

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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### FORBEARANCE

The way of inward peace is in all things to conform to the pleasure and disposition of the Divine Will. Such as would have all things succeed and come to pass according to their own fancy, are not come to know this way; and therefore lead a harsh and bitter life; always restless and out of humour, without treading the way of peace.

—W. Q. JUDGE

ONE of the many ways in which we can starve and mortify our personal self is by practising forbearance. Forbearance means patient self-control, restraint or tolerance. To forbear means to desist or abstain. Each human being is attached to physical existence through the three qualities—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*—light or truth; action, passion or desire; and indifference. Each one of us is a mixture of these three qualities. However, the differences between human beings are caused by the predominance of one or the other of these three qualities. “When *sattva* and *tamas* are hidden, then *rajas* prevaieth,” says the *Gita*. The predominance of the *rajasic* quality exhibits itself in impulsiveness, drive to achieve and over-zealousness. Here is the description of a person with predominant *rajasic* quality:

The characteristics of *Rajas* are love of gain, activity in action—meaning the holding of external action as the end in

view; the initiating of works; restlessness and inordinate desire, producing thirst and propensity for possessions of any and every kind; loudness of speech; obtrusiveness in manner and action, and self-assertion in many ways. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 199-200)

Forbearance helps in subduing the *rajasic* nature. To want things to happen as per our desires is a mark of self-assertion. We must forbear from fixing our desire on accomplishing even a seeming good result. It is not wise to fix our mind on any set plan. Buddha brings home this truth when he says, “‘Here shall I pass the monsoon; there shall I dwell in winter and summer.’ This is foolish reflection. He does not consider obstacles of existence.” Often, we engage ourselves in a series of actions, hoping to *bring about* the desired result. Here is a useful bit of advice, which, if followed, will save us much heartache:

It is not ours to say what shall be the result of an action; the Law will bring about a result much better, perhaps, than we had imagined. If the results, if the passing circumstances, are not those we expected, then by means of Devotion we accept them as just what the Law intended. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 68-69)

Forbearance involves checking a hasty conclusion, decision or action, and hence requires deliberation before acting. Moreover, it is the ability to remain passive or silent, if that is what the situation demands. For instance, we are more interested in talking than in listening to others. We are only too eager to tell the other person about our experiences and opinions. We need to conquer this habit of pushing ourselves forward, as it marks subtle assertion of the personal self. Mr. Judge suggests that when a person has finished narrating his experiences, we must try to suppress in us the desire to tell him about our experiences and opinions. If we practise this even for a week, we will realize that it takes considerable effort. But if we keep up the practice, we shall be gradually led to realize

the meaning of the saying, “Man, know thyself.”

Life presents us with ample opportunities to practise such forbearance. At times, the best course of action would be to refrain from interfering, and allow the child to make mistakes and learn from them. Often, it is better to withdraw in silent pity, *i.e.*, forbear from reprimanding, and thus give the offender a chance to repent of his ways and improve, suggests H.P.B. Our “Great Parent”—our Divine nature—forbears and watches with pain the child (personality) going astray. Like the unruly child choosing to stray away from the parent, often we stretch the “silver thread” that binds us to the divinity within, when we assert our will. Our divine nature can guide and help only when *we* turn to it for guidance. Such are also the *Nirmanakayas*, those perfected beings who have renounced the peace and bliss of Nirvana and chosen to remain in the invisible atmosphere of our earth. “Sorrowless they survey the sorrowful crowd,” and can help only those who seek their help.

Whenever we are able to suppress in us the impulse to express anger, hatred, dislike, etc., we act as *true* human beings should act. For, then, we momentarily exercise free will, instead of reacting to the external stimuli. But could such forbearance result in hypocrisy? For, it is very easy to present a good façade and be congenial with the person we inwardly dislike. The answer is, it need not be so if we are inwardly aware that we want to transform our dislike into love and acceptance. When we pursue the right course of action in all sincerity, gradually, the corresponding feelings would also arise and at last bring about the inner conversion. There is the story of a shrewd, harsh and selfish king whose inner qualities reflected in his countenance. He fell in love with a beautiful girl whom he wanted to marry. He called for a magician and asked him to paint a mask that looked kind, pleasant and handsome. The magician agreed to make one, but with the condition that the king should keep his own face on the same lines that he painted on the mask and that he must think only kind and noble thoughts and be gentle to others. The king approached the

beautiful girl, wearing the magic mask, and she agreed to marry him. As months passed, the king kept up the effort to be *genuinely* kind, gentle and compassionate, to match his outward conduct. However, he regretted, all the same, having cheated his wife. Hence the magician was asked to remove the mask. When that was done the king looked at his reflection in the mirror and was surprised to see that his face was exactly like the mask he had worn so long!

But at times we are required to forbear from expressing even positive emotions. Many a time parents forbear from showing sympathy and tenderness in order that the child may learn discipline. Life as a mother of a mentally retarded child could well be a continuous exercise in forbearance. No matter how painful, she has to forbear from being lenient or from pampering the child. So too, a highly developed adept, using his great intuitive powers, may refrain from relieving a particular person from his miserable condition, as he knows that often it is pain and adverse circumstances which are our best teachers. “Kindness and gentle treatment will sometimes bring out the worst qualities of a man or woman who has led a fairly presentable life when kept down by pain and despair,” says H.P.B.

A lover may be compelled to desist from expressing his/her love for various reasons. It could be one-sided love, or the person loved might be already married or in love with another, and then it would be far more noble to love and suffer silently than to give expression to one’s love. There is the poignant play, “Cyrano de Bergerac,” by Edmond Rostand. Cyrano, a poet-lover with an ugly nose and the face of a clown, not only hides his love for a lovely lady but also helps another man win her love.

The *Gita* advises us to refrain from doing another’s duty, no matter how perfectly and wonderfully we may be able to do it, and attend only to our own duty. In doing another’s duty we deprive that person of the opportunity to learn and fulfil his own Karma. Can a mother do her child’s homework?

It is suggested that as we begin the day we may make certain

inward resolves, such as, “I will adjust myself to what *is* rather than trying to adjust everything else to my own desire. If my feelings are hurt I will not show it to anyone.” Such a practice helps in acquiring the ability to absorb minor, emotional shocks arising out of hurt pride, injustice and misunderstandings that come through personal relationships. It makes us strong enough to endure personal injustice and attacks. The occult principle requires that if the injustice is against one’s self, then one must be able to let it go. A student-aspirant has to be as hard as a mango’s stone towards his own woes and as soft as its pulp towards others’ pain and sorrow.

Another resolve to make every morning is: “I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out.” How difficult it is to forgo the credit for our good work! It is still more difficult to allow someone else to take credit for our own efforts. It is by learning to do service, unperceived and unthanked, that we prepare ourselves to be a unit of that “Guardian Wall,” built by the sacrifice of perfected beings, which shields mankind and protects it from “further and far greater misery and sorrow.”

There are times when circumstances prevent us from doing the good work we long to do. For instance, we might have an intense desire to educate slum children, or reach food and clothing to the poor in Africa, and so on. But it might happen that some other receptive hearts might catch the vibrations of our intense desire and be able to accomplish what *we* longed to do. Are we then able to feel happy even when we are denied the subtle satisfaction of doing the good deed *personally*? Mr. Judge has this to say:

Even when you shall not have succeeded in carrying out anything but some small duties, some words of warning, your strong desire will strike like Vulcan upon other hearts in the world, and suddenly you will find that done which you had longed to be the doer of. Then rejoice that another had been so fortunate as to make such a meritorious Karma. Thus, like the rivers running into the unswelling, passive ocean, will your desires enter your heart. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

Patanjali in his “Yoga aphorisms” suggests certain moral observances (*yama*) and forbearance (*niyama*) as preparatory moral steps before we can undertake meditation practices. Forbearance consists in not killing, veracity, not stealing, continence and not coveting. There is however, a right and a wrong way of abstaining from evil. When we turn away from evil, in horror or disgust, we maintain a negative link with it and become guilty of self-righteousness. Hence *Light on the Path* says, “The self-righteous man makes for himself a bed of mire. Abstain because it is right to abstain—not that yourself shall be kept clean.”

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BEHOLD, we know not anything;  
 I can but trust that good shall fall  
 At last—far off—at last, to all,  
 And every winter change to spring.  
 So runs my dream: but what am I?  
 An infant crying in the night;  
 And infant crying for the light;  
 And with no language but a cry.

—TENNYSON

## THE REAL SUN AND THE VISIBLE SUN

THE Sun is the central star of our Solar System, the visible source of light and life. About the formation of our Solar System, there is disagreement between popular scientific theories and occultism. According to one theory of science, planets have originated from the Sun. They are chunks of cosmic matter, which have separated from the Sun and are now revolving around it because of the force of gravitation. Occultism disagrees with this view. Occult Philosophy says that Sun and planets are chunks of nebular matter that have detached themselves from the mass of cosmic matter and gradually condensed over millions of years. In the condensation of cosmic matter, Sun was the largest and first to detach itself before the others. It is therefore the elder brother and not the father of other planets. Thus:

The Occult Doctrine rejects the hypothesis born out of the Nebular Theory, that the (seven) great planets have evolved from the Sun’s central mass, not of this our visible Sun, at any rate. The first condensation of Cosmic matter of course took place about a central nucleus, its parent Sun; but our sun, it is taught, merely detached itself earlier than all the others, as the rotating mass contracted, and is their elder, bigger brother therefore, not their father. (*S.D.*, I, 101)

Ancient astrologers believed in the existence of seven sacred planets. They are, Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. They did not consider Uranus, Neptune and Pluto among the seven sacred planets. Occultism approves of this exclusion. “Seven primary or principal planets, the rest *planetoids* rather than planets,” says H.P.B. It is not surprising that recently even science has amended its stand, and has declared that Pluto is not even a planet, on the basis of certain finer scientific criteria. Occultism states that Sun and Moon are not among the seven *sacred* planets. Both Sun (which is not a planet) and Moon (which is a dead planet) are substitutes for two sacred planets which were known to the

Initiates. Sun is the substitute for the invisible trans-Mercurial planet still nearer to the Sun, but now invisible. Moon is the substitute for a planet with a retrograde motion, sometimes visible at a certain hour of night and apparently near the Moon—the occult influence of which is transmitted to us by Moon.

The real Sun is the Central Spiritual Sun, which ever remains concealed behind the visible Sun, and the latter is only its reflection, its shell or robe. It may be true that many of the elements similar to those on our earth, including many unknown ones, may certainly be present in Sun's outer garment or Chromosphere; but they are *not* present in the body of the Sun—"a body that was never yet reflected by any telescope or spectroscope that man invented." It is incorrect to attribute luminosity of Sun to combustion.

The electro-magnetic knot of our Sun is neither tangible nor dimensional, nor even as molecular as the electricity we know...It gives out nothing of itself. It is an absurdity, therefore, to say that the solar fires are being consumed and gradually extinguished. (*Transactions*, pp. 116-117)

None of the ancients, the sun-worshippers included, regarded our visible sun otherwise than as an emblem of their metaphysical, invisible, central sun-god. Moreover, they did not believe what our modern science teaches us, namely, that light and heat proceed from our sun, and that it is this planet which imparts all life to our visible nature. "His radiance is undecaying," says the *Rig-Veda*, "the intensely-shining, all pervading, unceasing, undecaying rays of Agni desist not, neither night nor day." This is evidently related to the spiritual, central sun, whose rays are all-pervading and unceasing, the eternal and boundless life-giver. (*Isis*, I, 270)

Popular scientific theories attribute the heat of the Sun to the conversion of hydrogen atoms into helium by the process of fusion under enormous pressure and density that exist at the centre of the Sun. To them, Sun is a burning mass, destined to die out. Occultism disagrees with this view, too. Occultists point out that Sun is not a gradually cooling mass of matter giving off heat and light. Sun is

not a globe in combustion, but simply a world, a glowing sphere of electro-magnetic substance. This physical sun protects the solar system from being reduced to ashes, for that is what would happen once the protective cover of the physical sun is removed. Hence, we are told that contrary to scientific speculation, while there is one man left on the globe, the sun will not be extinguished, and when it does, it will unveil the "Central Sun," the mysterious, ever-hidden centre of attraction of our sun and the system. Astronomers admit that our sun along with the entire solar system is in motion around some far-off undetermined centre, and that in turn could possibly be revolving around a still more distant and more powerful centre. However, they know not whether the undetermined centre be a sun or simply a larger and stronger centre of energy than the sun. Thus:

When that day comes, the semblance or reflection of the Sun which we see, will first fall off like a veil from the face of the true Sun. No mortal will see it, for no mortal eye could bear its radiance. Were this veil once removed for even a second, all the planets of its system would be instantaneously reduced to ashes, as sixty thousand of King Sagara's Sons were destroyed by a glance of Kapila's eye. (*Transactions*, p. 146)

Thus, occultism teaches that the visible Sun is not the "direct source" of vitality of our Solar system. The real, invisible Sun is the very heart and head of our Solar system. Its rhythmic beating pumps vital fluids throughout our system. It is this contraction of the solar heart which causes the 11-year cycle of sunspots. The Nasmyth willow leaves are actually the reservoirs of solar vital energy. We are given a graphic description of the circulation of the Sun's vital fluid throughout the solar system, just as the blood pumped by the heart circulates through the body. Thus:

The Sun *in abscondito* being thus the storehouse of our little Kosmos, self-generating its vital fluid, and ever receiving as much as it gives out, and the *visible* Sun only a *window cut into*

*the real* Solar palace and presence, which reflects, however, faithfully the interior work....

Thus, there is a regular circulation of the vital fluid throughout our system, of which the Sun is the heart—the same as the circulation of the blood in the human body—during the manvantaric solar period, or life; the Sun contracting as rhythmically at every return of it, as the human heart does. Only, instead of performing the round in a second or so, it takes the solar blood ten of its years, and a whole year to pass through its *auricles* and *ventricles* before it washes the *lungs* and passes thence to the great veins and arteries of the system. This, Science will not deny, since Astronomy knows of the fixed cycle of eleven years when the number of solar spots increases, which is due to the contraction of the Solar HEART. (*S.D.*, I, 541)

It is the Sun that drives the planets—the impulse to motion comes from the vital force of the Sun. Gravitation by itself does not explain the rotatory motion of planets. Gravitation (attraction) is only half the law, the other half is that of repulsion. It is the Sun which magnetizes the stellar bodies and sets them into motion.

Hindu mythology depicts the Sun-god riding a brilliant chariot driven by seven horses. This is symbolic representation of the sevenfold nature of everything in the universe. We are familiar with seven colours, seven musical notes, seven days of the week, seven sacred planets and so on. Man, too, is sevenfold. So are Sun, Moon and all the planets. It is on account of his septenary nature that the Sun was spoken of by the ancients as one who is driven by seven horses, as also that he has Seven Rays, etc. Man is sevenfold and the real man is not his physical body. It is the inner man who thinks and chooses, who uses his body, while remaining invisible. “The real Sun and the real Moon are as invisible as the real man,” says an occult maxim.

Mr. Judge points out that by meditating on “the most excellent light of the true Sun,” we can gain help in our struggle to assist humanity. Physical sun guards and sustains animal economy, but

the true Sun shines within us through the medium of the physical sun, and just as we prepare the soil for receiving the vivifying rays of the physical sun, so also we must direct our thoughts to the true sun within and prepare the ground within for its influence. For, in one sense, the true Sun represents our Higher Self which is inseparable from the Absolute or One Reality. The *Gayatri Mantra* refers to this real Sun within each one of us. In the article, “A commentary on the *Gayatri*,” Mr. Judge adopts the following translation of the *mantra*:

Unveil, O Thou who givest sustenance to the Universe, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, that face of the True Sun now hidden by a vase of golden light, that we may see the truth and do our whole duty on our journey to thy sacred seat.

Explaining the meaning of the *mantra*, Mr. Judge points out that just as the physical sun hides the true sun, so too, our personal self hides or obscures the light of the true sun within. *Unveil*, is the cry of the man who is determined to know the truth and who perceives that something hides it from him. Through our own past Karma we have acquired brain and desire nature which are too strong for the Higher Self to pierce through. The request made in the verse to *unveil the face of the True Sun* is the request made to the Higher Self for illumination. The light of intellect is not the true sun of our moral being. So long as desire and the personality remain strong, just so long will the light be blurred and we will mistake words for knowledge. The object of the prayer is that knowing the truth we may be enabled to carry out our whole duty and be able to accomplish our journey to the “Sacred Seat,” in company with the whole of humanity. For, humanity is an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto.

Periodically adjust the inner life.

—W. Q. JUDGE

## THE THREE JEWELS OF BUDDHISM

Men driven by fear seek refuge on mountains, in forests, under sacred trees or at shrines. Such refuge is not secure, such refuge is not the best. Such refuge frees not a man from pain.

He who takes refuge in the Enlightened One, in the Law, in the Order, perceives clearly the four Noble Truths—suffering; the origin of suffering; the cessation of suffering; and the Noble Eightfold Path, treading which all suffering is transcended.

—*The Dhammapada*

OUR chief aim and object in life should be to learn the Way of life, the mode of thought, which the Enlightened One showed, and in which can be found that peace which all seek but few realize; that contentment which enables one to look upon the world and its sins and sorrow with a “Vision” that is capable of rendering real help. Without vision a person, even with eyes, is blind; without vision the brain can philosophize yet remain indifferent and cold to the world and its suffering. It is vision born of knowledge which the *Dhamma* gives and which we must possess. If we study the history of religious movements we find that a hundred thousand things are put on the shoulders of “God,” and perhaps a larger number on the shoulders of the Devil, while all the time it is our own thoughts and feelings, our own hopes and aspirations, our own words and deeds that bring us woe or weal. For things gone wrong we blame God or Devil. Buddha taught that false resignation must not be resorted to, but knowledge and understanding must be sought. With the Light of the *Dhamma*, the Light of Spiritual Law and the aid of our own divine and immortal soul we not only understand but unfold the faculty of discernment (*Viveka*) and are able to distinguish the real from the unreal. Therefore, Lord Buddha insisted upon our acquiring the right view of things. Buddha condemns perverted views, saying that a person with distorted views leads many people astray—away from righteousness.

Belief implies non-enquiry; blind faith is the mother of every

kind of perverted view. “Nearer to church, further from God,” is a fact because the church, the temple, the mosque, even the Buddhist pagoda, nowadays, do not encourage a questioning attitude. Let us not mistake the religious life for the spiritual life. Religious life often means doing many things that we do not understand. The first step in acquiring knowledge and understanding is getting the lamp of the soul and shedding the light of wisdom all around. The priest or the *pandit* may say, “If you do not do what I tell you to do, you will go to hell.” But the spiritual man says, “Our hell is of our own making; do not be afraid of the priest, but seek the light which shows you why purity is superior to impurity; how soul-peace is superior to sense-peace.” The priest says he can save you, but he does not. The spiritual man, like Lord Buddha, says, “You can save yourself.” The right view, the right attitude to life must be acquired.

Lord Buddha taught a Way of Life, a Way to Peace, to Wisdom, to Altruism. It is necessary to understand and to expound the life-giving, illuminating, heart-inspiring doctrines of that Way, especially the teachings of the “Three Jewels,” more commonly called the “Three Refuges.” Buddhists take refuge in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* (the Law or the Teachings), and the *Sangha* (the Order); but these three are also the *Jewels*. The dual significance must be kept in mind. For our own benefit, for our own salvation, for our own progress, we seek refuge. We seek refuge from the storm that threatens us with starvation, misery and death. But once we have gained the strength from that refuge, we must not overlook that our fellow men are seeking that same refuge, and are still suffering from soul-sickness. The great Buddha and Bodhisattvas are miracle-workers. In the true sense what is their greatest Miracle? These Great Ones all walk on the Waters of *Samsara* (Earth life) wearing the Three Jewels of Immortality, of Wisdom and of Brotherhood. So, by all means, let us take refuge in Buddha, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha*, but also let us wear these jewels so that their magic lustre may help our fellow men.

The three Refuges and Jewels are open to threefold interpretation: (1) the orthodox or religious interpretation; (2) the broad, social, and tolerant interpretation; and (3) the spiritual, mystical and esoteric interpretation. Unless we understand and assimilate these three interpretations our grasp of the great Bodhi-Dharma will be partial and unsatisfying.

Even the orthodox and religious, sectarian view is that Gautama was not the only Buddha. In the Buddhist scriptures, the deathless race of Buddhas is mentioned, and we can trace for ourselves a long line of Buddhas. Jesus never claimed that he was the only Son of God, but such is the claim of the Church.

When we come to the second interpretation of the term Buddha, we find that Buddha means “the Enlightened One.” However, it is recognized that there are “the Enlightened Ones” even outside the pale of Buddhism. A Jesus, a Krishna, a Shankara, a Mahavira are also the Enlightened Ones. Therefore, when we seek refuge in the Buddha, we take Gautama as a great Type, but we are not intolerant about the doctrines and teachings of other Great Souls. Now this is a step in advance in liberalism of thought. But as men become broad they are apt also to become superficial and to lose the depth of vision. If we are not cautious, we might begin to put all kinds of names in the list of the Enlightened Ones. Even non-spiritual people, political philosophers, are called Masters, Gurus, Rishis and so forth. It is the third key that reveals the real nature of Gautama. We need to inquire: Who was Gautama? Why did He go through the experience of this wondrous life? Where is He now or what is He now? All these reveal the Real place and position of this Light of the World. When we say, “I take my Refuge in the Buddha,” let us do so with insight, and that insight will not be born into us unless we go to His Teachings—the *Dhamma*.

The orthodox sectarian view is that *Dhamma* means Buddhism. Perhaps an ultra-orthodox Ceylonese Buddhist, if asked, “What is *Dhamma*?” will answer—the *Sutta-Pitaka*, or collection of Buddha’s sayings. But our knowledge and perception have gone

too far to accept any book, or set of books, as Infallible Holy Revelations. *Dhamma* is not any particular religion. *Dhamma* is the code of Laws that enables us to live a noble and useful life—that is the second tolerant interpretation. Therefore, people read scriptures of other religions as well as their own, and absorb whatever they can. People have become so tolerant that philosophic prattle passes for profundity. People read novels to gain knowledge of psychology, take to practices of life which train body and mind. For instance, a young, educated woman, who read a book on meditation, and began practising breathing-exercises given in a chapter under the Sanskrit name *Pranayama*, ended up in a mental asylum. It only goes to show that there are good, intelligent people, even tolerant and broad-minded, but they lack discrimination. What is the Rule? Read anything you like, but practice only after due inquiry and analysis, study and research. If *Dhamma* is not any one particular holy book, it certainly also is not a vast collection of anything and everything that looks good to us. We get a clue in the *Mahaparinibbana-Sutta*. Buddha says that in whatsoever doctrine and discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, that is not *Dhamma*. The Noble Eightfold Path has eight steps leading to enlightenment: Right Views, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Concentration and Right *Samadhi*. *Dhamma* from the real, spiritual point of view, is that Eternal Religion, *Sanatana Dharma*, which some Hindus claim as their own particular System of Thought. The only holy and infallible Book is the Great book of Nature, to be read by the seer who is the sage. So, in taking Refuge in the *Dhamma*, let us go to the Truth hidden in Nature, and read the scriptural and secular books after securing some yardstick to measure truth.

The third jewel is *Sangha*. True *Sangha* consists of those who in the Buddhistic language are named Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Nirmanakayas and Arhats. Who belongs to the real *Sangha*? He only belongs to the Real *Sangha* who having unfolded sufficient *Viveka* (discrimination) and *Vairagya* (detachment) in himself dons

the robe made of the fabric of the Great Paramitas, the great virtues, *i.e.*, one who practises the transcendental virtues. But the Buddhistic conception of *Sangha* is dual. The other meaning of *Sangha* is the order of the *Bhikkhus* (monks). The *Bhikkhus* who wear the yellow robe also wear, if they are true *Bhikkhus*, the Yellow Robe of Golden Wisdom. They shave their heads, but that, too, is only symbolical, *i.e.*, we must be clean-shaven of the thousand and one weaknesses. Our mind must be clean and freed from diverse and conflicting views, freed from theories and speculations. The great Lord did not establish the *Sangha* as one more separating creedal institution. The “Brotherhood of Monks” had rules in each cycle and era that may be different in outer observances, but never different in Inner Realities. Take, for instance, the Essenes, a community of spiritual Healers. One of their rules was that they should not shave but allow their hair to grow. But does it mean that they did not destroy vices and weaknesses? Of course not. They were healers or therapists. They were the students whom the *Bhikkhu*-missionaries of King Asoka converted so that they became *Thera-puttas*, *i.e.*, sons of *Ther* or the elder Buddhists. So real *Bhikkhus* are the children, the sons and the daughters of the Real *Thera* (elder) Buddhas and Bodhisattvas—the Great Order of men who have the Soul-light.

Let us allow the true message of Lord Buddha to sink deep in our own hearts. Let us shave ourselves clean of personal egotism, of religious prejudices, of communal pride, of national bigotry; let us wear the Robe of *Dana*-charity, of *Shila*-Harmony and of all the other Paramitas. Let us learn to distinguish between the Eye-Doctrine of formal knowledge and the Heart-Doctrine of Spiritual Perception.

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KEEP thine eyes open, or Fate will open them for thee.

—*Gems from the East*

## LAO TZU’S “TAO TE KING”

### I

H. P. BLAVATSKY described Lao Tzu as a godlike being and classed him with Krishna, Buddha and Jesus. Lao Tzu was the resuscitator of Taoism, the practical philosophy and religion of the Way. He did not invent the Tao, he merely rediscovered it because Tao, or “The Way of the Heart,” was lost in rituals and ceremonies. The age of Lao Tzu was the age of Buddha, Pythagoras, Zoroaster, Mahavira, etc. It was a remarkable era of great Teachers all over the world. It is termed as Virtue-Age, when sages gain recognition. The rest is termed Vulgar-Age.

Lao Tzu was the court archivist of King Chou. He was born fifty years before Confucius. The task of Confucius was to codify old records for use. In this task he was helped by Lao Tzu, who exposed blind beliefs and superstitions and observance of rituals and ceremonies. Confucius described his first meeting with Lao Tzu, thus:

I know a bird can fly, I know a fish can swim, I know animals can run. Creatures that run can be caught in nets; those that swim can be caught in wicker traps; those that fly can be hit by arrows. But the dragon is beyond my knowledge, it ascends into heaven on the clouds and the wind. Today I have seen Lao Tzu and he is like a dragon.

We know that Great and Wise beings have been often described as “Dragons of Wisdom.” Lao Tzu means “Old Master.” He was also called Lao Tan or long-eared, which symbolized his capacity to listen to the voice of the silence or Inner Tao. It is said that after Lao Tzu died, there were many well-meaning persons who began to interpret and improve upon his teachings, but in the course of time his teachings were corrupted. There were true followers like Chuang Tzu, Leih Tzu and Went Zu, who endeavoured to keep the original impulse and original teachings intact.

Lao Tzu did not die, he disappeared, as did Shankaracharya. He was last seen and spoken to at the northwest gate of his land, where the gatekeeper recognized him. He said to Lao Tzu: "You are about to withdraw from the world. Record for me your instructions." During the journey, Lao Tzu dictated his teachings, known today as the *Tao Te King* and then disappeared without a trace.

The *Tao Te King* is referred to as the Book of Five Thousand Characters. The book is split up into 81 short chapters divided into two parts, upper and lower. The upper part is sometimes referred to as *Tao King* (Book of Tao) and the lower part as *Te King* (Book of Te). *Tao* means Way, Path, to guide and direct. *Te* is generally translated as Virtue or qualities acquired by living nobly. Here is what H.P.B. has to say about the *Tao Te King*:

He [Lao-Tzu] is said to have written 930 books on Ethics and religion, and *seventy* on magic, *one thousand* in all. His great work, however, the *heart* of his doctrine, the "Tao-te-King," or the sacred scriptures of the *Taosse*, has in it, as Stanislas Julien shows, only "about 5,000 words" (*Tao-te-King*, p. xxvii.), hardly a dozen of pages, yet Professor Max Müller finds that "the text is unintelligible without commentaries, so that Mr. Julien had to consult more than sixty commentators for the purpose of his translation," the earliest going back as far as the year 163 B.C., *not earlier*, as we see. During the four centuries and a half that preceded this *earliest* of the commentators there was ample time to veil the true Lao-tse doctrine from all but his initiated priests....Tradition affirms that the commentaries to which our Western Sinologues have access are not the *real occult* records, but intentional veils, and that the true commentaries, as well as almost all the texts, have long since *disappeared* from the eyes of the profane. (*S.D.*, I, xxv)

The difficulty of comprehending his teachings with our everyday mind is suggested by Lao Tzu through a subtle paradox:

My words are very easy to understand, very easy to put into practice; yet the world can neither understand nor practise them. (*Selections from the Upanishads and the Tao Te King*, p. 141)

To intellectually comprehend the words in which Truth clothes itself, is not to grasp the Truth. Truth can neither be written nor uttered. To get at the Truth or inner meaning of sacred works we need to read them between the lines, *i.e.*, exercise intuition. Intuition is the faculty of the soul and it could be developed by living in close proximity to our Divine nature. In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* Mr. Judge suggests that the *Gita* must be read by the "light of the spiritual lamp—be it small or great—which the Supreme Soul will feed and increase within us if we attend to its behests and diligently inquire after it." He speaks of disclosed Vedas and undisclosed Vedas. Lao Tzu discards discursive knowledge in favour of intuition, hence the *Tao Te King* may be regarded as a form of mysticism.

The *Tao Te King*, translated as "Treatise of the Way and of Virtue," is a book which relies upon intimation and paradox to convey what Lionel Giles called a "well-defined though rudimentary outline of a great system of transcendental and ethical philosophy." Both the words *Tao* and *Te* have varied meanings. The opening verse of the book says:

The Tao which can be expressed in words is not the eternal Tao; the name which can be uttered is not its eternal name. Without name, it is the Beginning of Heaven and Earth; with a name, it is the Mother of all things. Only he who is eternally free from earthly passions can apprehend its spiritual essence. (*Selections from the Upanishads and the Tao Te King*, p. 89)

These statements express dual aspects of God—Transcendental and Immanent, or *Nirgunabrahmam* and *Sagunabrahmam*. The transcendental aspect is often termed Parabrahmam or One Reality. To assign to IT any attributes is to dwarf IT and hence the sages of the Upanishads spoke only in terms of negatives, saying, "*neti, neti,*" or "not this, not this." Tao is the background of everything

visible and invisible, down to the minutest speck. The Immanent aspect is on the plane of emanations to which attributes can be assigned, and is called Logos or *Eswara* which is the Mother of all things from which manifested existence proceeds. Heaven and Earth represent two opposites: Heaven represents Spirit while Earth represents Matter. Spirit and Matter, or *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, are the source of everything in manifestation. Heaven and Earth might also be taken to represent the invisible, noumenal world and the visible, phenomenal world.

Tao is also symbolized by "Great Breath." The breathing out produces manifestation. It is followed by inbreathing, so that whatever was manifested becomes non-manifested, or returns to the original state. Thus:

There is something, chaotic yet complete, which existed before Heaven and Earth....It must be regarded as the Mother of the Universe. Its name I know not. To designate it, I call it Tao. Endeavouring to describe it, I call it Great. Being great it passes on; passing on, it becomes remote [far-reaching]; having become remote it returns [to the original point]. (*Selections from the Upanishads and the Tao Te King*, p. 91)

Tao also represents Cosmic Order or Law. There are divine beings who participate in the natural order of things and they are the embodiments of the Law. In fact, the presence of God in manifestation is to be felt through Law that is all-pervasive and works unerringly and righteously. There is the Law of Karma called the Ultimate Law of the Universe, which is inseparable from the Law of Cycles. The manifestation and dissolution of the universe obeys the Cyclic Law. In manifestation, we observe the cycle of seasons, the ebb and flow of tides, etc. Tao is God and Tao is also Law. We say that God is Law. Hence:

Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from Tao; but the law of Tao is its own spontaneity. (*Selections from the Upanishads and the Tao Te King*, p. 92)

All the manifestations of Tao are the result of the dynamic interplay between two forces: Spirit and Matter or *yang* and *yin*. *Yang* is light, masculine and active principle while *yin* is dark, cold and passive principle. H.P.B. writes of the "centripetal and the centrifugal forces, which are male and female, positive and negative, physical and spiritual, the two being the one *Primordial Force*." (*S.D.*, I, 282)

They are the two poles, which set limits to the cycle of changes. Thus, when *yang* has reached its climax it retreats in favour of *yin*, so also when *yin* has reached its climax it retreats in favour of *yang*. The dynamic character of *yin* and *yang* is illustrated by the ancient Chinese symbol, called the "Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate." The diagram consists of a circle that is divided into two parts through a curved line. Half of the circle is dark, the other half is bright. The brighter portion contains a dark dot and the darker portion has within it a bright dot. This diagram is a symmetric arrangement of the dark *yin* and bright *yang*. The symmetry is not static but rotational, suggesting a continuous cyclic movement. The two dots in the diagram symbolize the idea that each time one of the two forces reaches its extreme, it contains in itself already the seed of its opposite (*The Tao of Physics*, pp. 112-114). We may compare it to the processes of involution and evolution. In the process of evolution, there is first descent of spirit into matter, on the descending arc, wherein matter becomes more and more dense till it becomes the densest. This is followed by ascending arc, when matter becomes gradually more and more ethereal and spirit reasserts itself.

(*To be continued*)

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WHEN a certain point is reached, pain becomes its own anodyne.

—*Gems from the East*

## THE LONGING FOR PRAISE

“Shun praise, O Devotee.”

—*The Voice of the Silence*

THE self of man is immortal and is without limits. Being immortal, it cannot be cognized by the mortal parts of himself. These mortal aspects have their uses, but it is not one of their functions to bring the Spirit down into matter. Man's body and senses are incapable of perceiving the Self and are of no help in man's quest of his fast-moving Soul. Therefore is it laid down that for experiencing life in the Spirit, man has to achieve a complete abstraction from everything pertaining to the external universe or the world of the senses. He who would step on to the Path of Wisdom has to understand the ramifications of this Truth and the rationale of the discipline which alone can make realization possible.

To contact and have experience of the external universe is the lot of each human being as he incarnates in his mansion-house of flesh. To sustain his physical body and the other mortal constituents of himself, he has to draw energy from each aspect of the non-eternal world around him. One way to do it is to act as a human animal which is guided entirely by sense urge and desire. Or he may search for that which vitalizes and refines his vestures by taking in only such aspects of the outside world as are not inimical to his world of Soul and Spirit.

The Self of man does not wait upon the smiles of another; blossoms not through adulation of the masses; nor does it wither or shrink at their scorn. Praise or blame affects it not. It is, however, patent that both praise and blame cause strong and sometimes violent upheavals in the lower and mortal parts of men as well as of nations. The one is sought after, the other shunned; the two constituting a pair of opposites that besets one who has not freed himself from desires. The masses of men do not reflect the spiritual and are more or less averse to its involvement in their lives. Their

praise or censure is based on unstable foundations and is all too often thoughtless and basically unsound.

The human mind is incapable of discriminating between the false and the true so long as its perception is caught up by the fantasies that arise from delusion. Delusion is like a mirage and is produced by the shimmering heat of desire. Praise is one of its creators. This delusion makes the person identify himself with his body and the desires which run through its psychic counterpart. In the moments of elation that praise brings, he hardens himself in his personality to such an extent that he fails to look up and ask for judgment from his Lord and Inner Ruler—he who stands on high unaffected. The fumes that arise from delusion becloud and benumb the mind so that the “I” becomes identified with the entity that enjoys the glow of personal satisfaction. The memory of the imperishable and stable part of himself is for the moment shut out and he remains enmeshed in the mortal and vulnerable part of himself till delusion loosens its hold on him.

More insidious and therefore more potent of harm is the praise that the self-gratulatory men shower on themselves. These are people who are too haughty to worry about the opinions others may have of their achievements. They are so permeated by vanity that they have a constantly distorted image of themselves. They think they are apart from ordinary people—not because they have advanced in spirituality but because they are intensely egocentric. They weave a fantasy around themselves as do the mad man and the fool and all too often end up by worshipping their own image.

The longing for praise starts with the child when it yearns for acclaim from parent, teacher and friend. Its desire is natural so long as its higher mind remains unreachable. When this stage is passed, the child as it grows into the man is able to gather knowledge, test and verify its soundness and discriminate between the real and the false. It is the failure of modern systems of education that is responsible for the singular lack of knowledge about the spiritual governance of life, which makes it well-nigh impossible

for the growing mind to visualize the grand vistas that lie beyond the thresholds of the evanescent aspects of life. Our academies of learning consider useful the knowledge that deals with matter and provides quick and easy employment. The knowledge of the eternal—that which deals with the origin and oneness of life; the psychic and spiritual heredity of man; the implications of reincarnating on earth and the immutability of LAW that is intelligent and that sees and weighs and adjusts—is at a discount. We have thus gathered over the centuries a body of knowledge that pertains to phenomenal things and which must therefore be itself phenomenal. This false learning, says *The Voice of the Silence*, “is rejected by the Wise, and scattered to the winds by the Good Law.”

This “scattering to the winds” is the process by which the non-eternal is disintegrated and dispersed. So perished the knowledge of the sorcerers of Atlantis; so must perish the knowledge that one portion of humanity is garnering for the torture and subjugation of the other. This is so because the Power that is all-pervasive and that cannot be mocked nor deceived exists and moves towards the fulfilment of its great mission. Its presence is perceivable in the great movements that history and tradition record of the triumph of the right, the destruction of the wicked and the preservation of the righteous. It is impersonal in the sense that the extent of reaction to any action is mathematically precise, for it takes no count of the one who acted—his status, his prayers, his confessions. Yet the Law is not blind. It judges motives and penetrates the heart of things. It supervises, it instructs, it preserves and it destroys. The time when the reaction to the action will manifest is determined by the needs of the over-all plan of evolution and the psychic and manasic necessities of the person. The fruition of the act may be immediate or may even get extended to the next or succeeding incarnations. The harm that follows upon a longing for praise may not thus become apparent on the instant, and when it does manifest, one may not be able to link the effect to its legitimate cause.

The shunning of praise and the gathering of true knowledge,

though important steps in a disciple’s life, are by themselves not enough. They need an additive before they can be turned into Wisdom. Says *The Voice of the Silence*: “If thou would’st eat the bread of Wisdom, thy flour thou hast to knead with Amrita’s clear waters.” The knowledge has to be leavened by the eternal waters of an impersonal, all-embracing love. No knowledge has the power of beneficence unless it has the eternal as the vitalizing, sustaining and intelligent background of what philosophers call divinity and men call god. The knowledge that is promulgated with the desire to earn praise has but a mortal background and will therefore be unable to reach the spiritual centre of the listeners.

In one sense, the seeking of praise is but one form of a hungering for a reward. Praise feeds and fattens ambition and is the root from which the weeds of pride take their birth. After delivering a good lecture, does the student wait anxiously for some words of praise? After spending indifferent years in a Theosophical lodge does he expect to be recognized and fawned upon? Does he want to be pointed out as one who has missed not a single meeting during the years when Theosophy was under an eclipse? Let him heed well the injunction of *The Voice of Silence*:

Build high, Lanoo, the wall that shall hedge in the Holy Isle [Thinking Self], the dam that will protect thy mind from pride and satisfaction at thoughts of the great feat achieved. A sense of pride would mar the work....

THERE is never any need to worry. The good law looks out for all things, and all we have to do is our duty as it comes along from day to day.

—W. Q. JUDGE

## 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:** How does one help oneself to conquer a state of depression?

**Answer:** Depression in technical terms could be “endogenous,” *i.e.*, arising out of some constitutional defects, or “exogenous,” *i.e.*, dependent on the circumstances and events that precipitate into the state of extreme despair. In both cases, there seems to be latent psycho-biological as well as “psychic” idiosyncrasies that manifest cataclysmically or cyclically, given the internal and external causes. As for the frank psycho-pathological case of depression, proper professional (psychiatric) help may be needed in addition to the management by family, counsellors and friends.

The question of the conquest of any physical and mental disturbance involves both the individual himself and those who are called upon to help. As for the student-aspirant, if he finds himself drifting, perhaps imperceptibly, into a state of sadness and *ennui*, he is directly responsible for his own mental and moral health. A sincere student will not entertain an enervating state for long, which could surely interfere with his own spiritual work and even drag his co-disciples down. Such a state could make him impotent to help others, “altruism” being the aim and motive force of a true theosophical life. In fact, an important duty of an aspirant is to brighten the life of *others*, and if he permits the dark clouds to hang over his head, he is sure to affect others and retard progress.

Now, before any remedy is suggested one must understand what it means to despair of life, to lose hope and meaning, to harbour an

awful adversary called “grief,” to fall a prey to discouragement, pessimism—even resentment, disgust and bitterness. To say: “I am unhappy,” is to confess that “I am insincere!” It means that I have lost my faith in the Divine and the merciful Law which guides our destiny. It is to say that “I am content to be weak” and “I want my depression!” One has permitted the hostile forces to ride on one’s back and will not shrug them off. For, there are real enemies of spiritual man, existing in the astral atmosphere of the world, who are ever ready to attack aspirants in their weakest moments and in their weakest spots, such as doubt, ingratitude and bruised feelings against fellow students!

In the life of every student-aspirant there are crises, where moods are adversely affected but are always noticed, and an attempt to overcome the defects is sought. For, if a dark mood is entertained for long, like any other defect, it may become habitual and gain strength. In *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 24*, Mr. Judge deals with cyclic return of impressions and points out that our having a quarrel with someone and getting very angry, creates an impression in us, and that impression is as much subject to cyclic law as the moon, and the stars, and the world. Our “blues” or depression come in cycles. If we maintained a diary we would observe that depression occurs at regular intervals of time. When the depressive cycle returns, we must compel ourselves to feel joyous, even against our will—or at least try to feel the joy of others. We may do this next day or even two days later. We would then have implanted joyous impressions, so that when the depression returns, it brings along with it the impressions of joy and they would counteract each other’s momentum. Soon we would succeed in establishing a joyous cycle.

Another aspect of despair is that unconsciously the student harbours some ill-will within himself. Deep down, one’s lower nature wants to be heard, taken notice of, even while it hides its real egotistic claim! The remedy therefore is to maintain, in every condition, the state of good will.

We have, in theosophical literature, instances of aspirants to

the higher life and chelaship who have undergone “ordeals” which test their physical, mental and spiritual mettle. During these trials, the disciple has to conquer the enemy within as well as without. Letters of the “Victorious Disciple,” Mr. Judge, written from personal experiences, are a very helpful guide in such cases. He has advised the candidate to fight his battle all by himself, although the collective goodwill of his co-disciples does help in reminding him that the “fogs must lift,” and that behind these dark veils there is Light. Here, the friends and co-workers are given the opportunity to extend their best wishes and to send healing thoughts for the struggling soul. For, none of us are completely free from stains and weaknesses, and tomorrow it may be our turn to undergo similar trials of higher life. Depression, in truth, is foreign to the Spiritual Ego, our true Being, whose nature is Faith, Hope and Love.

**Question:** What is the relation between wisdom and faith?

**Answer:** There is an intimate connection between faith and knowledge, as also between faith and wisdom. Wisdom is *Para Vidya* or Absolute Truth and can never be found in the books. Says Job in the Bible: “With the Ancient (man’s Higher Ego) is wisdom, and in length of days (or the number of its reincarnations) is understanding.” No man can learn true and final wisdom in one birth. Wisdom is something we have potentially, but its realization would take us many, many lives. But then what is the use of acquiring knowledge or *apara vidya*? The answer is that for our potentialities to flower forth, life experiences are necessary, but, to extract something from our experiences the mind needs breadth and depth which comes from sincere pursuit of knowledge.

Man becomes of the nature of the ideal on which his faith is fixed. Faith fixed on *anything* will bring results. There is blind, reasoned and intuitive faith. Blind faith is like that of some emotional person for whom two plus two could also be five if the priest says so. It is blind faith that makes us credulous. We are then ready to believe everything—even things contrary to reason and

common sense—and that gives rise to dogmas and superstitions. Most of the time we place our faith on externalities—gods, men, religions, systems of thought, and thus we limit the power of Spirit, making it impossible to expand beyond the limitations of our ideal. Faith in an outside god, outside Law, an outside atonement for sins, are all external faiths of the nature of *tamas* or ignorance.

Reasoned faith is the faith supported and verified by reason. Mr. Crosbie suggests in the article, “The Power of Suggestion,” that even Masters make use of “suggestion” in presenting the truths. But unlike modern science and religion, when the true is suggested to us, They also provide us *with the means to verify* it. H.P.B. points out in the Preface to *Isis Unveiled* that by combining science with religion, existence of God and immortality of man’s spirit may be demonstrated like a problem of Euclid. She writes: “Tell one who has never seen water, that there is an ocean of water, and he must accept it on faith or reject it altogether. But let one drop fall upon his hand, and he then has the fact from which all the rest may be inferred. After that he could by degrees understand that a boundless and fathomless ocean of water existed. Blind faith would no longer be necessary; he would have supplanted it with KNOWLEDGE.” So also existence of God can be proven by proving the wondrous powers of the soul of man. Man-spirit proves God-spirit. We must get at the *basis* of whatever is presented to us. Never adopt any conclusions just because they are uttered by a person in whom you have confidence, but only when they coincide with your intuition, says Mr. Judge. “To be even unconsciously deluded by the influence of another is to have a counterfeit faith.” Once we have decided, after due deliberation, to follow a particular discipline, there should arise no controversy or conflict in our mind. Once settled, it must be like Pythagoras’ theorem, verified and accepted by an advanced mathematician. Before accepting the theorem, he has tested it, and hence, does not verify every time he makes its application. Similarly, once having accepted the moral principles, or a system of philosophy, we must have unshaken faith and courage to practise

them even in the face of opposition from family, society, religion, community, etc.

Even when a disciple does not understand a word of what the Guru teaches but if he is happy to be near the Guru and serve him, then, his abiding faith will eventually clear his mind, says Mr. Judge.

*The final authority is the man himself.* Intuitive faith is the highest and it helps us to discriminate between true and false systems of thought. To obtain intuitive knowledge or wisdom we must have faith that such knowledge exists. Faith is defined as a covenant or agreement between our lower and higher nature. It is when we listen and act according to the dictates of our higher nature that we gain wisdom which resides in the Higher Ego. We have to place our faith on that which is internal. One who follows the Path of true faith is not drawn away from his fellow beings. He sees the difficulties under which they labour and desires to help them. Self-knowledge is the child of loving deeds. Mr. Judge writes:

Every impulse from above, every prompting of the divine within must be met at once with hearty welcome and response. If you feel as if something urged you to visit some sick or afflicted neighbour or friend, obey the suggestion without delay....If some pathetic story of suffering has moved you, act on the emotion while your cheeks are still wet with tears. In short, put yourself at once in line with the Divine ways, in harmony with the Divine laws. More light, more wisdom, more spirituality must necessarily come to one thus prepared, thus expectant. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 32)

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THERE is no transforming power in death; as a tree falls, so must it lie. It is during the lifetime that we must recognize and awaken our true nature. Death opens no door to knowledge.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Our attitudes shape our future. Using global warming as a case study, Matthew Colborn, a psychologist from the United Kingdom, explains why our feelings and attitudes about the future and its risks can lead to either triumph or disaster. Our attitudes and beliefs are a mixture of emotion and reason. Our training and background predisposes us and affects the way we organize and interpret the data. For instance, on the issue of global warming, a lay person's opinion and interpretation will be different from that of a climatologist or an economist.

Our emotional disposition affects how we see the world. Imagined utopias are the result of hope and optimism, while dystopias are often the result of fear. For instance, both James Lovelock and James Howard Kunstler in their writings express fear over the future consequences of reliance on fossil fuels. But whereas Lovelock has an optimistic outlook, Kunstler veers towards despair. Hence, though Lovelock believes that it is too late to stop global warming, he makes a number of suggestions that could help mitigate the consequences and save as much of civilization as possible. He suggests replacement of fossil-based technologies with those that are significantly less damaging to the planet and makes a strong case for nuclear power.

A constructive attitude drives one to action, using all the emotions as springboard, while hopelessness paralyzes action. Imagination is a crucial element in our attitude towards the future. "More than 40 years ago, Sir Arthur C. Clarke said that if we fail to find an alternative to the fossil it will be because of incompetence and lack of ability to imagine a different and better world. Knowledge is nothing without an inspired attitude to interpret it, which is the essential ingredient in any pre-vision of the human future," writes Matthew Colborn. (*The Futurist*, January-February, 2007)

It is our attitude or inner stance that guides our actions and

either inspires us to put in our best efforts or give up in despair. The inner attitude of hope, faith and confidence is very important, especially, in spiritual endeavours. Sometimes, when the student-aspirant lapses in his spiritual discipline he may decide that he will not oscillate *so much* in the future, but that is not the best attitude, because it shows that he expects to oscillate *at least a little*. “If he expects to oscillate, he will oscillate. It would be better to expect to hit the mark, instead of expecting to miss it,” writes Mr. Crosbie. The quality of energy aroused and the psychological position will be different in these two cases. If we doubt our ability to accomplish, nothing can get done.

A Master has gone on record that each member, if earnest and unselfish, can become a centre of powerful influences, gathering like-minded people around him and benefiting the whole neighbourhood. What comes in the way of each member becoming such a centre is, basically and mainly, the mental attitude. Mr. Judge points out that most students think that people around are not receptive. But this is dangerous, because we are connected with others on the mental plane and if we think *nothing can be done*, we impress other minds around us with the same thought, and then, of course, *nothing is done*. As against this, if we *think* Theosophy and earnestly and sincerely say to ourselves that just as I have benefited from Theosophy, let others too be benefited, then it would be like whispering into the ears of others who are in our vicinity, “Theosophy, help and hope for thee.” Such an attitude combined with sincere efforts at promulgation can have a miraculous effect.

In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge points out that the power of adverse circumstances is determined by our own attitude. “A few moments’ reflection will show you that we make our own storms. The power of any and all circumstances is a fixed, unvarying quality, but as *we* vary in our reception of these, it appears to us that our difficulties vary in intensity. They do not at all. We are the variants.”

Imagination is the King faculty and Will cannot do its work if the Imagination is weak or untrained, says Mr. Judge. Most, if not all, diseases are the result of fear and wrong imagination; hence the need to get rid of fear and give a right bent to our imagination. Also, fear paralyzes the Will.

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It appears that to put a person into a hypnotic trance, we may no longer need a hypnotist. Hypnosis seems to have entered a new era, with iPod-like device in the computer (laptop) known technically as the “Pzizz,” working as a self-hypnotizing device that alters brain waves. The Pzizz is a gadget (and now an optional software package for the iPod) designed to generate a unique hypnotic experience through headphones. Each headphone plays a tone of slightly differing frequency, which creates a pulsating beat that is felt but not heard, because it is below the range of human hearing. The electrical signals in the brain alter in frequency to match with these pulsating beats, called “binaural beats,” of the headphones, and as a result, bring about alteration in consciousness. Such alterations in brain waves produce hypnosis. It is claimed that such an experience would lead to improvement in one’s state of mind and in one’s quality of life. In our modern age hypnotism is almost ubiquitous. In 2006 alone, Lindsay Lohan resorted to hypnotism to cure herself of her shopping addiction and Kevin Federline considered using it to overcome the smoking habit.

Hypnosis is nothing but a state of relaxation. A hypnotist cannot make you do anything you don’t want to; he can merely propose activities for your unusually open mind to weigh the merits of, writes Bruno Maddox (*Discover*; Special Issue). The writer observes that we are afraid of hypnosis because guided by Freudian psychology we are convinced that hypnosis would bring to the surface unhealthy emotions from our subconscious, whereas the fact is that there is nothing terrible in our subconscious. His own

experience showed that hypnotism could be massively relaxing and refreshing—cleaning the sensory organs.

Theosophy points out that like most other psychological phenomena, hypnotism is very little understood, even by those who use it for a good purpose. A hypnotist interferes with the free mental action of the subject. Hence, even when the outcome of submitting oneself to hypnosis may appear to be good, there always remains the possibility that some suggestion or psychic infection that was introduced during the passive state of the subject, can manifest after many years. As against a few dubious advantages, there are immeasurable dangers in this practice.

Often, hypnosis is used in the treatment of deleterious habits. It has been effectively used and has helped the person to overcome alcoholism, insomnia, nail-biting, fear phobias, etc. But in the process, the person so treated becomes dependent on the hypnotizer. When a habit is overcome by hypnosis, the person has to face the same temptation again, with added handicap/weakness of increased suggestibility. Thus, sooner or later he has to regain his self-control and learn to overcome the habit himself.

The rationale of the hypnosis produced by “Pzizz,” is similar to that of the hypnotic condition produced by purely mechanical means, *i.e.*, by fixing of the eyes on some bright spot, a metal or a crystal. H.P.B. explains the rationale of this method, thus:

It is the eye—the most occult organ of all, on the superficies of our body—which, by serving as a medium between the bit of metal or crystal and the brain, attunes the molecular vibrations of the nervous centres of the latter into unison (*i.e.*, equality in the number of their respective oscillations) with the vibrations of the bright object held [catching the rhythm of the latter and passing it on to the brain]. And, it is this unison which produces the hypnotic state....(*Lucifer*, December 1890)

Hypnotism tends to increase suggestibility and such persons are open to both favourable and unfavourable suggestions. They easily fall prey to destructive suggestions from relatives, friends

and popular nostrums of the day. In other words, hypnotism tends to weaken the will and hence the self-control of the subject. As an English physician put it: “The confirmed and trained hypnotic subject is a maimed individual in mind and body, and is likely at any time to be dangerous to himself and to society.”

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Is life possible without oxygen? According to a paper published in *Science* (Vol. 314, No. 5798), scientists of the Princeton University, U.S.A., are claiming that a particular kind of bacteria are surviving 2.8 kilometre below the surface of the earth without oxygen, sunlight and in extreme conditions of temperature and pressure. The community of bacteria derives energy from the decay of radioactive rocks, and the hydrogen needed for their respiration is obtained from the decomposition of water by radioactive decay of uranium, thorium and potassium. These microbes were discovered in the water-filled fracture inside the South African gold mines near Johannesburg, writes Archita Bhatta (*Down To Earth*, December 15, 2006). This discovery has increased the possibility of existence of life on oxygen-deficient planets like Mars. Could they shed light on the origins of life on earth? The researchers said that the bacteria found it impossible to survive in the presence of oxygen. How do these creatures sustain themselves? Have these bacteria evolved to possess all the characteristics needed to survive on their own *or* are they working with other species of bacteria?

It appears that Nature provides the appropriate conditions necessary for the survival of every organism. H.P.B. puts it thus:

Every organized thing in this world, visible as well as invisible, has an element appropriate to itself. The fish lives and breathes in the water; the plant consumes carbonic acid, which for animals and men produces death; some beings are fitted for rarified strata of air, others exist only in the densest. Life, to some, is dependent on sunlight, to others, upon darkness;

and so the wise economy of nature adapts to each existing condition some living form. These analogies warrant the conclusion that, not only is there no unoccupied portion of universal nature, but also that for each thing that has life, special conditions are furnished, and being furnished, they are necessary. (*Isis*, I, 343)

Men of Science, Louis Pasteur and Claude Bernard, described life as a process of fermentation and demonstrated that there exist in Nature “beings” or “lives” that can thrive without air, even on our globe. They derived the oxygen necessary for their multiplication from the various substances that surround them. Pasteur found that many lower lives, such as Vibriones, as well as certain bacteria and microbes, not only could survive without air, but also were killed when exposed to air. Certain germ-cells, such as those of yeast, multiply in the air, but when they are deprived of it, they act as ferments and rob oxygen from the substances that are brought in their contact and ruin them. It is observed that cells in fruit and so also those in tissues and organs of our body, when they do not find sufficient oxygen become *ferments* and stimulate fermentation. The process commences with one cell robbing its neighbouring cell of its vitality when the supply is insufficient; the process then steadily continues. These cells behave as *anaerobic* beings. H.P.B. comments that perhaps Pasteur was unconsciously taking his first steps towards Occult Science in stating that the organic cells are endowed with a vital potency that does not cease its activity with the cessation of a current of oxygen towards them and does not break off its relation with life itself which is supported by the influence of that gas. (*S.D.*, I, pp. 249 fn. and 263 fn.)

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THE road to sin is a wide highway; the way out of it, a steep and rugged hill.

—*Gems from the East*

## THE LURE OF THE ABNORMAL

THE *Bhagavad-Gita* (literally, the *Gita* or Song of Bhagavan or Lord) is the book of instructions which teaches the practice of *Buddhi Yoga*. It gives guidance as to how each event in life is to be met and how each step upon cautious step is to be taken on the path of knowledge and divine wisdom. Nowhere in the treatise does Krishna urge his disciple to develop abnormal powers, whether they be physical, psychic or spiritual. The goal of human evolution is not attained by their acquisition. The entire trend of the teaching is towards the blending (*yoga* or union) of mind and soul and the final assimilation in the Supreme. This union and final assimilation is an end by itself. It is not taken as a means for obtaining powers. These but follow upon and are a natural outcome of attainment. Arjuna too does not ask for nor covet powers for the averting of the conflict, nor for the obtaining of victory. He desires only such instructions as will quieten his inner turmoil. All his questions are directed towards that end.

Krishna as the Guru, the Asylum and the Friend of Arjuna imparts the divine wisdom. Commencing his discourse with the teaching about the immortality of the Self and the spiritual and imperishable roots from which the mortal man springs, he recites the excellences of the Supreme and reveals the divine universal form with all its resplendent effulgence, the imprint of which will remain with Arjuna for all times. But that is all. Even the demonstration of his Universal Form comes not as a display of a phenomenon but as a legitimate sequence of the Instructions which preceded it and also as a corrective to Arjuna's previous blindness in failing to see the presence of the Lord in all things and everywhere. Krishna does not give to Arjuna the fabled glance by which Kapila made a mountain of ashes of King Sagar's 60,000 sons, nor does he protect Arjuna's son from being slain, nor yet does he make Arjuna immune to death and the other risks of war. He does not use his supreme power to reduce the Kurus to ashes,

nor does he depute such powers to his devoted disciple. Divine powers are not so used.

For centuries man has chronicled the manifestations of abnormal powers and forces, dubbing them divine or diabolical to suit his own prejudices. Their range is vast, and some are so stupendous as to cause men to disbelieve their existence. But they are there and can be awakened and directed by the perfected will of man. When the student sees these powers exercised, he may get so awed by the manifestations as to start paying homage to the operator. Under the dangerous spell cast by the phenomenon, he may treat the person through whom such power manifests as the chosen one of God, and abandoning previous vows of loyalty, proclaim himself the disciple of the new-found teacher. Many a student thus falls by the wayside, unable to lift his gaze beyond the range of the encircling spell which obsesses his mind and numbs his discrimination. *Isis Unveiled* treats of phenomena and their rationale and proves by facts piled upon facts that there are no miracles in nature. What the ordinary person calls miraculous is the effect of a law that at the particular time and for the particular individual was hidden or non-comprehensible. Clairaudience, clairvoyance, telepathy, mind-reading, apportionation, and all the other phenomena now clubbed together under the appellation of extra-sensory perception were considered miraculous only a hundred years back.

The student has to understand the basic fundamentals that lie at the root of the Ten Items of *Isis Unveiled*. He may pass over them lightly, but then it would be at his own risk. The truths which these items give out are the immunizing agents that will protect the student against the glamour of the abnormal. Each phenomenon which he sees or which is brought to his notice can be understood by one or the other key which these Ten Items provide.

Theosophy postulates that Nature is triune and that so is man. The triune man provides the key which fits the lock of Nature and opens its mysteries. Each of the three great divisions has its own sub-divisions which have their own respective planes of

consciousness, their own sensory instruments of perception and their own powers and potencies depending upon the subtlety or grossness of the substance in use. So vast, so complex is the realm of nature that even in regard to the matter with which we are familiar our humanity has not reached to the knowledge of all the subtler forces that reside therein.

The three broad divisions of nature and of man are: the physical, the astral or psychic and the spiritual. The first two divisions are in a constant state of flux. They are perpetually changing and are for that reason perishable. It is only when man succeeds in merging himself in his spiritual nature that he becomes an immortal entity. The forces that reside in the spiritual aspect cannot be reached by the physical perishable, nor yet by the perishable psychic. The perishable natures must for all time remain ignorant of the spiritual. Further, they cannot be used to mount to the spiritual. The forces that reside in the spirit are not for showmanship, nor for the gaping laudation of the multitudes. When one rests in the spiritual, the desire either to possess the powers or to glory in their use and demonstration is gone. Therefore is it written for the disciple that the power he shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men.

Those who love to parade their virtue or their knowledge may by that very act be judged to be without access to the powers of the spirit. This must be so because the quality of impersonality which is the essence of the spirit precludes the exercise of force for ends lesser than spiritual. Persons who worship the evil powers or the elemental spirits or the ghosts of dead men put themselves out of the pale of the spirit as do others who profess one religion or the other and favour one sect or creed as opposed to others. Spirit is one, indivisible and impartite. It cannot be reached nor its powers drawn upon by the mortal and warring aspects of men.

The powers that an Adept can acquire are so vast, so ludicrously impossible to the ordinary mind as to invite ridicule at their very mention. Some of these powers will be found enumerated by

Patanjali. They exist, but the stress is not on their acquisition but rather on the fact that they are met with on the way and should not be allowed to divert the aspirant from the ultimate goal. A knowledge that such “impossible” powers exist will rob the lesser powers of much of their glamour.

No force in nature or in man is inherently good or bad. Forces or powers are colourless—even those of the physical plane. It is the motive which propels the force to action that can make it white or black, benign or malignant. To be white, the force has to be directed by one who at operation time is as impersonal as the sun, wind or the ocean swell. So functioning, the man can protect large multitudes. The acts which such a man performs are in harmony with Nature’s laws and with what has been called the fixed arithmetic of the spheres. This rules out any use of power—however trivial—for self-glorification, pleasure, the wonderment or the confusing of others, or for gain to oneself, one’s nation, family or group. It *ipso facto* precludes the seeking of a reward or the doing of harm to anyone, even though he be the vilest and the meanest of mankind.

When the student comes across persons who operate the lesser known powers, his initial reaction often is that the possessor of these must be very close to perfection. Here would be a teacher fit for him because he displays his superiority over those who merely preach. Phenomenalism appeals to the emotions, makes the mind captive, and the man reduced to this condition willingly surrenders his will to that of another. Thus, though he may have studied the Ten Items of *Isis Unveiled* (II, 587 *et seq.*) and can recite them backwards, he is liable to be glamoured at the sight of flowers and medallions produced from nowhere, or at the correctness of information about events occurring at the very moment at places continents away. Coming in contact with a medium, he may stand enthralled when he is told that his long-lost relative is by his side and is calling him by a nickname which perchance he had himself forgotten. These are hours of great danger and there will be no

angel by his side to ward it off.

Phenomena beyond the threshold of the normal do occur. *Fakirs* and *Sannyasis* have been known to produce them in such abundance as to appear as minor gods in the eyes of gaping multitudes. Diseases have been known to have been cured on the instant by magnetic passes, by breathing upon the patient and by other unorthodox means. But the production of even the most baffling of phenomena is no indication of any advancement on the spiritual path. The path shown by the Masters of Wisdom is a very special path. It demands from the aspirant altruism and the giving up of anything that life can offer as a loving sacrifice at the altar of human advancement towards the higher life. Many a student moves away from this path because he finds no glamour in Theosophy, while in the degree of his emotional tendencies he finds himself carried away to sit at the feet of phenomenalists, mediums and holy men. Holiness gives powers; it throws a halo of sanctity around the person and those who come close to such an one may feel the warmth of that achievement. But it does not breed volunteers for selfless service in other and more troublous centuries when the forces of goodwill have to be marshalled to protect multitudes from the evil intentions of those who may be called masters in evil. *Kali Yuga* has yet several hundred thousand years to run, and the iron age as it proceeds will have troubles in plenty for the unwary and for the weak of heart.

The switching from one teacher to another, the abandoning of one system for another, once a firm declaration of adherence is made, leaves a scar or wound in the inner make-up of the person. It may become a sore and will in time fester and putrefy. This is the wage of a *volte-face* on the planes of soul and spirit. The pledging of one's troth, the declaration of one's undying fidelity is no light matter. Once given, it remains as a covenant for life and lives.

