the data, giving rise to perception. (b) It is the power of mind which recalls past ideas (memory) and thereby gives rise to future expectation or regrets over the past. (c) The power of mind is also exhibited in generating the notion or idea of an external object by using the “laws of association,” which enables it to form *persisting* connections between various groups of sensations. (d) The power of the mind connects our ideas together by the mysterious link of memory and thus generates the notion of self or individuality. H.P.B. explains in the *Key to Theosophy* (Indian Edition, p. 34) that the complex feeling that “I am Mr. Smith,” means a long series of daily experiences strung together by the thread of memory, and forming what Mr. Smith calls “himself.”

(2) When the power of intellect is liberated from the bonds of matter, it manifests as Clairvoyance and Psychometry, among other things.

Clairvoyance is “clear seeing.” *The Theosophical Glossary* defines it as “the faculty of seeing with the inner eye or spiritual sight....Real clairvoyance means the faculty of seeing through the densest matter, and irrespective of time (past, present and future) or distance.” True Clairvoyance involves the ability to see as well as to *interpret* correctly what is seen in the astral and Akasic planes. True clairvoyance is also called seership and a true clairvoyant is called a “seer,” who can “see things visible and invisible...at any distance and time with his spiritual or inner sight or perceptions.” (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

Spiritual visions become possible by one of the two methods. An adept may receive direct impressions from his spirit by paralyzing at will, the memory, fancy, instinctual or independent action of cells and organs in the body, and automatic activities of the brain. In *Isis Unveiled* (II, 591), we are told that unless these are paralyzed, they pose an obstacle to spiritual vision, which gets further distorted by vibrations of astral waves, even in a high state of *dharana*. According to post-Vedic tradition the *Rishi* is a “seer” (*mantra-drashta*) to whom the Vedas were “originally revealed” through states of higher consciousness.

Itchasakti is the *power of the Will*. It is also described as “force of desire.” On spiritual plane desire is indistinguishable from Will. But on our plane, the distinction is made between the two, and the desire is regarded as the mover of the Will. Both Will and desire are creative forces, but whereas desire creates blindly, Will creates intelligently. Will is the divine power of the Spirit within—illimitable and exhaustless. We have limited that power by entertaining small, mean and selfish desires. Moreover, the ideas give the direction to the power of Will, but what we lack are universal ideas. Will is the most developed and powerful in human beings. Man, alone, can give conscious impulse to the force of Will.

Some people develop Will power through various Yoga practices. But the development of *Spiritual Will* or *perfected human Will* requires cultivation of unselfishness and readiness to be assisted,

guided and instructed by our divine nature. In other words, Spiritual Will could be developed only when we have learnt to drink, to the last bitter dregs, what the cup of life holds for us, without a murmur, and realize that the adverse and painful circumstances are for our experience and discipline. When we are ready to sacrifice the personal nature, so that the lower nature loosens its hold on the higher, then all the power and force of the divine nature becomes available. The more we pay heed to the “Voice of Conscience” within, the greater will be the development of our Will. When the attitude is, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,” and when the lower, personal nature is purified so that it is brought closer to the divine nature, then our prayer becomes *Will prayer*.

“A Yogi generally performs his wonders by means of *Itchasakti* and *Kriyasakti*” (*S.D.*, I, 293). *Kriyasakti* is the highest power of thought, which makes of man a creator, and it lies latent within each one of us, but only in few it has been called to life and developed. This creative potency is described as “the mysterious *power of thought* which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy. The ancients held that any idea will manifest itself *externally*, if one’s attention (and Will) is deeply concentrated upon it.”

The Secret Doctrine teaches that in the first portion of the third race incarnated the “Sons of Wisdom” and produced by *Kriyasakti*, a progeny called the “Sons of Will and Yoga.” It was a *conscious act* of Will. The race thus produced immaculately has been described as the “ancestors” (the *spiritual* forefathers) of all the subsequent and present Arhats, or *Mahatmas*.

In the Fourth Chapter of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, “I am born but through my own *maya*, the mystic power of self-ideation, the eternal thought in the eternal mind.” Mr. Judge comments in the footnote that in the *Varaha Upanishad* it is stated that “the whole of the universe is evolved through *Sankalpa* [thought or ideation] alone; it is only through *Sankalpa* that the universe retains its appearance.”

(*To be continued*)

DRAGONS OF WISDOM

SYMBOLS of dragon and serpent figure in the traditions and mythos of the ancient world. Art forms of these saurians may be seen in almost every part of the world. Modern antiquarians and scholars of comparative mythology have made detailed study of these symbols and myths for over a century and half, and have published the results of their extensive research. Unacquainted with the science of symbology of the ancient people, they have, one and all, given their own interpretation of these symbols and myths; some seeing in them phallic significance, and some others nothing but fanciful imaginings of ancient people. But what is striking in the comparative study of myths and symbols of the ancient world is the uncanny similarity between mythological and allegorical themes occurring among ancient peoples so widely scattered over the globe despite the fact that there could have been no possible means of intercommunication between them. This is so especially in respect of astronomical and zodiacal symbols and myths. How then can one account for such similarity? This unmistakably points to the fact that there must have been a universal science of cosmology diffused throughout the world among all peoples, from remotest times, which have been preserved in symbols and myths. It thus stands to reason that unless one is versed in the science of symbolism, their real significance cannot be discerned.

One of the reasons, among others, why the Theosophical Movement was launched towards the end of the 19th century was to demonstrate to the world with proofs that such a universal Wisdom-Science has always been in existence from time immemorial, and that it is the fountain source of all the sciences, religions, and philosophies of the world, and that it is recorded in symbols and emblems.

“The great archaic system known from prehistoric ages as the sacred Wisdom Science, one that is contained and can be traced in every old as well as in every new religion, had, and still has, its

universal language...the language of the Hierophants, which has seven 'dialects,' so to speak, each referring, and being specially appropriated, to one of the seven mysteries of Nature. Each had its own symbolism. Nature could thus be either read in its fulness, or viewed from one of its special aspects." (*S.D.*, I, 310)

All of the seven keys to ancient symbols are in possession of Initiates. The Adept fraternity have now partly revealed to the world, through their Messenger and Teacher, Madam H. P. Blavatsky, a few of the keys to symbolism. Even so little that has been given is so vast in scope that it gives students of Theosophy an intuitive bird's eye view of the outlines of the mysteries of cosmic and anthropological evolution, psychological and spiritual mysteries, and a philosophical explanation of the enigma of good and evil. Very few of the many significations of the symbol of the Dragon are touched upon in this article, avoiding as much as possible too high metaphysical concepts.

Serpent is the most appropriate symbol of the immortal reincarnating Ego. As the serpent periodically casts off its old skin and puts on a new one, so the Divine Ego, the eternal I-am-I consciousness of man, casts off the old body and acquires a new one during the course of the cycles of his birth and death. Theosophy teaches, moreover, that "the Earth and Man cast off periodically, serpent-like, their old skins, to assume new ones after a time of rest" (*S.D.*, II, 74). Science corroborates the ancient teaching that man renews his skin periodically, serpent-like. In verse 4 of Stanza I of *Anthropogenesis* (*S.D.*, II, 46), we read: "And after great throes she (the Earth) cast off her old three and put on her new seven skins, and stood on her first one." The Earth casting off her old three skins, Theosophy teaches, refers to the three preceding Rounds which she had already gone through, and is evolving through our present fourth Round out of the seven.

"At the beginning of every new ROUND, after a period of "obscuration," the earth (as do also the other six 'earths') casts off, or is supposed to cast off, her old skin as the Serpent does; therefore

she is called in the *Aitareya-Brahmana* the *Sarpa Rajni*, ‘the Queen of the Serpents,’ and ‘the mother of all that moves.’ The ‘Seven Skins,’ in the first of which she now stands, refer to the seven geological changes which accompany and correspond to the evolution of the Seven Root-Races of Humanity.” (*S.D.*, II, 47)

In the *Aitareya-Brahmana*, again, the earth is called “the Serpent Queen” for another reason, that before our earth became egg-shaped, a long trail of Cosmic dust moved and writhed like a serpent in space, before it assumed globular shape. (*S.D.*, I, 74)

Serpent swallowing its tail, forming a circle, is an ancient symbol representing infinitude and eternity as well as that of recurring, beginningless and endless, Manvantaric evolution of the universe and man, originating from the Unknown and returning back to the source, to go forth again, after a period of rest, each such going forth on a higher plane, in an ever-ascending progression by cycles. Within this great Cycle of Manvantara run smaller cycles of planetary, racial, civilizational, and individual cycles of reincarnation.

The First Cause—which radiates periodically from the Absolute, therefore, unknown and unknowable Causeless Cause—of the origin of the Universe is the Intellectual Soul of the World, called Mahat in Sanskrit and by various other names in cosmogonies of various peoples, such as, Avalokiteswara, Iswara, Kwan-shai-yin, Ormuzd, and so on. It is symbolized as the Great Dragon of Wisdom. In the verse 7 of the Stanza III, it is graphically referred to as, “...Unparalleled refulgent glory: Bright Space, Son of Dark Space, which emerges from the depths of the great dark watersHe shines forth as the Son; He is the blazing Divine Dragon of Wisdom...” (*S.D.*, I, 29). It is the synthetical aggregate of a hierarchy of divine creative powers who fashion and build the universe according to the ideal plan in the Universal Mind following the cosmic and Karmic law. The highest of these intellectual cosmic powers are also known as the Dragons of Wisdom, or Serpents of Wisdom, being the emanations (or, figuratively, Sons) of the Great Dragon.

In the course of differentiation of the unitary spirit-substance into

multiplicity of beings and states of matter in seven steps on the descending scale, from the spiritual plane down to the physical, results in each step of the descent progressively obscuring the light of Spirit by the material *upadhi* or vehicles in which the Spirit becomes embodied. Hence, the absence of Light of Spirit and predominance of unintelligent matter over the clear light of spiritual consciousness on the lower plane leads to error, and is, therefore, called Evil; which theologians in their fancy have made into an extra-cosmic entity called Devil or Satan. Above it is effulgent Light or God, below it is differentiated life and light—darkness. Both are one in eternity but dual in manifestation—Good and Evil, God and Satan.

So is man, the microcosm of the macrocosm. He is a dual soul—mortal and immortal. His true Self and nature is divine: Atma, Buddhi, Manas—three in one and one in three. It is the Saviour of man, symbolised as the Good Serpent. It reflects itself in every incarnation in the lower quaternary as the mortal personal self, conquered generally by the principle of Kama, animal passions and desires, leading man into error—hence Evil depicted as poisonous serpent. Ego is one, dual in incarnation—Good and Evil, God and Satan.

Akasa, the primordial divine Spirit-Substance, is the noumenon of sevenfold differentiated Prakriti, whose first manifestation is Mahat on the divine plane—the plane of the Blazing Dragon of Wisdom, already alluded to; on the lower rung of the ladder of Being, it becomes Astral Light: the former, so to say, forms the divine Soul and Spirit in man, and the latter his lower quaternary. Thus, the dual man is constituted of the dual Light—the good and evil, the divine and the infernal. The Astral Light being on the plane of the lower mind absorbs the vile emanations and inequities of man on earth, reflects them back on mankind causing calamities, and moral and physical epidemics which periodically sweeps across nations. It is a great deluder and tempter of man, which if not conquered leads man to moral ruin. It is symbolized as the evil serpent. If man is to

spiritually regenerate himself to become immortal—the constant endeavour by him towards that end being his duty and destiny—he must conquer and subdue the Astral Serpent by his spiritual Will. This is allegorised as Krishna dancing on the head of the five headed poisonous serpent, Kaliya (Kalinga), subduing and driving him away, with his brood, to the ocean, freeing the people of Mathura from his depredations. This dualism of the Ego is found in all in the mythos of old peoples as: Bel and Dragon of Chaldea, Apollo and Python of Greece, Osiris and Typhon of Egypt, Kartikeya (Kumara) and the serpent, which he is depicted as subduing with his spear, in Indian tradition, and so on.

The Personal self, or terrestrial man, under the dominion of the Dragon Apophis, is enemy to himself, unless he takes refuge in and is guided by the Serpent of Wisdom, Divine Ego. He who slays the former by the aid of the latter and attains immortality is called the Dragon Slayer, becomes the Serpent of Wisdom himself. The great Hierophants and Sages call themselves as sons of Serpent-god or the Sons of the Dragon—the symbol of Wisdom and Immortality. Jesus used this symbol of the serpent standing for wisdom as is seen in his saying, “Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” (*Matthew* 10:16)

The Allegory of the “War in Heaven,” in one of its meanings is the terrible war the candidate for initiation into Sacred Mysteries has to wage in himself against the animal and human passions of his lower self—the Dragon Apophis—in which contest he either fails or succeeds to crush out the Dragon of darkness. If he succeeds, he would be one of the renowned “Dragon Slayers,” and becomes a “Son of the Serpent” and the Serpent of Wisdom himself, “having cast off his old skin and being born in a *new* body, becoming a Son of Wisdom and Immortality in Eternity.” (*S.D.*, II, 380)

A GENTLE word, a kind look, a good-natured smile can work wonders and accomplish miracles.

—WILLIAM HAZLITT

NADA—THE EASTERN PERSPECTIVE ON SOUND

RESEARCH shows that modern humans skew heavily towards visual dominance. Sixty-five per cent of people are visual/spatial learners while only thirty per cent are auditory learners. The near ubiquity of screens around us and the ensuing bombardment of visual stimuli right from childhood is only making this skew worse. However, in the ancient East, oral transmission and hence the auditory sense was given primacy and the rudimentary sense of hearing with its associated primordial element of Ether was considered to be the first sense-element to be evolved. Hence, all of creation or involution was seen from the standpoint of sound or music and naturally spiritual evolution as well was considered from the same standpoint.

Moreover, advances in modern medicine and the ensuing increase in life-expectancy is belying the underlying health crisis progressively affecting younger people. From a theosophical perspective, the moral root-cause of ailments afflicting humanity is that of Sakkayaditthi (in Pali) or Sat-Kaya-Drsti (in Sanskrit) which is the delusion of personality also called the “great dire heresy of Separateness” in the *Voice of the Silence*. The more one feels separate from his fellow men and nature in general, the more one is in dissonance with reality. And this dissonance expresses itself physically as diseases of various sorts.

Sakkayaditthi exists as long as illusion persists. But who awakens this illusion? The mind—the great slayer of the Real. And hence this statement from *Nadabindu* Upanishad brings it all together: *Nado yavan manastavan*—Mind exists so long as Nada exists. So, let us look at creation from the perspective of Sound, which will give us certain hints on overcoming this moral cause of all diseases, that of “the great dire heresy of Separateness.”

The progression of manifestation can be conceived of in the uniquely eastern perspective of sound. Here we will only be considering the terms of the formula in the abstract and not tie it

down to any particular level of manifestation of which there are seven.

The causeless cause is absolute silence or darkness and is assigned the number 0.

In it, the first differentiation or first cause can be called Brahma. It can be correlated to the universal Ideation which is Nada or reverberance and assigned the number 1.

In all cosmogony, this first cause is shown to separate from itself the substance or basis of all subsequent objective manifestations which can be correlated to Voice or *Shabda*—the primordial, unmodified sound. And these two, Ideation and Voice can be assigned the number two, referencing Father-Mother or Purusha-Prakriti.

Then, Brahma is reborn as Viraj through (not from) Vak, giving rise to Father-Mother-Son or Ideation-Voice-Word. This stage from the perspective of sound is AUM, the enunciated Akshara. While AUM is said to be monosyllabic, when pronounced, it is still formed of three sounds A, U, and M. Hence, it is the Trinitarian-One (as we see in the *Secret Doctrine*). And hence assigned the number 3.

Viraj, in manifestation, is the “Word made Flesh,” or the Creative Logos, or Kala Hamsa. When seen from the perspective of Sound, one gets an intuitive feel for the distinction between the Word and its concrete representation. Here, the *Kala Hamsa* is also AUM but when expressed in writing requires four glyphs or Matras to represent. When spoken or enunciated, this monosyllabic Pranava consists of three-sounds-in-one but when concretized into writing, needs four glyphs to represent. These 4 glyphs are depicted as the *Kala Hamsa* in the *Nadabindu* Upanishad as A forming the right wing, U, the left wing, M the tail and the 4th glyph that shortens the M which is called Ardha-Matra (half metre) or Halanta to be the head. This of course will be assigned the number four. The sum total of all these numbers is ten, forming the higher Tetractys.

Now, this manifested AUM when enunciated in Vedic Sanskrit requires us to choose one of three tones for each Vowel. Of the three

sounds of AUM, A and U are vowels or Swara, while M is a consonant or Vyanjana. The base tone for vowels is called Udatta. Two semitones lower than the base is called Anudatta and is represented in Devanagari with a horizontal dash under the vowels. And one semitone higher is called Svarita which is represented in Devanagari with a vertical dash on top of the vowels.

Now, for each tonal choice of the vowel A, we have three choices for U and hence we have three times three or nine choices. All of which really only represent the one monosyllabic AUM and hence it is one and nine. As we see in (*S.D.*, I, 98): “*The voice of the Word, Svabhavat, the numbers, for he is one and nine.*” This is the lower or manifested Tetractys represented by Pythagoras with 9 triangles within the one triangle that subsumes them all.

Now we come to the last level of manifestation where language is created. Here, the same AUM in its final manifestation as the triple Hypostases or (three divine) Avasthas, or Brahma-Vishnu-Maheshwara, is said to give rise to the Maheshwara Sutras. Tradition holds that Maheshwara as Nataraja completed his cosmic dance of creation and finally played his Damaru (power drum) in seven pairs or fourteen times which gave rise to the Maheshwara Sutras.

These can be correlated to the two contrary forces of centripetal and centrifugal, or positive and negative forces interacting to bring forth the seven creations found in all cosmogonies. The Maheshwara Sutras sound like gibberish to the uninitiated but it forms the foundation on which Panini Grammar stands. And unlike English grammar, Sanskrit grammar is not just prescriptive but actually generative. It creates words from Stems called Dhatus and generates the entire Sanskrit compendium of words.

We saw how AUM, the three-in-one sound gave rise to the higher Tetractys ($1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$), how along with the three tonal variations of Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita, it gave rise to the lower Tetractys ($3 \times 3 + 1 = 10$) and finally with Maheshwara Sutras ($3 + 7 = 10$) gave rise to language. Interestingly, the same idea of the triadic AUM in its triple manifestation is seen under Hermetic

symbology, as Triple-Triads in Orphic cosmogony and Pistis Sophia.

To understand why language is given such importance in Eastern tradition, let us consider some germane modern research related to perception. When we see, for example, a tree, there is what is called a bottom-up perception which is quite intuitive. The image of the tree is projected onto the retina which converts it into electrical signals for the brain. The brain recreates (we think faithfully) an internal representation of the tree in our mind. The process up to this point is simply physical sensation. Now a *sui generis* process called apperception, takes place. We perceive this internal representation as not-self but relate to it and bring it in relationship with other internal objects or categories, thus establishing a position for it in the world of Name and Form or Nama-Rupa.

Simultaneously with the bottom-up process, a non-intuitive top-down process also takes place. The frame of reference that is our belief or value-system, which generates meaning, is pushed-down or projected onto this reality. So, if one were a lumberjack, one would not see the tree but rather the logs. If one were hungry, one would not see the tree but rather the fruits on the tree and so on. Now, the bottom-up process is converting sensation to language—the language of the mind which are thoughts. And the top-down process is projecting our internal language onto reality. This is why Carl Jung said that “*perception is projection.*” It is impossible to perceive anything outside of one’s frame of reference which is essentially one’s internal language or Qualia. And hence Language IS Reality. And since all of language is generated from AUM as we have seen, *Mandukya upanishad* says, all this is verily AUM.

Hence, in three stages, the same AUM has generated more and more heterogeneous realities until, on this plane, our internal language or frame of reference becomes unique to each person as our personality. As the post-modernists would say, our personality is a unique intersectionality. But identifying oneself with this separative idea of personality is the disease, the great dire heresy of separateness.

So, if language IS reality, then to elevate our reality, we have to elevate our language—that of the mind as well as the tongue. To do so, we have to look to music as the most refined form of language on our plane.

In Eastern Music (*sangeet*) one song typically consists of two aspects that interleave each other—*Manodharma* and *Kriti*. *Manodharma* is the free-form improvisation while *Kriti* is the fixed composition. In life, these seem to correspond to Free-Will and Destiny. *Manodharma* is said to be beautiful when it is in greater fidelity with the Raga in which the *Kriti* is composed. While there is room for improvisation, it needs to be within the confines of the Raga. In life, this corresponds to the use of Free-Will, strictly within the confines of Dharma. The *Kriti* aspect of the song is said to be beautiful when it is in exact adherence to the composition as conceived by the composer. In life, this corresponds to the complete surrender to the decree of Karma which proceeds from Ishwara, and hence is Divine Will.

Accepting of one's situation in life as a result of one's own prior Karma and the concerted effort to act within one's Dharmic exigencies, slowly dissipates the coarseness of the personal idea. Robert Crosbie calls the Destiny aspect "Reaping" and the Free-Will aspect "Sowing." It is only by perfecting our Sowing and Reaping, can we elevate the Song of Life to the non-duality of AUM and hence heal the discordant disease of Separateness.

YOU CAN give without loving, but you can never love without giving. The great acts of love are done by those who are habitually performing small acts of kindness. We pardon to the extent that we love. Love is knowing that even when you are alone, you will never be lonely again and the great happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, loved for ourselves and even loved in spite of ourselves.

—VICTOR HUGO

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

RECENTLY, a court in India sentenced a convict in the rape and murder case to life imprisonment until death. However, people across the country wanted capital punishment. This has raised certain questions: Does capital punishment have a place in a civilised society and is that the deterrent to heinous crimes? There are some countries that have abolished capital punishment, and the Arab Islamic nations still decapitate the convicts in the public. And yet rapes, murders and highway robberies happen periodically in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Then, what purpose does capital punishment serve? Why do masses insist upon the same? “There is a fine line between justice and vengeance. It is easy to cross that line when you are consumed by anger and grief. While justice aims to restore order and uphold righteousness, vengeance is driven by anger and desire for retaliation....It is important to exercise caution and restraint...and act with a clear mind and a sense of fairness in the pursuit of justice, rather than let emotions cloud our judgment,” writes Sumit Paul. The struggle for existence can bring out peaceful and ethical approach in some, while in others, violent and ruthless approach.

“But what then is capital punishment but the most premeditated of murders, to which no criminal’s deed, however calculated it may be, can be compared?” wrote Albert Camus. When we decide to take a life when a life has been lost, it is revenge, not justice. The duty of the state is to protect the lives of its citizens, be they criminals or commoners. Most societies refrain from capital punishment because it is degrading for both, those who impose and also on whom it is imposed. Firstly, capital punishment is irreversible. Also, in this mode of punishment there is no guarantee that innocent people will not be put to death. “Returning hate for hate multiplies hate....Humans have to be humane to universally discard death rap as an outright inhuman act, thought and practice. It must prick our conscience,” writes Sumit Paul. (*The Free Press Journal*, February 8, 2025)

H.P.B.'s advice has been that human laws must be restrictive and not punitive, because we do not have the wisdom to mete out adequate punishment, such that it would give the person chance to repent and turn the corner. The occult reason why theosophy is against Capital Punishment is that an executed criminal though physically dead, is astrally alive. He is filled with the feeling of hatred towards society and all those who were responsible for his trial and execution; as also strong feelings of revenge. He can inject thoughts of crime into the minds of sensitive and mentally weak people and incite them to commit crime. We then hear of cases in which a crime is committed by weak persons who appear to be carried away by some outside force. While in the body, a criminal is able to influence only a few, but after death, living in the astral body, his area of influence is unlimited.

H.P.B. seems to suggest that a criminal is like a leper born in a leper colony. No one is born a criminal, and society or circumstances are also responsible for making a person what he is. So much of terrorism is in the name of religion, and arises from the false and literal interpretation of lofty spiritual concepts.

What is the best method of reforming the criminals? Rehabilitation, imprisonment and religious rehabilitation programmes have been considered to be better alternatives to hanging. Unfortunately, prisons, which seek to improve the character of prisoners, tend to degrade it instead, as they lack empathy. No lasting reform can be achieved unless human nature is changed. The individual criminal needs to have ideals put before him that can prompt a change in his mental and moral outlook.

Let us remember that all crimes are not premeditated. At times, they are committed on the spur of the moment and the person is truly repentant. "We have to learn to look intelligently into the hearts of men." We cannot isolate ourselves from the wicked and foolish people, because the world that we live in today is of our own making. "Remember that the sin and shame of the world are your sin and shame; for you are a part of it; your Karma is inextricably interwoven with the great Karma," teaches *Light on the Path*.

Today, when we look at the world around us, we experience despair and powerlessness. But we, human beings, are not powerless. Each human being has immense potential as he partakes of the limitless life force of the cosmos, writes Daisaku Ikeda. His mentor, Josei Toda said that for realizing peaceful existence, it is essential that one individual becomes wiser, stronger and more compassionate and thus initiates the process of inner transformation. "I firmly believe that a great human revolution in just one person can be the start of a transformation in the destiny of whole societies and all humankind."

When we make a powerful resolve every nerve and fibre of our being will orient itself towards the fulfilment of that goal. But, if we think "This is not going to work out," then every cell in our body will be deflated, and we, then, give up the fight. Hope is a flame that may have been sparked by someone else but we must keep it burning through our own determination, which includes continually believing in the limitless dignity and possibilities of both us and others.

At times, we are on the verge of losing hope when we confront a cruel reality. According to Josei Toda, great people of the past remained unmoved by life's hardships because "their hopes were not directed towards the fulfilment of personal desires, but based on a wish for all people's happiness, and this filled them with extraordinary conviction and confidence." To unleash the great power of hope within us we need to believe in the essential goodness in other people and make constant effort to cultivate that goodness in ourselves. "We must embark on the challenge of creating a new reality. It is in this effort that true undying hope is to be found," writes Daisaku Ikeda. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, April 27, 2020)

H.P.B. observes that if we take a look at the concrete facts of human society we find that today, selfishness, indifference, brutality, too often seem to reign supreme instead of justice, kindness and love being paramount. "All good and evil things in humanity have their roots in human character, and this character is, and has been, conditioned by the endless chain of cause and effect. But this

conditioning applies to the future as well as to the present and the past. Selfishness, indifference, and brutality can never be the normal state of the race—to believe so would be to despair of humanity—and that no Theosophist can do. Progress can be attained, and only attained, by the development of the nobler qualities.” To achieve this goal a true student of Theosophy should endeavour to set an example of his own life so that “from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellow-men.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, Indian edition, pp. 232-34)

“At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope, and love,” says *Light on the Path*. True hope has its foundation in knowledge—*knowledge* of an ultimate objective possible of attainment by every human being. It is a hope of reaching unconditional happiness and also for spiritual progress of humanity. Therefore, it is said that hope springs eternal in the human breast. It is the well-spring of life, which brings hidden energies and powers to the surface. It is the kind of hope which cannot be dashed or extinguished completely. In *Prometheus Bound* we read: “To love, and bear; to hope, till hope creates from its own wreck the thing it contemplates.”

The Doctrine of Karma is the Doctrine of Responsibility, and the Doctrine of Rebirth is that of Hope. Rebirth provides an opportunity for progress. The Elder Brothers of Humanity despair not of humanity and are there to guide us on the right path. We must emulate them. To be able to say that with all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams it is still a beautiful world, or with all its pride, cruelty, wickedness and dissembling, there is still hope for humanity, is the mark of true optimism, rooted in the belief expressed by Carlyle: “From the lowest depth, there is a path to the loftiest height.”

You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage
to lose sight of the shore.

—WILLIAM FAULKNER

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