

**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”

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**THE DHAMMAPADA—THE TEACHINGS OF THE  
BUDDHA**

From a heap of rubbish on the roadside, a lily blooms,  
fragrant and pleasing; from a mass of blinded mortals arises  
the disciple of the truly Wise One, shining with exceeding glory  
of his own Wisdom. (*The Dhammapada*, Verses 58-59)

GAUTAMA the Buddha occupies a special place in the Hierarchy of Exalted Beings. H.P.B.'s *Paraguru*, i.e., her Master's Master, in a letter refers to himself and his peers as the “devoted followers of that spirit incarnate of absolute self-sacrifice, of philanthropy, divine kindness, as of all the highest virtues attainable on this earth of sorrow, the man of men, Gautama the Buddha.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 33*)

Buddha never wrote anything himself. His teachings were transmitted orally. The complete *Buddha-vachana* (sayings of Buddha) is referred to as *Tripitaka*, i.e., three baskets or collections of Buddha's words. They are *Vinayapitaka*, *Suttapitaka* and *Abhidhammapitaka*. The *Suttapitaka* is the collection of discourses delivered by Buddha at different times to disciples and lay people. *Suttapitaka* is the principal source of the knowledge of *Dhamma*. The *Suttapitaka* is made up of five different collections called “Nikayas” in Pali. One of them is *Khuddaka Nikaya*, which is a collection of 18 *texts*, and one of them is the *Dhammapada*.

*Dhamma* means law and *pada* means verse or step. There are 423 verses in the *Dhammapada*, arranged in 26 chapters, subjectwise. It is said that the *Dhammapada* was one of the first Buddhist texts translated into English. It is translated into over 30 different languages. The word “Dhammapada” is often translated as “Footfalls of the Law.” Feet are organs of supreme movement. When our feet move, we find ourselves in a different environment. Our feet symbolize the march of evolution. The worship of the feet of the Guru is an acknowledgement that His feet have finished the great march of life and evolution. We want to derive the same strength as is in His feet—acquired by long travel and experience. Buddha is called a Tathagata, one who walks in the footsteps of his predecessors. We are invited to follow in the footsteps of the illustrious and the holy.

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

In the very first chapter of the *Dhammapada* entitled “Twin

Verses” there are ten pairs of verses. The first verse in the pair points to the negative possibility—it is the conduct followed by conditioned human beings. Then the next verse gives the positive possibility. Thus:

“He reviled me, he beat me and conquered and then plundered me,” who express such thoughts tie their minds with the intention of retaliation. In them hatred will not cease. . . . who do not express such thoughts, in them hatred will cease. (Verses 3-4)

As Stephen Ruppenthal points out (*The Dhammapada* by Eknath Easwaran, pp. 75-6), the injunction in the first verse is normally easy to follow and gives temporary satisfaction. The second course of action is difficult, goes against the conditioning of the pleasure principle and to implement it requires hard effort. But in the long run, the sweet and easy way leads to more suffering; the hard way, to *Nirvana*. In a way, these verses suggest that pleasures of greater worth “will come to any human being who recognizes the choice he has in every action, even in every thought, and has the will and discrimination to choose wisely.” Robert Frost’s famous lines provide a model for the crossroads at which every human being stands:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the *Dhammapada* deal with three types of persons—the fool, the wise man and the sage. The fool is an immature person—one still in the grip of this world. He has either not suffered or not suffered intelligently. Some of us are “fools” in the sense of not even being *aware* of our weaknesses and faults.

The fool worries himself thinking—“Sons have I; wealth have I.” He himself does not belong to himself. How then sons? How then wealth? The fool aware of his folly is to that extent wise; but a fool who takes himself to be wise is a fool indeed.

(Verses 62-63)

To become aware of one's faults is the first step towards wisdom. The wise man makes people aware of their faults, by cleaning the doors of their perception, so that they are able to see what they did not perceive before; hence the wise man is described as "a revealer of hidden treasure."

If you see an intelligent man who detects faults and blames what is blameworthy, follow that wise man. Value him as a revealer of hidden treasure... Let such a man admonish, let him instruct, let him forbid what is improper. (Verses 76-77)

There are several verses that awaken us to recognize the transitory and illusive nature of the body. The body is an image and we must cultivate a correct attitude towards it. The body wears away, but the dweller of the body or the essence is not withered by age. We are anxious, not only to keep body and soul together, but the beauty industry is reported to go to great lengths to help people look young and beautiful.

Looking upon his body to be fragile as an earthen jar, valuing his mind as a firm fortress, let a man fight Mara with the sword of wisdom... Ere long, alas! will this body lie on earth, cast aside, bereft of consciousness, useless as a burnt faggot. (Verses 40-41)

Not just the body but all composite things in manifestation are impermanent and subject to decay, death and sorrow. The cure for sorrow lies in recognizing the impermanent nature of conditioned existence. Objects of enjoyment melt in our very grasp like ice clasped in a warm hand.

"Impermanent are all conditioned beings"... "Full of pain are all conditioned beings"... "Unsubstantial are all conditioned beings"... He who knows this ceases to be in the thrall of grief. This is the Path of Purity. (Verses 277-79)

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, named Buddha

as the greatest psychologist of all time. Buddha draws attention to warped psychology thus:

They who feel shame when there is no cause for shame and they who feel no shame when they ought to be ashamed—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines... They who fear when there is no cause for fear and they who do not fear when they ought to fear—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines... They who discern evil where there is no evil and they who see nothing evil in what is evil—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines. (Verses 316-18)

Clinicians of our time are still encountering warped psyches influenced by distorted conceptions of sin.

Buddha had his own backlog of priestly distortion to face, and his "point, counterpoint" method of instruction, in perfect balance itself, encouraged balance in those who listened. "Evil" is not to be feared, in other words, but *understood*, which can in turn only be accomplished by penetrating beyond traditional categories of Right and Wrong. Do we, today, really need anything more desperately than to find a way of retaining ethical awareness, while rejecting categorical morality—and its accompanying self-righteousness? (*The Dhammapada*, Foreword)

Sooner or later we need to learn to consult our own conscience. The judge, jury and prosecutor are within us. Its decree alone matters. If we keep paying heed to the voice of the world we may continue to be swayed, without knowing what is the right thing to do. There is the story of an old man and his son going from one village to another, with their donkey, the old man riding the donkey. People called the old man cruel as he was making his son walk. Then the father dismounted and the son rode the donkey. People again criticized, saying, "Look at the shameless fellow, making his poor old father walk!" Then both of them decided to ride the

donkey together and again they were criticized for overburdening it, and so on, till finally they lost the donkey while crossing the bridge over a turbulent river. Buddha says:

This is an old saying, O Atula; it is not of this day only.  
 “They blame him who sits silent, they blame him who talks much, they blame him who speaks moderately in measured terms.” There is not any one in the world who is not blamed.  
 (Verse 227)

Then again, psychologists believe that desires disappear once you satisfy them. The appetite grows on what it feeds. Buddha says: “Lusts are never satisfied, not even by a shower of gold.”

Buddha recognized in the desires the cause of all our suffering. As our senses contact the outside world there arises sensation, and depending upon *Vedana* or sensation arises thirst or craving. It is this craving which is the origin of suffering. The transition from sensation to craving, is the psychological fact behind all suffering. We have to break this link. How difficult it is to overcome desires, is shown by Buddha in various verses using apt similes.

Like unto a fish snatched from its watery home and cast on land, the mind trembles and quivers leaving the dominion of Mara....So long as the desire, however small, of a man for woman is not destroyed, so long his mind clings like a suckling calf to its mother. (Verses 34 and 284)

As the *vasika* plant sheds its withered flowers, so you, O Bhikkhus, should shed passion and ill-will....Cut out the love of self as you would an autumn lily. (Verses 377 and 285)

Spiritual life involves self-reliance and self-effort. “You yourself must strive; Buddhas are but sign-posts” (verse 276). So also, one’s spiritual progress or inner development cannot be judged by one’s exterior. Thus:

Not nakedness, nor matted hair, nor filth, nor fasting, nor lying on the ground, nor besmearing the body with dust and

ashes, nor posture squatting can cleanse the mortal who is full of doubt. (Verse 141)

He is not a Bhikkhu because he carries the begging bowl. Nor even because he adopts the whole law outwardly. But he who is above good and evil, is chaste, who comports himself in the world with understanding, he, indeed is called a Bhikkhu. (Verses 266-67)

The end of the Path leads to Buddhahood or Enlightenment. Buddha is the one who is awakened. There is a human form but there is no ordinary conditioned mind with all its prejudices, preconceptions and limitations. A Brahmin called Dona once tried to categorize Buddha by asking if he was a *deva*, a *gandharva* or a *yaksha*, to which Buddha replied that he transcended them all. There is a great temptation to categorize people in terms of their caste, income, social status, etc. But it is not possible to do that with Buddha. When Angulimala, the bandit, tried to catch up with Buddha, he noticed that though he moved quickly and even ran, the distance between him and the Buddha did not decrease. So he told Buddha to stand still. Buddha said, “I am standing still, it is *you* who are moving. I am standing in *Nirvana*, you are moving because you are going round and round in the *samsara*.” Angulimala could not catch up with Buddha because Buddha was moving in a different dimension. Angulimala, representing time, could not catch up with Buddha, representing Eternity, writes Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher.

By what track can you allure One who is enlightened? Trackless indeed is He. His victory nought can undo. None of this world can touch that victory. He is a Seer of limitless range....No net of desire can catch Him. No craving can entangle Him. (Verses 179-180)

## OUR PLANK OF SALVATION

THE important question for the earnest soul who tries to walk the path H.P.B. showed is this: “What will keep me going in my endeavour to reach to Wisdom and to acquire the strength to serve always the Immortal Holy Ones?” Where can we find a better answer than in the Message of Theosophy, our most priceless inheritance? And who can improve upon the one we quote from a memorable article by H.P.B.? In it we see the expression of the injunction of *The Voice of the Silence*—“Be humbler still, when Wisdom thou hast mastered.” Admitting that “imperfect and faulty is my nature; many and glaring are my short-comings,” she goes on to say:

For thirty-five years and more, ever since 1851 that I saw any Master *bodily* and personally for the first time, *I have never once denied or even doubted Him*, not even in thought. Never a reproach or murmur against Him has escaped my lips, or entered even my brain for one instant under the heaviest trials.... Unswerving devotion to Him who embodies the duty traced for me, and belief in the Wisdom—collectively, of that grand, mysterious, yet actual Brotherhood of holy men—is my only merit, and the cause of my success in Occult philosophy... (“The Theosophical Mahatmas”: *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

Real success in the Higher Life depends upon Devotion to the chosen path. Unless a man has consecrated himself whole-heartedly to walking the path, he will swerve from his devotion. Unless one looks at events and persons with the single eye of the Spirit, one will not be able to see straight. All humanity is checked by its own Karma, but in the case of those who choose to tread the path, as H.P.B. points out in this article, “Karma, instead of having to be distributed throughout his long life, falls upon him in a block and crushes him with its whole weight.” What, then, is the safeguard?

He who believes in what he professes and in his Master, will stand it and come out of the trial victorious; he *who doubts*,

the coward who fears to receive his just dues and tries to avoid justice being done—FAILS. He will not escape Karma just the same, but he will only lose that for which he has risked its untimely visits.

Unswerving devotion to the self-chosen Discipline and to Those from whom that Discipline emanates is indicated by H.P.B. as our plank of salvation in the turbulent waters of *Samsara*. In the midst of death, people live. We, the aspirants to Wisdom and Sacrifice, live in the midst of spiritual death. But as Life ever is, while death is but a phenomenon of Life, our victory is assured if we keep to the rules of the Great Game we are playing, and walk steadfastly on the Path of Discipleship.

It has been pointed out that dual is the manifestation of the inimical force we have to encounter and to overcome. First, our kin and friends and fellow-men who constitute the society in which we live, become the channels of our Karma. The voices of all and sundry are allowed to deflect us from our course. Not all such voices are nefarious and wicked. Many among such voices are the charming notes of the birds, who, for all their beauty, do belong to the animal kingdom. The second inimical manifestation is the force of Desire, *Rajo-guna*, which circulates in our lower nature.

The means of surmounting the first obstacle lies in the perception that the aspirant to God-like Wisdom is going North while others are going East or West or South. Soon or late these may change their course to their own betterment, but we cannot change ours without dire calamity. The second fact to hold on to as a conviction is that our kin and friends must rise to the plane of Theosophy; we cannot descend to theirs of sense-life—which, once again, does not mean a life of evil and wickedness. It becomes necessary therefore to apply to ourselves the injunction—“Come out from among them, and be ye separate.” Those who succeed do so because they “carry no personal luggage of human transitory sentiments along with them,” says H.P.B.

The second is a more formidable obstacle. *Rajas*, the force of

love-hate, is the constant enemy—*nitya-veri*, Krishna calls it in the *Gita*—whom we have to overcome. Our many desires are also Karmic results of our own thoughts, wills and feelings. From the past, through the present, to the future these must stream forth; our day-to-day Karma adding to the storehouse of the past and changing that assemblage for the better or the worse.

Neither the past which is gone, nor the future which is to come can be touched save through the present. The right attitude to Karmic precipitations or Karmic opportunities is to regard these two as one with a dual aspect. Right resignation follows right endeavour. We cannot say “this is for the best” unless the result so described issues from correct and intelligent effort in the immediate past. “This is not only as I deserve, but also as I desire,” can be said by him who feels at the core of his being that his endeavours were fully and well made, with and under the circumstances, and that they ultimately produced the result. So, from Right Exertion of the past is born Right Resignation in the present.

Bhishma, the embodiment of Dharma, asserts that “Exertion is greater than Destiny” and expounds the doctrine of *how* it can be made so. As to the future—a firm position, hopeful and confident, must be assumed if our exertion in the present is to bear nourishing fruits in the hereafter. To say and to repeat—“Come what may, Theosophy first, Theosophy last, in life, through death, into life again,” is to bring to birth that Right Attitude which is one of “unswerving devotion.” Without such Right Attitude there cannot be Right Exertion, and without the latter how can there be Right Resignation, which is perception of the Justice of Karma—the Unerring?

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MAN’S desires are limited by his perception; none can desire what he has not perceived.

—WILLIAM BLAKE

## SUFISM—MOHAMMEDAN MYSTICISM

### III

A SUFI considers his soul and everything in the universe to be an emanation from Deity. He believes that by intense meditation on the divine, to the exclusion of all else, he may see the Deity mentally, thereby gaining a knowledge of the essence and nature of his own soul and knowing things intuitively—past, present and future. The ultimate aim is *Samadhi*, or union of the soul with the Deity, called in Persian and Arabic, *Wasil*—literally, “union” or “meeting.”

The journey on the spiritual path consists of four stages: The law or *Sheryat* (canonical law enjoined in scriptures) is like the vessel; the true path or direction (*Tareequt*) is like the sea; the perception and the truth of things (*Haqueequt*) is like the shell; the knowledge of the Deity itself (*Marifut*) is like the pearl. In other words, he who wishes to obtain the pearl must first go on board the vessel, *i.e.*, knowledge is only to be obtained progressively.

One has to begin with the observances and outward form, but drop it gradually. *Sheryat* is highly essential, as far as the laity is concerned, as it works as good moral restraint. The second or next state is *Tareequt*, derived from *Tareeq*, a way, road, direction, and it is the stage where one slowly begins to give up formal, outward observances and devotes oneself to mental and spiritual worship. When one learns to appreciate and know one’s own nature—the oneness of the soul with deity—one begins to look upon the outward prescribed forms as less important. At this stage there arises greater piety, the living of the life of virtue and morality and the appreciation of the good. The moral ideal of the Sufis is unselfishness and the renouncing of worldly desires and possessions. There is self-control through mortification of the lower self.

By worship and thanksgiving to the Highest Principle and

meditation thereon, the mind begins to understand fundamental principles or laws of nature. This state is called *Haqeequt*, or state of truth. It is derived from *Haq*, meaning “truth.” It signifies reality or statement of any circumstance.

The fourth stage is *Marifut*, a term for knowledge or wisdom. It is the state of union with the Divine, wherein there is neither lord nor servant, or adorer and adored. The Perceiver, the Perception and the Perceived, all become one. *The Voice of the Silence* describes *Samadhi* as “the state in which the ascetic loses the consciousness of every individuality, including his own. He becomes—the ALL.” (p. 21 fn.)

Love is the great theme that runs through the ocean of Sufi poetry. There are two forms of Love: Ordinary Love and Special Love. People confuse these two forms of love. When there is perception of beauty in the form or apparent being, it is ordinary love. When this becomes profound (special) love, it is transmuted into viewing the beauty of the essence (*dhat*) and not form. The ordinary love beautifies existence while the special love refines existence (*The Sufis*, pp. 315-16). The Upanishads say that wife is not dear because she is your *wife* but because the Self shines in her. Everything becomes dear because of the presence of the *Atman*.

The moral principle of the mystic is the principle of Love. He says, “The greater your love, the greater your moral....Our own heart must teach us the true moral.” Real virtue or moral cannot be in accordance with some rule, but must stem from the heart. The mystic leaves morality to the deepening of the heart quality. The more loving our heart is, the greater is our morality (*The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, Vol. X, p. 16). As St. Paul said, “Love and do what you will.” When the thought of self is removed, every thought, feeling and action is virtuous. There is no greater teacher of morals than love itself, for the first lesson that one learns from love is: “I am not, you are” (*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17). True love leads to self-denial, self-abnegation, self-effacement, self-transcendence. Jalalluddin Rumi writes:

A man went to the door of the Beloved and knocked.  
A voice asked, “Who is there?”  
He answered, “It is I.”  
The voice said, “There is no room for Me and Thee.”  
The door was shut.  
After a year of solitude and deprivation he returned and knocked.  
A voice from within asked: “Who is there?”  
The man said: “It is Thee.”  
The door was opened for him.

The patched robe, which is called the uniform of the wandering dervish, is part of the mystery of the Sufis. At a superficial level, it is connected with poverty, with the industry involved in sewing the patches, etc. But it is more than that if we look at the etymology of the word “patch.” The Arabic root from which the word “patch” is derived has many meanings: (1) *Nonsensical*, or a fool. (2) *To be addicted to wine*. Sufis use the analogy of intoxication to refer to a certain mystical experience. (3) *Seventh heaven* refers to the celestial or divine quality of Sufism. (4) Chessboard refers to the black and white checker pattern of the floor of certain dervish meeting-places. (5) To repair a well means to rectify the existing “well” of human knowledge. (*The Sufis*, pp. 325-26)

A despondent man seeks consolation in intoxication. If the wine is good it may help him reach a state of material ecstasy and forget his sorrow. But if bad, then his state can be worse than before. So also, it is true of Spiritual wine—spiritual progress and knowledge. If it is true and pure it can lift the disciple to the realm of perfect contemplation of the truth, but if adulterated, then it can throw him back even further than the point that was attained. For instance, dabbling in the psychic realm, without proper training or guide, can produce more harm than good, as is seen in the case of wrong meditation practices, exercises to cultivate clairvoyance, etc. Often a little progress in the psychic realm may produce the delusion in the aspirant of having attained great heights. Mr. Judge describes

it as *astral intoxication*. He writes:

Nor are psychical splashes of blue flame, nor visions of things that afterwards come to pass, not sights of small sections of the astral light with its wonderful photographs of past or future, nor the sudden ringing of distant fairy-like bells, any proof that you are cultivating spirituality. These things, and still more curious things, will occur when you have passed a little distance on the way, but they are only the mere outposts of a new land which is itself wholly material....The liability to be carried off and intoxicated by these phenomena is to be guarded against. (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 77-78)

The *wine* that the mystic drinks is ecstasy. When the mystic is drunk, he is intoxicated by love. It then does not matter where he is—among rocks, in the palace, in the desert or elsewhere. Like a drunken man, a Sufi, in his certain stage of search, may be out of step with reality. The symbolic intoxication of the Sufis may perhaps be compared to “Manticism,” or mantic frenzy. The etymology of the word is traced to the two sacrificial cups of the Soma-mystery, used during religious rites. H.P.B. writes:

While the initiate drinks (albeit sparingly) of this sacred soma-juice, the Brahma, or rather his “spirit,” personified by the god Soma, enters into the man and takes possession of him. Hence, ecstatic vision, clairvoyance, and the gift of prophecy. Both kinds of divination—the natural and the artificial—are aroused by the Soma. The *Sukra*-cup awakens that which is given to every man by nature. It unites both spirit and soul, and these, from their own nature and essence, which are divine, have a foreknowledge of future things, as dreams, unexpected visions, and presentiments, well prove. The contents of the other cup, the manti, which “stirs the Brahma,” put thereby the soul in communication not only with the minor gods—the well-informed but not omniscient spirits—but actually with the highest divine essence itself. (*Isis Unveiled*, p. xxxv)

Mystical life is a puzzle, bewilderment and miracle. It becomes

a puzzle when the law is not understood. A mystic is aware of the perfect justice inherent in the universe. He knows that one cannot get the slightest comfort and pleasure without having to pay for it, and every pain has its own reward (*The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, Vol. X, p. 17). This is the doctrine of Karma. We find Jallaludin Rumi teaching the doctrine of rebirth, the journey of the soul through lower kingdoms and culminating in spiritual perfection. Thus:

I died as a stone and became a plant; I died as a plant and became an animal; I died as an animal and became a man; when did I grow less by dying? I will die as a man to give birth to an angel.

The Sufis believe that there are messengers of truth known as Wali, Qutub, Nabi and Rasul. They penetrate into the inner world of the unseen in different degrees and come at certain periods of time. (*Sufi Mysticism*, p. 49)

A mystic is one who perseveres in wiping away the false ego, *i.e.*, identification with the personality—by meditation, concentration, study and prayer, so that the false ego can disappear and the divine can manifest. “It is just like a spring which rises out of the rock and which, as soon as the water has gained power and strength, breaks even through stone and becomes a stream. So it is with the divine spark in man....Where it manifests it washes away the stains of the false ego and turns into greater and greater stream, which in turn becomes the source of comfort, consolation, healing, and happiness for all who come into contact with that spirit” (*The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, Vol. X, p. 19). As there is only one God and one wisdom, there can be only one Mysticism. Mysticism is not a branch of a tree—it is the stem, which unites all the branches.

(Concluded)

## THE POWER OF DEVOTION

THE word “devotion” and its Sanskrit equivalent “*Bhakti*” are generally misunderstood, both in their metaphysical and ethical implications. The so-called devotees of the various schools are misled into thinking that the path chosen by them is the best. In reality, *Karma Marga* or the Path of Action, *Jnana Marga* or the Path of Knowledge, and *Bhakti Marga* or the Path of Devotion, are not different paths; to tread any one of these paths in the true sense is to tread the others also. Thus, he who desires to be perfected in *Bhakti* or devotion has to be perfected in action and knowledge as well.

To understand what devotion is we have to trace its genesis in man. When the mind of man was first lit up some 18 million years ago and he acquired self-consciousness through the “grace” or sacrifice of Great Beings, the first feeling that arose in the human heart was that of oneness with and devotion to those spiritual creators. This feeling arose in the newly awakened men of self-conscious intelligence because of the benediction of wisdom that was simultaneously granted, because of the light their new-found understanding threw on the world around them and on the future goal of ultimate perfection—not only for humanity but for all life. What was the condition of mankind then? *The Secret Doctrine* tells us that in those early days there was but One Religion, One Race, One Language, One Knowledge. Men were then blessed with the presence in their midst of the Great Ones who were their first teachers, not only of the mighty knowledge, but also of the great arts, for they taught such things as the use of fire, agriculture, architecture, mathematics, astronomy; and, deeper still, they taught the use of the fire that purifies and transmutes the gross into the divine—the agriculture of the emotional and feeling principle, so that from it arises the cultured plant of compassion absolute; the architecture of the temple of the Spirit; the mathematics of the Soul; and the true astronomy which is the science of the Universe

of Life, its vast currents and its many transformations. These, then, became some of those innate ideas that were burnt into the consciousness of infant humanity and that persist as the eternal background to our progress up and down the ladder of civilization—the universal pathway of devotion.

Devotion, the first conscious feeling to arise in our human consciousness, springs up from within, from the depths of our inner being—just as love for the mother awakes spontaneously, innately in the child. The child does not know why that love arises, but it still is there. The mother takes advantage of that feeling to become the child’s first teacher in its new life, thus doing for it that which the Great Ones did when they gave us the light of *Manas* and used our devotion to instil into us the knowledge of the laws of Nature of which we had become aware as a living part of ourselves, and through that, aware of our responsibilities to it as self-conscious, free-acting centres—inheritors of a trust as great as the mighty knowledge itself. Human civilizations have not grown from savagery; they come from Sages and the descendants of Sages. Theosophy is that original, primeval Knowledge imparted by those Sages, and it teaches the wisdom of the spiritual way of life; it teaches how devotion may be used for further growth, through the development of confidence in the world of which we are a part, and through a knowledge of the common aims of all life processes and of the perfectibility of mankind.

Just as in the process of evolution the One Race and the One Language broke up and produced many, so the One *Bhakti* produced the many kinds of faith that we know of today. This is what the Twelfth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* offers; different types of devotion are mentioned, and each of these, if pursued with clear-hearted assiduity, will lead to the one real inner devotion of the heart.

The degradation of humanity to its present condition has occurred in various stages and in many grades and ways. Since the days when Krishna taught, a further lowering of standards has

occurred. Religions no longer bind man to a unitary system of thought and wisdom. There is differentiation and distinction all the way through, and an evident departure from the path of devotion has taken place. But does devotion mean feeling only? Is there no corresponding *knowledge* of devotion? No corresponding *practice* of devotion? How is it related to *Jnana* and *Karma*? *Bhakti* is not *mere emotionalism*, not mere sentiment. To stop thinking, and to seek to merge one's feeling with the object of one's devotion, may give one a feeling of selfish satisfaction and personal happiness, but such a condition is not different from that of the drug-addict who feels happy in his intoxicated state, oblivious of the reality of daily life and its duties. On the other hand, true *Bhakti* is considered the highest form of *Mukti* or emancipation.

*Bhakti Yoga* is considered the supreme culmination of the path that leads through knowledge and action to devotion or *Bhakti*. Every person has to work. According to his attitude and attention to his own particular duty or *dharma* is he truly devoted. Devotion to one's family, to one's friends, to one's work and service—these are all desirable, but still on the outer plane. Just as austerities or rites have to be performed, not just outwardly, but have to recede inside to the region of the mind and feelings, so with devotion. It is from a well controlled and devoted mind and feeling nature that follow wise and gentle actions. The practice of forethought, of meditation, of contemplation and of the quiet exercise of the higher will must begin to take place. In the Seventh Chapter of the *Gita*, Krishna says that the “spiritually wise,” whom he considers to be the greatest of his devotees, are “verily myself.” The highest summation of the practical way of life is achieved only through devotion.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* may be divided into three main groups: from the first to the sixth chapter, from the seventh to the twelfth, and from the thirteenth to the eighteenth. The middle division is devoted to practical devotion. In Chapter XII Krishna describes what this practical devotion really is—the summation of *Bhakti*

*Yoga*—and the signs of the man who is practically devoted are given. At the close of Chapter XVIII, he asks Arjuna to surrender himself. This sounds easy to many—but is it so? How many of us can face the searching question: “What have I got to sacrifice?” “What is there in myself that I can offer to the Master?” In many cases we have to admit our unworthiness. Many like to think that it is easy to throw their weaknesses and sins on Krishna; for, doesn't he ask us to place everything on him? He does, but he asks us to fight first—fight our lower selves. To sacrifice the personal means to sacrifice the animal in ourself; this concept has been perverted and is taken to mean animal sacrifice! We also have to sacrifice money, power, fame, and all the other attributes we deem personally belonging to us—all those things which separate us from others and make our personal “environment.” When we have given up all this—what we *have* and what we *are*—then only will the Krishna within begin to shine outwardly—not just for our own benefit, but for the benefit of all.

The devotion that is advocated in the *Gita* is all-embracing. It knows no barriers of race, creed, family, etc. True devotion destroys all separateness, all differences, and, coupled with wisdom, extends our vision. The fire of that devotion-wisdom can light our daily tasks, so that we in turn, through the force of our quiet example, may light up others who do not yet possess that fire. What we need is devotion to the cause of human brotherhood, to the God within our fellow men and ourselves. We need to emulate the example of those Great Beings, the perfected men of earlier *Manvantaras*, who sacrificed themselves for our sake and gave us of their light. Keeping them as ideals, and through practical action based on the inspiration of the knowledge that is ours, let us pledge our devotion to their Cause—which is to benefit mankind.

## UNDERSTANDING PRACTICAL OCCULTISM

WHAT, we may ask ourselves, is the governing faculty in mankind, and therefore in ourselves? There is something in us to which we relate all experience, all memory, all expectancy, and by which we determine whether to act or to abstain from acting in every contingency. That is the fact in regard to everyone, yet it is perfectly safe to say that not one in a million is aware of it. To be aware of that fact is the first step in practical occultism.

Let us regard our nature, as each one of us can easily see it to be. We all have a body nature or sense nature by means of which, during our waking life, we are in contact with the Nature around us, both Nature visible and Nature invisible. Within and behind that physical nature of ours we have our psychic nature, our emotional or sensational nature, that part of us which is pleased or displeased, pained or the reverse, by our contact with Nature in every direction. Still within and behind that, there is another aspect of our nature that we know under the general name of reason, that which sees the relation between the object of sense, whatever that object may be, and the sensation aroused by contact with that object. Then, within and behind that there is still another department of our nature which “philosophizes” upon all these things, which wonders what is the use of it all anyhow; when we have eaten all that there is to eat, and of the best, and have drunk all there is to drink, and of the best—in short, have emptied the cup of life—there is a part of our nature which wonders what the final purpose may be and wherefore we are thrust into this pilgrimage.

Just so brief a consideration as that shows that man has a highly complex nature. But, this man of sense and man of emotion and man of reason and man of intuition, or aspiration, is not the real man. Who is the real man? He who perceives through the senses, who suffers or enjoys through his emotions, who traces events to their causes, and who perceives what must of necessity lie behind all cause and all effect.

If we regard our own life and the lives of those about us, we shall find that the pervading influence in us is our psychic nature. We do not act from a sense of justice. We do not act from a perception of duty. We do not act from a perception of reason. We *have* the perception of justice. We *have* the perception of duty. We *have* the perception of reason, but they are not the axis of our daily conduct. Our psychic nature, our emotions, our feelings, our desires, are the fulcrum of our human life. We employ our reason—what for? In order the better to gratify our desires and passions and feelings and emotions. We employ the perception of duty. Why? In order to gain the wherewithal to gratify our desires. We make use of the sense of justice, the intuitive recognition of the universal providence throughout all nature. Why? In order to excuse ourselves, through the tithes of some good done, for the gratification of our desires which are not good.

If we turn to our religion, we shall find that it is a religion of desires. All religions that are believed in by the people are psychic religions. They offer a psychic state—here and more particularly hereafter—to their devotees. They do not offer a condition of justice here or hereafter—whether for the embodied or disembodied soul. The person whose desires are unfulfilled in this life is told by his religion that through certain beliefs and ceremonies he may, after death, go to a state where his desires may be eternally gratified. If, on the other hand, we do not accept those beliefs, do not perform the enjoined rites and ceremonies, we shall go to a place where our desires shall be forever balked.

So we have a perfect example of psychism in the governing motive in human religion. All religions are psychic stimulants, that is to say, their appeal is to the emotional nature, the psychic nature, the desire nature of the person. That makes one psychically drunk—so drunk that his reason is starved, his sense of justice is atrophied. Theosophy has ever come into the world to tell people that if they want to reach to the highest state possible for a being, they must make the highest principles of their nature the fulcrum of their

actions, and the lower and lesser nature the slave and servant to the highest in them.

There is no hope whatever for the divine man in us, for the spiritual man in us, for the just man in us, in our religion or in our science. Both alike appeal to the psychic nature. *The Voice of the Silence* begins with these words: “These instructions are for those ignorant of the dangers of the lower *Iddhi*”—a word that means the psychic nature, the psychic powers. If we study history in the light of the several divisions of our nature, then we can understand the long, long cinderpath of woe that humanity has travelled since the dawn of time, and why it is that when those men who make the whole of their nature subservient to what they can see is the highest in them—those great Beings we call our Elder Brothers—why it is that when they come into the world in human guise, humanity has inevitably and invariably ranged itself into three classes: those who were simply indifferent—by far the larger part; those who worshipped them as gods who could give them what they wanted; and those who hated them as devils out of fear they would take from them what they had, or what they wanted. The history of Christ is not unique. There were many crucified saviours anterior to Jesus of Nazareth. They all came to teach us what is the matter with ourselves. The matter with us is that we are spiritual prostitutes, each one of us. Every day and every hour we are forcing the highest, the noblest, the truest, the most perfect and divine in us into the debaseful menialship of scullion, for what we know is an undependable portion of our nature. The Great Ones come to tell us that there is no being who can *see* for us, but that everyone is amply able to see for himself; that there is no other being who can *think* for us, but that everyone, even the dullest, is amply able to *think* for himself. They come to tell us of the dangers of the lower *Iddhi*; of the dangers of being guided by our feelings. The crafty person, the able intellectualist, understanding what our nature consists of, can just as easily make us his victim by playing upon the reflected light of our highest and noblest feelings as through

our worst. The person who wants to exploit us will appeal to our generosity, and if we are not amenable to that, he will appeal to our greed, and if that does not interest us he has still a third arrow—he appeals to our conservative instinct; and when he goes his way he has our money and we have a stock certificate. Men fail to realize that, because they do not consider this part of our nature which should ever be ruled with an iron hand.

What are our feelings for? What is our emotional nature for? What is the use of the psychic nature? There is the second step in practical occultism: Recognizing that we have a psychic nature, that unconsciously to ourselves we have been dominated by it, that it is that which has wrought ruin for mankind, comes the question: Well, what have we got it for? Of what use is it? The psychic nature, properly used and properly understood, is an infallible diagnostician of the other fellow’s state of mind. If I have no feelings of my own I can tell instantly what the other fellow’s feelings are. What would not any physician give if, instead of taking the temperature, feeling the pulse, asking his patient a string of questions, ordering this test and that and looking in the books—all of which are second-hand, third-hand or tenth-hand hearsay attempts to find out what is the matter with the patient—if he had some way himself of feeling just what the patient felt, he would know at once what illness he had. The psychic nature is just that—the means whereby we can directly, instead of indirectly, cognize the nature of the mixtures that constitute the other being. A man’s virtues may predominate absolutely at one moment; the next instant his sins may replace the virtues. We do not understand, nor does the man himself recognize, that the seven virtues and the seven deadly sins are aspects of one and the same thing. The sevenfold division of the psychic nature, when understood, when controlled, when in harmony with Nature, corresponds to the seven virtues. When used to infect us with the virus of whatever may be about—seven deadly sins.

What is the secret underlying all this mystery? The Buddha,

the Christ and many, many others have taught it. In our time, H. P. Blavatsky has written volumes upon it. Theosophy has been kept alive in the world just to tell people that. To understand the secret we need to delve into the very depths of our own nature, to try to *see* with the highest powers and faculties we have, and then from that seeing, to *think* and to *act*. This is the practical occultism which alone can save any man, and which, if practised, *would* save every man.

Occultism admits to no outside saviour, whether it be God or anyone else. Over against the conception of a God who favours some and punishes others, who is partial and who can be bribed—over against that set this conception: that everything in this universe proceeds from one and the same Source and is identical with that Source. The moment we throw away the concept of an unjust God, we can begin to see the fundamental honesty, the unswerving justice in Nature. There is something that stands under and back of everything—call it the One Substance. Substance means, literally, that which stands under. We need to revise our understanding of these concepts. Take the forms there are in Nature. What an immense variety of human bodies there is! They all come from the same matter. There is no such thing as the blue blood of one and the low blood of another. The laws under which a good body is born and exists are the same as the laws under which poor bodies are born and exist. The laws under which the most complex and finely organized bodies exist are the same as those under which the simplest or coarsest bodies exist—all under One Law, all from One Substance.

But let us get behind matter—the formative—get behind compounds to the elements from which those compounds derive, get behind elements to the One Essence. There is an omnipotent—in the sense that all powers come from it—and omnipresent and eternal Reality of which everything that is, is a modification, a representation, an expression, an embodiment. This One Reality excludes nothing, includes everything.

There is the object of practical occultism: To demonstrate the identity of man with the Absolute Principle and also with the Deity as we see It manifested in Nature—not merely the identity of man, but the fundamental identity of everything that is. There is no room for anybody to say—“You are of a different material than I, that is why you are as you are; God made me weak, God made you strong; God made me bad, God made you good; God damned me, God saved you.” There is no reason for religion, as religion is known, no reason for the fellow who is seeking to get the best of it for himself. Where there is no judge to be bribed, what is the use of accumulating bribes? Where Nature cannot be fooled, what is the use of working to accumulate the paraphernalia of deception?

*(To be concluded)*

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WHEN all is said and done, Science can only make its full contribution to the welfare of mankind if it is used as a means of encouraging a dispassionate but optimistic attitude towards all aspects of human affairs. To move from national traditions and aspirations to others based on international welfare may prove less painful if we are prepared to look on Man and all his problems as a phase in the evolution of the universe and if we have the courage to believe and to teach that he can, by means of his intellect, control and direct his own evolution and destiny.

—JAMES GRAY

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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

**Question:** We are continually asked to overcome desires. At the same time it seems that no one can survive without the desire to live and to carry on human existence. What can one do?

**Answer:** Behavioural psychologists try to justify human drives and survival instincts saying that certain human needs motivate man not only to survive but to live in dignity as man. Of these, the thirst for life and physical existence through rebirth is supreme and is called “*Trishna*” in Aryan tradition. However, in addition to these personal desires (“drives” as they are called by psychologists) man has other impersonal and deeper needs.

What kind of desires are we asked to overcome? We know that a person can accomplish nothing unless his emotional nature (desires) be turned in that direction. Even a gambler is able to concentrate on his game, for long periods, unmindful of sleep and hunger, because his heart is set on the game. Desire or *Kama* principle has been described as the balance principle from which the ways go up and down. Mr. Judge writes:

Whether we wish to do well or ill we have to first arouse within us the desire for either course. The good man who at last becomes even a sage had at one time in his many lives to arouse the desire for the company of holy men and to keep his desire for progress alive in order to continue on his way. Even a Buddha or a Jesus had first to make a vow, which is a desire, in some life, that he would save the world or some part of it, and to persevere with the desire alive in his heart through countless lives. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 50)

Thus we see that there are certain desires—aspirations—which are deeply felt, and which should be cultivated and maintained by the power of Will. But, “behind will stands desire,” say the old Hermetists. Will is the neutral energy of the soul, which is used or exploited by personal or Kamic desires.

We are told that our task is twofold. Ultimately, we need to separate will from desire. Strengthen will, by use and conquest, and make it the absolute ruler; and along with it also purify desire. How shall we purify desire? The first step is to conquer the desires for material possessions—for things of matter, as such, can be enjoyed only by oneself—though we may share out of the *surplus*. We may use of food, money, etc., only that which is absolutely necessary to keep life going. The next step is not desiring for oneself such abstractions as power, knowledge, love, happiness or fame, for these are all a form of selfishness. This may seem like a tall order. However, we are not asked to *shun* material possessions, fame, knowledge, love, happiness, but not to *desire* them.

We may begin on a smaller scale, for instance, by resisting the desire to have a second helping of a favourite dish; by curbing the urge to answer back or get even with a person; to get credit for the good turn we may have done to another; to speak or act needlessly—for that too is required sometimes—and thus exercise forbearance. Mr. Judge puts it thus:

Do not monopolize the conversation. Keep in the background. If someone begins to tell you about himself and his doings, do not take first chance to tell him about yourself, but listen to him and talk solely to bring him out. And when he has finished, suppress in yourself the desire to tell about yourself, your opinions and experiences....If you will follow these directions for a week you will find they will take considerable effort, and you will begin to discover a part of the meaning of the saying, “Man, know thyself.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

Simultaneously with the practice of conquering lower desires,

we need to learn to encourage those desires, wishes and feelings that pertain to our divine nature. Mr. Judge mentions occasions when fulfilling the desires of our divine nature could take us a step closer to the god within. Thus:

If you feel as if something urged you to visit some sick or afflicted neighbour or friend, obey the suggestion without delay. If the wish to turn over a new leaf comes into the lower consciousness, do not wait till next New Year's before actually turning it over; turn it now. If some pathetic story of suffering has moved you, act on the emotion while your cheeks are still wet with tears. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 32)

The thing to grasp is, we must be able to give up or overcome even the most legitimate desires if we wish to follow the spiritual path. Giving up the desire involves a certain amount of asceticism or mortification. For instance, H.P.B. was deeply inclined towards developing her musical talents and became an accomplished piano player at the age of 20. But when her Teacher advised her to go in search of Truth, she dropped her great talent and strong love for music in an instant, in order to plunge into the quest and preparation for the Higher Life. It is an example of sacrifice and triumph of will.

Desire could go out of hand and become lust. Desire causes attachment. Material possessions, good music, good books, drama and the arts, power, fame, even love may come our way, but we should be able to let them go when the time comes. We should not be restless and longing for them when any or all of them are absent or denied. It is true that we are born in the first place because there is *trishna* or desire to live and gain experience. But time must come when we are able to have mastery over this desire. This happens in case of saints, who are able to take up a body and leave it, at will, when life's mission is accomplished. About such a person, *The Voice of the Silence* says, "He holdeth life and death in his strong hand." The second chapter of the *Gita* explains the attitude required

by saying that we have to be like the sage—desires enter his heart like the rivers entering an unswelling passive ocean.

**Question:** Could *true* repentance wipe away our sin or lessen the effects of our wrongdoing or evil deeds?

**Answer:** First and foremost, what do we mean by *true* repentance? Repentance could take the form of self-reproach or constant brooding over the wrong done, leading to despair. It may take the form of continual crying and asking for forgiveness of God. In the case of deathbed repentance, the person confesses his sin to a priest. The mere act of confession is not sufficient to wipe away the sin and its consequences. If we are forgiven, in the sense of being absolved of the consequences of sin, what happens to the person whom we wronged? Law of Karma is the law of justice and of compensation, both for the sinner and the sinned. Referring to a case of murder, H.P.B. asks: "How about the victim, and his or her family, relatives, dependants, social relations; has justice no recompense for them?" She gives the example of the act of throwing a stone into a pond. She argues that it not only disturbs the water in the pond but also the birds on the trees and the air above the pond, and so on. Hence, if we could retrieve this stone, roll back the ripples, obliterate the force expended, in short, wipe out every trace of the act, then we may submit to the popular notion of forgiveness of sin through repentance or atonement. A Master of Wisdom wrote regarding mistakes made out of wrong concepts: "They cannot be obliterated, for they are indelibly stamped upon the record of Karma, and neither tears nor repentance can blot the page." On another occasion, the Master wrote to an erring person that though he might shed oceans of tears, it would not move Karmic balance even by a hair's breadth.

Our concept of repentance is that as a result of confession, crying or feeling of deep remorse we must be excused or given milder punishment. True Forgiveness is Mercy; it is an opportunity to mend one's ways and grow. But what is "true forgiveness"?

Professor C. S. Lewis suggests in his essay “On Forgiveness” that “there is all the difference in the world between forgiving and excusing.” He writes:

Forgiveness says, “Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology, I will never hold it against you and everything between us two will be exactly as it was before.” But excusing says, “I see that you couldn’t help it or didn’t mean it, you weren’t really to blame.” If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive. In that sense, forgiveness and excusing are almost opposites....What leads us into this mistake is the fact that there usually is some amount of excuse, some “extenuating circumstances.”

Our false concept of “merciful law” is that it *excuses* our wrongdoing and allows us to escape the ensuing consequences. A sin, crime, or error disrupts the channel of communication with our divine nature, and true repentance establishes back this ruptured communication so that we can receive the necessary guidance to correct ourselves. It also means humbly submitting ourselves to receive the just retribution from the all-merciful Law.

True repentance consists in resolving to mend the ways and acting in accordance with such resolve. If one has erred by lying, stealing or backbiting, one has to set into motion good causes by resolving and learning to abstain from repeating the same wrongs. True repentance must lead to inner transformation. We are then sowing new causes that can counteract or mitigate the bad effects generated by previous causes. What we experience is the resultant or sum total of the old, bad karma and new, good karma. The Aphorism on Karma says:

The effects may be counteracted or mitigated by the thoughts and acts of oneself or of another, and then the resulting effects represent the combination and interaction of the whole number of causes involved in producing the effects. (Aphorism 13)

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

What is heaven like, and who gets to go there? Barbara Walters, a television newscaster, who interviewed several believers, received varied answers to the question. A Palestinian suicide bomber, who failed in his attempt to kill the Jews, believed that his reward would be to enter the paradise where he looked forward to “joyous sex on silken couches amid rivers of milk and honey.” There are some 10,000 religions in the world and almost all of them teach of an afterlife. “In America, nine out of ten people believe that heaven is a real place—and most have faith that they are going there at the end of their lives,” writes Gail Cameron Wescott (*Reader’s Digest*, March 2006, Indian ed.). Many describe heaven to be a place with angels perched on puffy clouds and playing golden harps. Some look upon it as a place free from sorrow and pain, where there would be reunion with friends and loved ones who have gone on before. Others believe that in the afterlife they “will be able to go fishing with Hemingway, study piano with Mozart and painting with Michelangelo.”

Views of what heaven is vary widely among religious groups. The world’s 2.1 billion Christians believe paradise to be a place of eternal peace and tranquillity where there will be an actual resurrection of the body. Joy will come from being one with God. Muslims too, have equally rapturous vision of heaven with lavishly comfortable homes, sexual enjoyment, etc. In Hinduism, heaven is not the final destination, but an intermediate state where one enjoys for a while before being born again on earth. *Swarga loka* [heaven] is one of the seven *lokas* where all our sensual desires are satisfied and only those who deserve go there, writes Shanoo Bijlani.

Who will find place in heaven? The Palestinian bomber, mentioned above, was sure that the Jews would never be welcomed in heaven. The President of the National Association of Evangelicals affirmed that those who did not accept Jesus Christ as a Saviour

were destined to go to hell. Whatever the belief, most expect heaven to be a better place.

The equivalent term for paradise or heaven, in Theosophy, is *Devachan* or *Devasthan* (the land of gods). Heaven or *Devachan* is a *condition* or a *state* of mental bliss and not a locality. Philosophically, it is a mental condition analogous to, but far more vivid and real than, the most vivid dream, writes H.P.B. It is an idealized and subjective continuation of the earth life. The immortal aspect in man, termed reincarnating Ego, or *Sutratma*, that survives death, enters this state called heaven, clothed in an ethereal vesture or celestial body. H.P.B. explains that the ideal efflorescence of all the abstract, therefore, undying, qualities such as love and mercy, the love for the good, the true and the beautiful, clings to the Ego and is carried to *Devachan*, and the Ego becomes the ideal reflection of the human being it was when last on earth.

*Devachan* is for rest and recuperation. As Mr. Judge explains:

If the average man returned at once to another body in the same civilization he had just quitted, his soul would be completely tired out and deprived of the needed opportunity for the development of the higher part of his nature. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 117)

In life, we are not able to put into action or realize all our thoughts or live out all our dreams and aspirations. The energy generated by such thoughts and aspirations is stored in the Ego. The unexhausted and unfulfilled thoughts and aspirations are expanded to their highest limits, in *Devachan*, carrying out all that was not possible in life. “The soul pursues its highest ideals spiritually, and, seeming to carry those all out to highest perfection, it is benefitted, enlarged and strengthened....Not alone do evil and mediocre people go to *Devachan*, but pre-eminently those who have high and deep—though unfulfilled—aspirations. These are artists, musicians, dreamers, religious enthusiasts. And they, having impetuous thoughts, stay there longer than others.” (*Forum” Answers*, p. 126)

The state in heaven or *Devachan* is one of unalloyed peace and bliss, but the state there will be coloured by one’s beliefs and quality of life on earth. A person who believed in no life after death, will experience an absolute blank, a kind of dreamless sleep, in *Devachan*. Since *Devachan* is an illusionary state, Adepts have no *Devachan*. So also, a selfish, wicked Egoist, one who never shed a tear for anyone but himself and having no tendril of sympathy for the world around, has no *Devachan*, *i.e.*, does not enter heaven.

Do we see there those we have left behind on earth or those who have died before us? We do not see them there, *in fact*, but we make to ourselves their images as full, complete and objective as in life, and devoid of any faults. The mother who has left a drunken son behind finds him before her in *Devachan* a sober, good man. “The *post-mortem* spiritual *consciousness* of the mother represents to her that she lives surrounded by her children and all those whom she loved.” If the Ego in *Devachan* has pure and deep love for a person on earth, that love can affect latter for good, not just morally but also in material circumstances.

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Although the etymology of the words, “religion” and “*dharma*” shows that they are very close in meaning, today both the East and the West are guilty of restricting the meaning of religion to a very narrow sense. Religion is considered to be a more or less arbitrary set of rules dictated by a particular organization to foster proselytism. The sectarian notion of religion springs from the abuse committed by religious institutions in the name of religion, and the individualistic trend of western culture which looks upon man as an individual in isolation and not as a knot in a net of relationships.

Can Indic culture revive the true spirit of religion by pointing out the real meaning of the word? “The Indic spirit, not constrained by the individualizing modern mind, includes in *dharma* the

ultimate order of the universe.” Human religiousness consists in such an understanding of religion. *Dharma* comes from the root, *dhr* (to carry, gather, sustain, unite, protect), and it protects and sustains the people and is the cosmic order of the entire reality, according to R. Panikkar, a religious studies scholar (*The Times of India*, January 28, 2006). The word religion, similarly, has equally rich etymology. Thus:

It connotes re-eligere (Augustine), the effort to re-unite with and choose the divine as symbol of human dignity; relegere (Cicero), as cult and honour to one’s own source, the Divine, with which we are connected by our free-will; and re-ligare (Lactantius) to relate and bind oneself to God by a bond of knowledge and love....The word religion implies the consciousness of our manifold and constitutive bonds; our links with body, soul and spirit; our links with the entire humanity; our links with the earth and the whole creation; and our links with that Mystery, one of whose symbols is the Divine. A religious person is someone who is conscious of all his connections with the entire universe, aware of all the links which relate a person to the whole reality, a fellow being of the universe.

Today, institutionalized religion and religious fundamentalism divides man from man—more atrocities are committed in the name of religion than otherwise. So much so that it makes one wonder, “Is religion necessary”? While explaining that Theosophy is not a religion, H.P.B. gives the true meaning and function of religion. Thus:

A Religion in the true and only correct sense, is a bond uniting men together—not a particular set of dogmas and beliefs. Now Religion, *per se*, in its widest meaning is that which binds not only *all* Men, but also *all* BEINGS and *things* in the entire Universe into one grand whole. This is our theosophical definition of religion; but the same definition changes again with every creed and country. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 1*, p. 5)

Mr. Crosbie describes religion thus:

True religion must give us a basis for thinking, and consequently, a basis for acting; it must give us an understanding of nature, of ourselves and of other beings. (*Universal Theosophy*, p. 1)

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Humans are responsible for the worst spate of extinctions, since the dinosaurs. A World Conservation Union “Red List” says 844 animals and plants have gone extinct in the last 500 years, ranging from the Dodo to the Golden Toad. Habitats ranging from coral reefs to rainforests are threatened, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity said in the report issued at the recent UN meet in Brazil.

“In effect, we are currently responsible for the sixth major extinction in history, and the greatest since the dinosaurs disappeared, 65 million years ago,” said the report. Apart from the dinosaurs, the other Big Five extinctions were about 205, 250, 375 and 440 million years ago. Scientists suspect that asteroid strikes, volcanic eruptions or climate shifts may explain the five.

A rising human population was undermining the environment for animals and plants via pollution, expanding cities and global warming.... (*The Times of India*, March 22, 2006)

Instead of helping Nature and working on with her, man, the crown piece of evolution, has always sought to exploit her. In 1891, H.P.B. gave graphic description of man’s conquest of nature, in the article, “Civilization, the Death of Art and Beauty”:

Owing to the triumphant march and the invasion of civilization, Nature, as well as man and ethics, is sacrificed, and is fast becoming artificial. Climates are changing, and the face of the whole world will soon be altered. Under the murderous hand of pioneers of civilization, the destruction of whole primeval forests is leading to the drying up of rivers and

the opening of the Canal of Suez has changed the climate of Egypt as that of Panama will divert the course of Gulf Stream....Fertile lands threaten to be soon transformed into sandy deserts. (*She Being Dead Yet Speaketh*, p. 31).

“Kill not—for Pity’s sake—and lest ye slay the meanest thing [least developed creature] upon its upward way” (*The Light of Asia*). In killing the animals, not only does man disturb the harmony of nature but retards the evolution of the lower kingdoms. That the consequences of such actions would be dire, is hinted at in the article “Morality and Pantheism”:

If an individual attempts to move in a direction other than that in which Nature is moving, that individual is sure to be crushed, sooner or later, by the enormous pressure of the opposing force. We need not say that such a result would be the very reverse of pleasurable. The only way therefore, in which happiness might be attained, is by merging one’s nature in great Mother Nature, and following the direction in which she herself is moving: this again can only be accomplished by assimilating man’s individual conduct with the triumphant force of Nature, the other force being always overcome with terrific catastrophes. (*The Theosophist*, November 1883)

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THE man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried....the epitome of all Laboratories and Observatories with their results, in his single head—is but a Pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye.

—THOMAS CARLYLE

## THE THREE GUNAS—SATTVA, RAJAS, TAMAS

Shun ignorance, and likewise shun illusion. Avert thy face from world deceptions; mistrust thy senses, they are false. But within thy body—the shrine of thy sensations—seek in the Impersonal for the “Eternal Man”; and having sought him out, look inward; thou art Buddha.

—*The Voice of the Silence*

WHEN a child is born, its lower mind is already firmly entrenched in the capsule of the body and continues to make its abode therein till death comes to effect a separation. From the first moment of its entry, it is wedged in and surrounded by the essences, properties and qualities of matter and as it advances in consciousness it tends to identify itself more and more with the name and form of its birth. True, that as the child advances in age a large measure of consciousness becomes possible, and with the advent of the higher mind moral values become perceptible. But even then the egoistic inclinations of the man tend to overshadow morality and leave him a strange being who remains intensely personal. Until he can shake off the stupor into which matter has precipitated him, the man will continue to think that he is the body and that the body is he. So long as his thoughts run in that direction, his bondage to matter, environment and circumstances must remain complete.

Large masses of men are thus caught up by ignorance, and the apathy which is one of the characteristics of matter prevents any movement forward. Born as slaves to matter, they are content to remain in meek bondage, too indolent to think, too benighted to see beyond their broken lamps. They fade out at death, lost in the void of nothingness which their very ignorance has conjured up for them. They do not think they have a mission to carry out nor that their live's sojourn had been planned for progress towards an ever enlarging individuality.

The Wisdom of the Ancients teaches us that the soul in the body

(called *Kshetrajna*) is the owner, harvester and labourer of the field of his body (*Shetra*). He who tends not his field, produces no crop and gathers no harvest, becomes untrue to his mission, and his incarnation comes to be written off as a failure.

In general, the purpose of any incarnation is to provide to the lower mind an entry into a human form. From then onwards, it has to busy itself in working through that body for attracting molecules and atoms of such purity as can provide a channel for the higher mind (the higher Ego) to come and work through it. That which prevents such an advent is indolence on the one hand and turbulence on the other, both of which are inherent in the various strata of matter. Before it can even think of ways and means to invoke the higher mind to come and stay with it, the lower mind has to understand how the essences of matter can help or mar its efforts; how, itself remaining master and manipulator, it can control and blend the qualities to suit its own exalted purpose.

Matter evinces three qualities or *gunas* which separately or in combination produce varying results. The names of these qualities (the Sanskrit is used since there are no English equivalents) are: *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Rajas-Sattva*; *Rajas-Tamas*; *Tamas-Sattva*; *Tamas-Rajas*. The seventh stage is where the three qualities are so balanced that they remain in a perfect state of equipoise. Just as today that they remain in a perfect state of equipoise. Just as today the purity of the four castes as distinct and separate no longer exists, so too with the *gunas*. No one quality manifests with the other two completely absent. However, to understand the effect of the combinations, it is important to know the ideal characteristic of each, unmixed and undiluted by the presence and action of the other two.

*Sattva* represents purity, brightness and well-being. When a man is established in it, its light streams forth from all the gateways of the body. However, with all its knowledge and luminosity it does not liberate the Soul. It binds and restricts its freedom through the knowledge and the delight it provides. The chain may be enchanting

and of rarest gold, but it is nonetheless a chain. It fetters and it binds.

*Rajas* represents passion—a lust and thirst for things and a clinging frantically to life. It moves the man to scheme for the satisfaction of his appetites. It is the produce of anger, greed and covetousness. The man in whom *Rajas* predominates rushes out to do, to do. It is true that he abhors lassitude, but he is no searcher after truth and purity. On the contrary, if it suits his purpose, he will in order to secure his ends assume a mask of purity and proclaim himself a votary of truth.

*Tamas* represents the inert and stupefied condition that is brought on by ignorance. Such a state beclouds discrimination. Vicious persons, those who worship the elementals and the ghosts of dead men fall in the category of those in whom *Tamas* predominates. The doors and windows of the Soul are barred and no light comes.

The indwelling soul, knowing himself to be the owner and master of his field, has to plan his work upon it with care and caution. He has to test and weigh the advantages as also the limitations of the soil which he has inherited from previous births. He has to learn its secrets of behaviour under varying conditions. It is the man's duty to till his land and raise such a crop on it as will give nourishment and strength to himself and to as large a number of persons as can share in it. The science and the art of fertilizing, tilling, harvesting and garnering as also the toil and labour involved have all to be provided by the man himself. For his field, he alone is the *Kshetrajna*. He has to adept his activity according to the seasons that affect his field and also to the other seasons or cycles that affect him personally. Besides learning to perform the proper functions at the right time, he has to protect his crop from the scorching sun and the depredation of birds. He has also to guard his moral nature and protect it against infiltration by the undesirable elements that seek entry. The farming of land is not to be undertaken by hit-and-miss methods. Skills have to be generated to meet droughts and floods while yet other skills are to be used against

pests and weeds. A mere cataloguing of dos and don'ts, a listing of virtues, will always remain an exercise of academic interest till the mind grasps their value and desires their possession.

When the allotted span of life is over, the soul quits the field and then its harvest is assessed. It is by his assessment that future incarnations are determined. In fact, the indwelling but now liberated Ego will on return gravitate to that environment and attract that matter which will enable it to pick up the threads from where they were left off at the close of the last incarnation.

The characteristics of matter, as they force their presence upon the indwelling spirit, mould it in time into the nature of either a god or a demon such as are portrayed for us in the sixteenth chapter of the *Gita*. These effects are brought about by the reaction of the soul to outside stimuli. The sum total of the man's motives as they meet the on-rush of events moulds his thinking and makes of him either a being of light or a thing of darkness. Admittedly, there must be varying shades and overtones of light and darkness, but they are only intermediate states which after a period, long or short, during which man oscillates between them, must ultimately fall off, making him gravitate to one of the two poles of light and darkness. Man cannot for ever remain in a state of flux. Precipitation and separation must follow upon a mixing together of uncongenial elements.

Science looks at matter in one way, metaphysics in another. The scientist breaks it up from its denser to its finer forms, and in so doing releases the forces that reside in each distinct stratum of matter. He does not concern himself with the essence and quality that exudes from matter, nor with the moral and psychic effects which flow from a too intimate affinity with matter. The metaphysician views matter as an agent that can colour life, making it dull or bright, dogmatic and superstitious or transcendental and luminous.

Every possible circumstance has its *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic* quality. Of the three, *Sattva* becomes desirable since it is of the

nature of light and purity, and also because it is only the metaphysical aspect of any experience that can enrich the Soul. The student has therefore to apply to each circumstance the touchstone of *Sattva*. The vital factors in any human life are: Faith, Fortitude, Worship, Intellect and Happiness. Each of these can present any one of the three aspects of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*, depending on which *guna* predominates the motive and the action. The man is expected to be firmly fixed in *Sattva* and from the eminence so obtained to handle each experience and distil from it its bouquet.

It is only when man is sufficiently familiar with these three qualities and can discriminate between them that he is able to adapt his plastic potency to the ways of matter and thus control it. But he has to realize that though *Sattva* can undoubtedly bring bliss, it cannot bring ultimate realization nor even a freedom from the bondage of matter. At its highest, it still represents a conflict, a taking up of arms against the undesirable, for, as explained in the *Gita* (XIV, 10), it is only when the overcoming of one or the other *guna* is a continuous process so long as the human consciousness remains chained to matter. In this life, there are battles always. The Soul of man must be unfettered, his desires free, but that which bestows freedom is not to be found in the qualities, *Sattva* included.

The only possible way by which a man can rise above them is by viewing them as separate and distinct from himself. If he can weigh, test and experiment with them, if he can remain unaffected by the forms, shapes, forces and powers which these qualities throw up, then is he liberated. But the liberation is no mere negation of involvement. It is a positive grasping of a higher power with which to subdue and tame the lower forces. The forces of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* could be made to remain in equilibrium. This may appear paradoxical, this putting of differing and antagonistic positions in juxtaposition for the creating of harmony, balance and equipoise. To the ordinary man, indolence, turbulence and calmness are contraries; for any one of these to prevail, the other two must be

suspended or eliminated. The calmness of *Sattva*, serenity which is no result of conflict and conquest. If the forces of indolence, turbulence and calmness can be arranged as to neutralize each other, there must arise a serenity and a peace which is different from the indolent stupor of *Kama* or the enforced calmness of *Sattva*. Then, it is not the victory of one over the other two. It is a condition to which each three contribute by cessation of action. In yet another sense, it is the renunciation by the man of the fruits of these qualities.

As early as in the second chapter of the *Gita* (verse 45) Krishna advises Arjuna to be free from the qualities. To the average man, it would appear that the light of truth and purity obtainable in *Sattva* should be the consummation of all effort. Where virtue presides and light streams forth from the gateways of the body, can there be room for further progress? The answer is that beyond *Sattva* lie states where knowledge comes of itself, where serenity is not limited by conditions and where the lower mind basks in the light of its higher counterpart. Arjuna is made to ask Krishna:

What are the characteristics marks by which the man may be known, O Master, who hath surpassed the three qualities? What is his course of life, and what are the means by which he overcometh the qualities?

He, O son of Pandu, who doth not hate these qualities—illumination, action, and delusion—when they appear, nor longeth for them when they disappear; who, like one who is of no party, sitteth as one unconcerned about the three qualities and undisturbed by them; who being persuaded that the qualities exist, is moved not by them; who is equal mind in pain and pleasure, self-centred, to whom a lump of earth, a stone, or gold are as one; who is of equal mind with those who love or dislike, constant, the same whether blamed or praised; equally minded in honour and disgrace, and the same toward friendly or unfriendly side, engaging only in necessary actions, such as one hath surmounted the qualities.

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## The United Lodge of Theosophists

### DECLARATION

**T**HE policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy, without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion.

The work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues. That work and that end is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF, a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.

It holds that the unassailable *Basis for Union* among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is “*similarity of aim, purpose and teaching,*” and therefore has neither Constitution, By-Laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that *basis*. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity.

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and

It welcomes to its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.

*“The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all.”*

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Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its “Declaration,” I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine.

The foregoing is the form signed by Associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists. Inquiries are invited from all persons to whom this Movement may appeal. Cards for signature will be sent upon request, and every possible assistance furnished Associates in their studies and in efforts to form local Lodges. There are no fees of any kind, and no formalities to be complied with.