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The Living of the Higher Life**

OVERCOMING KARMA	3
REMEMBERING H. P. BLAVATSKY-II	9
STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA-THE SAGE-II	12
ON SACRED ANIMALS-II	17
ON ADORATION	23
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	27
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

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- (c) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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May 17, 2010

OVERCOMING KARMA

PEOPLE in the East, speak of "Overcoming Karma," becoming "karmaless" or, becoming free from Karma. But what is Karma? Karma is the law of action and reaction or the law of cause and effect. Thus, every action produces results, which affect the actor and also other people, to more or less extent, for good or evil. It is the law, which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably, each effect to its cause, tracking the latter back to its producer. It is no respecter of person and it cannot be propitiated. It works on all the planes of our being—physical, mental, psychic and spiritual. We reap the effects of our individual actions, as also, the actions of all the beings that constitute the body to which we belong. Thus, we share in good or bad fortunes of our family, nation, race and the world in general. We get back in exact measure what we have given—no more, no less. Simply put, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Man has free-will; he can think and choose. But with the power of choice comes responsibility. However, when we act selfishly, we disturb the harmony, and the Law of Karma restores the harmony by bringing results to the actor. It is, therefore, considered to be the law of reward and punishment in which good Karma brings good results and bad Karma brings evil results. The law of Karma works unerringly and in a just manner. It takes into account our motive, our knowledge, the inner state of mind and circumstances at the

time of action and the load of past karma that has ripened. The law is impersonal and merciful. Its intention is never to crush us by punishment, but to educate us. Therefore, out of the vast store of Karma generated by us, only, a portion is brought to fruition in proportion to our Karmic stamina, and not all at once. Also, that portion of Karma which cannot fructify because the environment is not proper is stored up and awaits its fruition in some future birth in the exact measure without getting diluted.

We are unable to find the cause of many of our sufferings, misfortune, pain and adversities, because the causes are hidden from our sight, generated in the past lives, of which we have no conscious memory. People then say that it is their *Kismet* or destiny or the will of God; about which they can do nothing and in the making of which they had no hand. They rebel against it or desire to escape it, somehow.

The common approach to escape the Karmic consequences is to run away from the circumstances in which Karma has placed us. We adopt various ways of *escaping the karmic consequences*, but that is not the way to *overcome Karma*. Thus, if a person is unhappy with the work environment and the colleagues, he seeks another department, another boss, or even another job. There is nothing wrong in seeking a better job with congenial environment. But if his colleagues were those whom he had ill-treated in past life or if the problem is not with other people but one's own peculiar nature which seeks prominence, which is selfish, competitive, scheming, insincere, wanting others to do all the irksome work while one gets to do what one likes, then no matter where he goes, no matter how good the other people are, sooner or later, he finds himself getting isolated, and becoming socially unacceptable in any circle. What he needs is not the change of external environment, but change of inner environment—change of his own nature and attitude. We had a hand in making the environment what it is today and therefore, first and foremost, we have to introspect and take steps to change that which is in our control.

Not in the sky, nor in the depths of the sea, nor in mountain clefts is there a place on earth where a man can be to escape the consequences of his evil deed. (*The Dhammapada*, verse 127)

Sometimes, circumstances of life bring some sort of emptiness and disillusionment. Failure in reaching some cherished goal, unrequited love, betrayal of trust, loss of a dear one, huge financial losses or loss of one's name and position often trigger extreme reaction. People then think that they cannot take it anymore, that they have had enough, and that it is too much to bear. They run away from trying circumstances. They may go to a forest or join some religious or spiritual order. Every year, thousands of people simply disappear; leaving behind the grieving family and dependents. In doing so, they are running away from the circumstances in which Karma has placed them, and thus commit the sin of omission. Like Arjuna, they want to run away from the self-chosen battlefield of life.

Some people have limited understanding of the law of Karma. They think that through their actions they are getting entangled in Karmic consequences and Karmic relations. Therefore, they refrain from outward action. They carefully avoid human relations. They would not accept favours or obligations from others. If anyone gives them some gift, they refuse to accept, *or* give something in return to clear the account. They would refuse help from others, lest they should fall under obligation, which would then force them to be born again to repay such obligations. This is false understanding of the law of Karma. It is not the action that has to be abandoned, but our *attachment* to action and its results.

Some people in their desperation commit suicide, hoping to end their misery. They think that by ending their life, they can escape the oppressing circumstances. Little do they realize that the person who has committed suicide is not dead—only the physical body is destroyed. He remains in the invisible realm for the duration of his balance life-term, conscious but helpless to do anything on this plane

because the physical body has been destroyed. Moreover, the suicidal tendency is likely to revisit the person in future lives as well.

Another mistaken means adopted for "overcoming karma" is consulting the priests, *pundit*; or astrologers for showing a way out of the misery. Some *pundits* have solution for every kind of guilt. "Have you killed a cat by mistake? No problem. You can offer a cat made of gold to God and your sin will be forgiven." They can suggest *parihara* or compensatory act or ceremony for every conceivable crime. Christians are asked to confess their sins and declare their belief in the blood of Christ as a price paid in advance for every sin that men may commit, and they would be forgiven and go to heaven, as redeemed children of God! Some people believe that if you sincerely repent, live a pious life and pray to the *all-merciful God*, you will be forgiven. But this cannot be. Sincere repentance would no doubt deter one from repeating the error, but it cannot wipe away the harm done to another. How can any God forgive a person, while his victim continues to suffer from the effect of his crime? The law of Karma also takes into account the suffering of the victim. However, when *we* are wronged, we must emulate Jesus on the Cross, who said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Bonds of love and hatred tend to last for at least three incarnations if we do not take any action. But, by practicing pity and compassion, we can reduce one-third of enmity in each life until we are free from the tie of hatred with that person.

We could not be born into a family, nation or a race unless we had a hand in making them what they are. And it is by trying to rise above our individual defects and also above the defects of our family, our nation, our race, that we gradually get out of them and also enable other members to likewise surmount them. Then, even if the distributive karma strikes a family or a nation or a race in the form of natural calamity like earthquake, cyclone, tsunami, fire, flood or famine, those who have not contributed to the terrible accumulated karma, or those who have eradicated the defects by relentless efforts, would find themselves miraculously escaping the calamity.

We are constantly experiencing the effects of our past actions and are constantly creating fresh Karma, by our thoughts or our actions. Then, how does one become free from Karma? Is there no escape? There is. Every action is preceded by a thought, however fleeting. Hence, action begins in mind. Beyond mind there is no action and therefore no Karma. But the basis of every action is desire, high or low. If we think that we are our personality, then all our attention is fixed in the fulfilment of our personal desires—sense gratification, physical comforts and worldly enjoyments. The unfulfilled desires or *tanha*, the thirst for life then brings us back into body for their fulfilment, life after life. But if we realize that we are not our body, mind, emotions or the personality but the Spirit within, our perspective of life would undergo change. No matter how low we may have fallen morally, how hampered we may be as a result of mistaken actions in the past, as Mr. Crosbie points out: "we have not lost and can never lose our power to set other and better causes in motion." When a person renounces interest in the fruits of actions, and also renounces the doership, he is not bound by actions, because then, he does not offer an individual focus, where karmic effects could return. He only introduces beneficent causes into collective karma of humanity.

Having acted from the basis of personal self, it is not easy for us to change our basis of thinking. Vast store of karmic tendencies generated in past exert opposition. It requires gradual but sustained effort of many lives to change our habits, desires and deep-rooted tendencies. It is up to us to set in motion fresh causes to counter the already generated store of Karma. But, Karma does not work mechanically. If you slap a person, it does not mean that this person will slap you in future. At any given moment, what we experience is the resultant of several Karmic causes, good, bad and indifferent, coming to fruition. So, if a good cause comes to fruition at the same time when the ill-effect of bad cause has ripened, the two may nullify each other *or*, result in reducing the impact. The simple law of physics is that two equal and opposing forces tend to nullify one another.

This appears to be the rationale behind the Biblical saying: "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." But let us not make a mistake of thinking that therefore, we can torment people, exploit and cheat them and then give out vast sums of surplus money in charity or build temples or hospitals to nullify our evil actions. The axiomatic truth is: "When the lesson is learnt, the necessity ceases." Have we become better human beings by giving charity? Have we realized the pain caused to other people and therefore resolved to act in kindly manner towards them in future while we give out charity to relieve their physical suffering? If not, then the money given in charity will bring favourable *physical* circumstances in future life. But, our moral nature may still remain depraved and we will necessarily have to bear the evil consequences. Therefore, we may find a person born with all imaginable comforts on physical plane, yet he may be brutal and beastly, squandering money after women, wine, drugs and gambling, doing no good to himself or to others and thus converting the very advantage of life into disadvantage.

What we need to do is to address the root-cause and not try to *manipulate* Karmic balance. Replace vice by cultivating opposite virtue. But we need to remain on our guard. Practice of virtues is not an end in itself. If our desires are altruistic, our aspirations are for pure and higher living and strengthening our moral nature, all the energy gets utilized in becoming a better human being. Karma then unfolds itself on a higher plane. But even then, we offer a focus or a center to which results must come back. Herein lies the danger. We tend to do good works and philanthropic actions, so as to *accumulate merit* which brings us the reward in this or next life, or a long stay in heaven world. But as the Ninth Chapter of the *Gita* points out, having enjoyed the heaven world, when our stock of merit is exhausted, we are born again.

The perfected ones are above Karma and of their own free will they take the birth or withdraw from the world, for the good of humanity.

REMEMBERING H. P. BLAVATSKY

H

THE WELL-KNOWN German biologist and philosopher, Hans Driesch, in his book *Psychical Research: The Science of the supernormal* (translated by Theodore Besterman), says:

Only hypotheses are possible about the fundamental principles, hypotheses which must be advanced in full consciousness that tomorrow they may be demonstrated to be false.

Mr. Besterman admitted the necessity of psychic researchers giving greater attention to Madame Blavatsky's works, and if they would only follow this excellent advice they would see how they have been blundering on for all these years and why all their labours, investigations and researches have admittedly had such poor results. The Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton, in the course of her presidential address before the Society for Psychical Research in September 1933, pointed out the conflicting theories advanced by different authorities, and how some of these, like Dr. Broad, had reached conclusions identical with "Eastern and theosophical doctrine." When a certain class of people are showing a mad craze for "phenomena," and are gullible enough to swallow any old wives' tales emanating from seances, a study of H.P.B.'s works cannot but prove of immense benefit to all in showing them the serious dangers lurking in seances and in explaining to them how and from what sources the so-called "messages from the dear departed ones" emanate. H.P.B.'s wonderful contribution to our knowledge of psychic phenomena is now being slowly appreciated, and constitutes one of her strongest claims to our gratitude and admiration.

Then, H.P.B. has done inestimable service to the modern world in the domain of religion. Her fundamental teaching is that it is from one Mother-Source that every great religion started as a clear and unadulterated stream but that it became in time polluted with the

dogmas and rituals invented by a cunning priestcraft for their own selfish ends. She stressed very strongly the necessity of throwing overboard these creeds, dogmas and rituals, and of returning to true religion in its pristine purity. This subject of true religion versus erroneous religious creeds and dogmas has taken up a considerable portion of her writings and makes a most instructive and fascinating study when considered in relation to the present-day religious needs of humanity as set out in the works of several leading writers. One such writer was the distinguished English poet, Alfred Noyes, who in his book, *The Unknown God*, says:

The need of the world today is a religious need. Consciously or unconsciously, all our thought, our art, our literature are impoverished by the lack of any positive and fundamental belief with which they can confront, on equal terms, the vast universe opened up to them by modern science, and feel, as other ages felt, the throb of a definite purpose in human life. The world is groping for a religion in which it can believe without evasions, without dishonest ambiguities, without self-deception, and without superstition.

A host of writers have depicted the religious needs of our day in similar language, and several of them have reached conclusions closely similar to the teachings given by H.P.B.

These salient facts are some of those that show the greatness of Madame Blavatsky. She cannot of course be said as yet to have met with full recognition, but the indications are that she will fully come into her own in the course of the next few years. Her real greatness lies in her universality. It is not one department of thought that she has illuminated, but those who have carefully studied her works must recognize that she may without exaggeration be said to have wrought a revolution in the threefold domain of science, religion and philosophy. She herself described her monumental work, *The Secret Doctrine*, as the synthesis of these three, and few will deny that this book contains the most convincing explanations as to the

origin and ultimate goal of the Universe and solves the riddle of existence in a manner which leaves no room for doubt in the mind of an impartial student. As indicated in this article, the trend of science and philosophy is in the direction of the profound teachings given by H.P.B. in the last quarter of the last century, and some of these teachings have already been accepted by science. There can be hardly any doubt that in the coming years, more and more of these teachings will pass into the current thought of the day. J. D. Beresford, whose name is so well known in contemporary English literature, has very aptly stated that H.P.B. had in her works set out that vast plan of Being, some fraction of which had since been tediously corroborated by the methods of observation and measurement; and he raised the very significant question:

Can we then doubt that those who draw inspirationally from the unfathomable well of knowledge are tapping the original source of wisdom, and that all the resources of science are but a secondary activity whereby some trickle of the overflow is slowly accepted by the reason and laboriously added to the list of established facts?

Even today H.P.B. has her detractors, persons who have not cared to study her works and her life-story. An increasing number of unbiased students, however, feel that in the fullness of time she will be looked upon as the greatest figure of her age. They take this view for substantial reasons, some of which are given in this article. To change the whole current of human thought was H.P.B.'s mission and her accomplishment.

(Concluded)

ACT so as to elicit the best in others and thereby in thyself.

-FELIX ADLER

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

THE SAGE—II

5. *Even the gods envy him whose senses are subdued like the horses well tamed by the charioteer, who is free from pride and free from depravities. (94)*

At several places in the *Dhammapada*, a perfected being is held superior to the *Devas* or celestial Gods. The reason is obvious. *Through the Gates of Gold* points out, "Not only is man more than an animal because there is the god in him, but he is more than a god because there is the animal in him. The god as servant adds a thousand-fold to the pleasures of the animal; the animal as servant adds a thousand-fold to the powers of the god. And it is upon the union, the right relation of these two forces in himself that man stands as a strong king, and is enabled to raise his hand and lift the bar of the Golden Gate." The purity of a *Deva* is, as it were, automatic. But in case of humans, it is acquired through self-effort. *A perfect man* is considered superior to the *Devas* because he reaches that position of perfection by facing trials and temptations, and gradually taming his animal nature and making it subservient to his higher or divine nature. The *Secret Doctrine* points out that those who are illumined (the high Initiates and Adepts) are few in number, and from them the genii abstain: for neither genii nor Gods have any power in the presence of a single ray of God—one Universal unrelated and unconditioned Deity (I, 295). The analogy of the Soul as a charioteer taming the senses or bodily powers represented by the horses has been beautifully put in the *Katha Upanishad*, thus:

Know that the Self is the lord of the chariot, the body verily is the chariot; know that the soul is the charioteer, and emotion the reins. They say that the bodily powers are the horses, and that the external world is their field...For him who is wise, with emotion ever restrained, his bodily powers do not run away with him, like the well-ruled horses of the charioteer....He who is wise, restrains emotion, and

is ever pure, gains that resting-place from which he is not born again.

6. *He who is patient like the earth, firm like Indra's bolt, like a lake free from mud—for him there is no round of births and deaths. (95)*

7. *Calm in thought, calm in speech, calm in actions is he who has obtained freedom through true knowledge. He has become tranquil. He is full of repose. (96)*

8. *The man who is not credulous, who has severed all ties, killed all desires, for whom even occasions to act with like or dislike arise not, who knows the ever-existing uncreate, he indeed is exalted among men. (97)*

For the one who has acquired patience of Mother Earth, purity of the lake free from mud, firmness of Indra's bolt, there is freedom from the round of births and deaths. Patient and tolerant, the Mother Earth supports all; good and evil, with same love and care. She patiently bears the excesses of her children, who exploit her for their own benefits. Pollutions of various kinds plague her. Indiscriminate industrialization has dotted her body with millions of chimneys, furnaces, railways and engines belching out soot, smoke and toxic gases. Mines, canals, tunnels, aqueducts, drains, sewers and subways have punctured her body to resemble "the skin of a morphiomaniac addicted to subcutaneous injections." Worse still is her suffering from the heavy sins of the inhuman humans. Speaking of the heavy karma of the mankind, Mr. Judge writes: "Oh, what a groan Nature gives to see the heavy Karma which man has piled upon himself and all the creatures of the three worlds! That deep sigh pierces through my heart." Elsewhere he writes: "This age is so full of ignorance that it sees not and cares nothing for the groans that are rolling among the caverns of mother earth...deep below its surface." She bears it all patiently, until at last she can carry it no more. She then appeals to the Gods to relieve her of her burden. Gods then destroy the sinners. Even in our modern days, she is considered to be a living entity called *Gaia* (the ancient

Greek goddess of the Earth). According to the *Gaia hypothesis* by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, "the Earth's living matter, air, oceans, and land surface form a complex system which can be seen as a single organism and which has the capacity to keep our planet a fit place for life." (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

Vajra was one of the weapons of Indra, the rain god. In Sanskrit it means "thunderbolt" and "diamond." Diamond is used for fine cutting. Likewise, *Vajra* destroys, but is itself indestructible. According to the mythology, an asura named Vritra had obtained a boon whereby he could not be killed by any known weapon, or a weapon made of wood or metal. Invincible, he drove away Indra from his kingdom. Indra went to Vishnu along with Siva and Brahma to seek his help. Vishnu revealed that only the weapon made from the bones of sage Dadhichi would defeat Vritra. Sage Dadhichi willingly gave up his life to free heaven and earth from the terror of Vritra. *Vajra* was made from the spine of sage Dadhichi with which Vritra was defeated.

Prof. C. S. Lewis writes about three kinds of men. There are those who are self-centred, for them everyone and everything exists for their pleasure. They do not hesitate using people and things as stepping stones for their success and pleasure. These are the people who always assert their personal will. The second category of people is of those who desire pleasure but not at the expense of others. They acknowledge some other claim upon them, such as, the good of the society—and honestly try to pursue their own interest no further than this claim will allow. They are like honest taxpayers, who pay tax, but hope that what is left over will be enough for them to live on. They experience inner conflict in trying to surrender their personal desires, when these come in conflict with the Divine Desire. But the third class is of those, who can say like St. Paul that for them "to live is Christ." In their case, there is no conflict between what they *want* to do and what they *ought* to do. For them, truly, "occasions to act with like or dislike arise not." It is only when a person lays aside his personal likes and dislikes and is willing to

undergo everything that his Higher Self has in store for him, by way of discipline and experience, that he finds himself in possession of spiritual will.

Having obtained the knowledge of ever-existing "uncreate" as the very highest in each and every being—sustaining all, yet itself never getting affected by any of the experiences, good or bad, pleasurable or painful, of honour or ignominy—one's whole approach to life and living undergoes a complete change. Having attained the highest goal of freedom from birth and death, there remains nothing else to be obtained or craved for. Such an exalted being is free from desires and attachments, likes and dislikes that prompt the ordinary man to action.

9. *Delightful is the place where Arhats dwell, be it a village or a forest, be it by deep waters or by desert-edge.* (98)

10. *Delightful are the forests to the Arhat; they charm not the worldly. There the passionless find delight, for they are not allured by sense-life.* (99)

Arhats are the great beings who have succeeded in uniting themselves with their own spirit. An Arhat is also called a Rahat; the Adept who becomes entirely free from any desires on this plane by acquiring divine knowledge and powers. Even as a mere monk, he has to abandon all attachment to places and people, if he aspires to become an Arhat. An Arhat, though supremely detached, does not lack appreciation of serenity of nature. But he does not depend on them. Their very presence charges the atmosphere of their dwelling place with delight, no matter where they are—be it a village or a forest, be it a desert-edge or an ocean-shore.

As city-dwellers, we do enjoy the company of nature once in a while. We may go to a hill-station or a beach-resort and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere. But, if we were asked to live at such places forever, we would soon be missing the hustle and bustle of city-life. Yet, sometimes life, the great teacher, drives us towards solitude,

which *we* term loneliness, till we have learnt to deal with it. Life seems to take away all props, one by one, forcing us to seek our own company. Our success or failure to handle such situation would depend upon the extent to which we had lived the life of detachment even while we were surrounded by our loved ones, and the comfort of books, art, music, etc. One of the qualities of a wise man is, "a want of pleasure in congregations of men" (*Gita*, XIII). Writes Jamuna Rangachari: "When we are truly attuned to ourselves, we need no one or nothing else. In the most essential way therefore, the ability to be with ourselves is testimony of our completion of a journey. This is the journey all of us must pass through." We must overcome the need of looking *outside*, for love, appreciation, acknowledgement and understanding, and experience inner love, inner strength and inner security. "And with each turn of the screw, our friendship with ourselves deepens and we feel replete within," writes Rangachari. (*Life Postive*, May 2006)

In the process of spiritual development, help and guidance comes from the inner planes of being and to avail of it we must stop inner and outer chatter. We are asked to increase impersonal moments in our life—such as when we are lost in appreciating sunrise or sunset, in helping someone, and so on.

The Arhat delights in the forest and secluded places away from our so-called progressed civilization. That is because, with increasing selfishness, crime, immorality and all the evils imaginable, we have filled our dwelling-place with psychic miasma, not conducive to spiritual living. When we make our thoughts noble and work sincerely for the good of humanity without selfish motive, we purify the invisible atmosphere little by little until it becomes so pure that it has the power to attract the Holy Ones. Until then, we cannot disturb the seclusion of the Adepts who are protected by Nature herself.

(*Concluded*)

ON SACRED ANIMALS

II

HANSA or swan symbolizes Divine Wisdom. In exoteric allegory, *Hansa* (or *Hamsa*) is a fabulous bird, which when given milk mixed with water for food, separated the two, drinking the milk and leaving the water, thus showing inherent wisdom. Milk symbolizes spirit and water symbolizes matter, writes H.P.B. (S.D., I, 79). *Hamsa* is equal to *a-ham-sa*, or "I am he." When written as *Sah-aham* or *So-aham* (*Soham*), it means, "he is I." In this alone is contained the universal mystery, the identity of man's essence with god-essence. (S.D., I, 78)

There are four successive stages in the life of a *sannyasi*, viz., *Kutichaka*, *Bahudaka*, *Hansa* and *Paramhansa*. In the stage of *Hansa*, the ascetic lives apart from his family and the world, maintains himself on alms collected from seven houses, devotes himself to the contemplation of *Parabrahmam* and carries one-knotted bamboo. *Paramhansa* stage is the same as the previous three stages except that the ascetic wears the sacred thread and his hair and beard are quite long. A *Paramhansa* who shows himself worthy is on the very threshold of becoming a *Dikshita*. (*The Theosophist*, October 1879)

"Holy Ghost" or "Holy Spirit" is said to have descended on Jesus' head in the form of a Dove, hence Russian people will not use the pigeon for food. Dove symbolizes peace.

The great wisdom and prudence of the serpent is acknowledged by Jesus himself, who said: "Be ye *wise* as serpents and harmless as doves." Serpent symbolizes many things. It is the symbol of the circular motion of the Sun in the space. The serpent biting its own tail symbolizes Eternity or all-devouring Time—the great spiral of evolution or *Manvantara*. Vishnu, the Preserver, is usually portrayed as sitting or reclining on the enormous coiled body of *Adi Sesha* or *Ananta*, with multiple cobra heads. Garga, the oldest astronomer in India, is supposed to have obtained astronomical knowledge from

Sesha—the thousand-headed serpent, who bears seven *Patalas* and the entire world upon his head—who is also *Ananta*, the infinite, and also "Cycle of Eternity," in esotericism. Narada is one of the few to have visited the nether or infernal *regions*—*Patala*. It is not sure if he got his knowledge of astronomy from *Sesha*, but he is supposed to surpass *Sesha* in the knowledge of cyclic intricacies. "It is he who has charge of our progress and national weal or woe. It is he who brings on wars and puts an end to them." (S.D., H, 49 and fn.)

A serpent always coils up in order to strike and that "coiling to strike" represents the working of the law of Karma, which, based on the causes or actions set into motion by us, strikes an unerring blow on us. The serpent also symbolizes the circle of necessity or numerous reincarnations of the soul. A Serpent casts off its skin periodically, just as the soul leaves the body to assume another. In this aspect it represents renewal of life or rebirth. Hence, serpent symbolizes spiritually regenerated man or an Initiate.

In the *Secret Doctrine*, (II, 47), H.P.B. points out that our earth (the fourth globe) and the humanity on earth have passed through three Rounds and that we are in the fourth Round. At the beginning of every new Round, after a period of "obscuration," the earth casts off, or is supposed to cast off, her old skins as the Serpent does: therefore, she is called in the *Atareya-Brahmana* the *Sarpa Rajni*, the "Queen of the Serpents," and "the mother of all that moves." So far, the Earth is said to have cast off her old *three* skins, because this refers to the three preceding Rounds she has already passed through; the present being the *fourth* Round out of the seven. The "Seven Skins," refer to the seven geological changes, which accompany and correspond to the evolution of the Seven Root-Races of Humanity.

Serpent is an emblem of eternity, infinitude, regeneration and rejuvenation, as well as, of divine wisdom and perfection. Hermes called serpent the most spiritual of all beings. The Gnostic's serpent with the seven vowels over its head is the emblem of the seven

hierarchies of the Planetary Creators. The Dragons and Serpents of antiquity are all seven-headed, representing seven races and seven principles in man. H.P.B. points out that in the order of evolution reptiles preceded birds and birds preceded the mammals and hence the symbol of the serpent is the most ancient symbol. There are legends regarding various things that the serpent represents, which are mostly allegorical. Since people do not understand the symbology, these legends are considered as fables based on ignorance and superstition. For instance, when Philostratus narrates that natives of Arabia and India fed on the heart and liver of serpents, in order to learn the language of all the animals, because the serpents have that faculty, we should not accept it literally. Similarly, there is the Scandinavian legend of Sigurd who roasted the heart of Fafnir, the Dragon, whom he had slain, becoming thereby the wisest of men. H.P.B. points out that "Serpent" and "Dragon" were the names given to the "Wise Ones," the initiated Adepts of olden times. It was their wisdom and their learning that were devoured and assimilated by their followers.

Dragon, *Naga* and Serpent all symbolize wisdom. In every ancient language the word Dragon signified what it now does in Chinese language, viz., "*the being who excels in intelligence*," and in Greek, "he who sees and watches."

Serpent is an emblem of both good and evil—the right and left-hand magic or sorcery. The Egyptian god Thoth Hermes is described as the god of wisdom and has authority over all the other gods. Says Mr. Bonwick, "Hermes was the serpent itself in a mystical sense. He glides like that creature, noiselessly, without apparent exertion, along the course of ages. He is...a representative of the spangled heavens. But he is the foe of the bad serpent, for the ibis devoured the snakes of Egypt." (*The Theosophical Glossary*)

Serpent is oviparous like birds and hence the young one of the serpent breaks open the egg and comes out by his own efforts. Hence, serpent is an emblem of the self-born. H.P.B. explains that the allegory of "Brazen Serpent" of Moses, and the "fiery serpents"

has a direct reference *to the mystery of generation*, and does not relate to Christ and Crucifixion.

The allegory of "Brazen Serpent" of Moses is about the Jews in wilderness, who complained to God of not having water. God sent "fiery serpents" to bite them. Then God gives Moses a *brazen serpent* (serpent of brass) on the pole, as a remedy, so that any person who looked at it, lived. After that God gives them water. The fiery winged serpent is connected with the idea of Eternity or God. H.P.B. points out that the Hebrew word for *brass* and womb (as well as the nether world) is the same, *viz.*, *Nakash*. The symbolical meaning of the word brazen is the "feminine principle" and that of "fiery" or "gold" is the male principle. (S.D., I, 364 and fn.)

The Brazen serpent is also the emblem of DIVINE HEALER, healing those who look at him. In *Isis Unveiled* (II, 481) we are told that the Brazen Serpent of Moses was worshipped by the Israelites as it was a symbol of "Esmun-Asklepius, the phoenician Iao" ("the physical and spiritual Principle of all things"). It is thus a "Healer" and a "Saviour." Serpent, as *agathodaimon*, is the emblem of the healing art and of the immortality of man. It encircles the images of most of the sanitary or hygienic gods. *The cup of health*, in the Egyptian Mysteries, was entwined by serpents. (*Isis*, I, 157)

Thoth Hermes carries the serpent-rod, emblem of Wisdom, the rod that became the Caduceus. We find this rod in the hands of Aesculapius which is different in form from the wand of Mercurius or Hermes. The rod of Caduceus, is a rod with a knob, flanked by two wings of the Swan (*Hansa*). The rod is entwined by two serpents. *Metaphysically*, the rod represents the trunk of the *Ashwattha* tree or the tree of life and being, which grows and descends at every new *manvantara* from the two dark wings of the Swan of Life. The two serpents coiled around the rod represent Spirit and Matter, and descending along the trunk they are interlaced in close embrace so that the two tails embrace on the earth, which forms the manifested universe, or the world of illusion (S.D., I, 549-50). Astronomically, the head and tail of the serpents represent the

points of ecliptic where the planets, and even the sun and moon meet in close embrace.

sculapius, Serapis, Pluto, Knoum and Kneph, are all deities with the attributes of the serpent. In India, Siva is described as a healer of snake-bites because he is said to have neutralized the poison of the snake that surfaced during the churning of the ocean, by swallowing it and holding it in his throat. "They are all *healers*, givers of health, spiritual and physical, and of *enlightenment*." The Upanishads have a treatise on the Science of Serpents, i.e., the Science of Occult Knowledge. The *Nagas* of the exoteric Buddhists are not "the fabulous creatures of the nature of serpent," they are beings superior to men and the protectors of the law of Buddha, because they interpret correctly Buddha's metaphysical tenets, writes H.P.B. (S.D., II, 26 fn.). The *Nagas* of the Hindus were Adepts and Initiates, and not reptiles. Exoterically, the *Nagas* are semi-divine beings, which have a human face and the tail of a serpent. However, there was also a race of *Nagas*, said to have sprung from Kadra, sage Kasyapa's wife, *for the purpose of peopling Patala*, which, says H.P.B., is undeniably America. There was also NAGA-DWIPA, one of the seven divisions of *Bharata-varsha* or India which was inhabited by the *Nagas*. (S.D., II, 132). *The Mahabharata* speaks of Arjuna visiting *Patala* (Americas) and marrying Ulupi, the daughter of Naga or Nagal King. "The Nargal was the Chaldean and Assyrian chief of the Magi... and the Nagal was the chief sorcerer of the Mexican Indians. Both derive their names from Nergal-Serezer, the Assyrian god, and the Hindu Nagas." (S.D., II, 213)

When Queen Maya, Lord Buddha's mother, gave birth to baby Gautama, two Nagas, Nanda and Upananda, are said to have given the baby a ritual bath by pouring over his body streams of warm and cold water. Likewise, Mucalinda, the Serpent-King protected Gautama from the raging storm, as he sat meditating beneath the Bodhi tree by wrapping his coils seven times around Buddha's body, with his hood spread above his head, like an umbrella. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, explains that *nagas* or serpents

are depicted as staying in the depths of the ocean. They may be taken to represent the forces in the depths of the unconscious, in their most positive and beneficent aspect. The King-Serpent coiling around Buddha's body, seven times, as he meditated, may well represent awakening of Kundalini power, writes Sangharakshita.

Kundalini is described as a serpentine, electro-spiritual force, a creative power, which can as easily kill as it can create. The seven coils may also represent the seven psychic centres (*chakras*) through which *Kundalini* passes in its course of ascent. It marks the activation of *Buddhi*, which is otherwise a passive principle, a passive vehicle of *Atman*. When *Buddhi* is activated, "the Yogi beholds the things beyond the seas and stars; he hears the language of the Devas and comprehends it, and perceives what is passing in the mind of an ant" (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 10 fn.). In the preface to *The Voice of the Silence*, H.P.B. tells us that the great mystic work called *Paramartha* was delivered to the great Arhat, Nagarjuna, by the *Nagas* or "Serpents," i.e., the ancient initiates. Buddhist tradition says that Lord Buddha confined his esoteric doctrine of *Prajnaparamita* to the *Nagas*, who later revealed to half-Naga philosopher, *Nagarjuna*.

The Serpent who tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, was "Lord God" himself, who, as the Ophis, the Logos or the bearer of divine Creative Wisdom, taught mankind to create in their turn. Adam and Eve represent the first physiologically complete couple, who were initiated into the mystery of human creation by the Serpent (Logos), by eating of the fruit of Knowledge. It was much later that they were accused by the ignorant and materially inclined posterity, of having committed the *Sin*, of disobeying the "Lord God," and of having been tempted by the Serpent, explains H.P.B. (S.D., II, 215)

(*To be continued*)

WHO is the wise man? He who sees what's going to be born.

—SOLOMON

ON ADORATION

ADORATION is the silent and unostentatious homage that the lesser pays to the greater light. It is not only respect, though respect may be the beginning of it. It is the repose of security that is born of faith and confirmed by knowledge. It is a feeling of deep satisfaction and calmness as when all else becomes quiescent and still and only the veneration remains—effulgent, benign, all-loving, as in the close embrace of the mother and her young.

Adoration is not a one-way flow. It opens an inner channel of communication between the adorer and the subject of his adoration. As the frightened child runs to its mother and clutching her finger in its little fist finds an end to its fright, so may the tormented soul find its solace in a union with its parent. In the lesser light resides the potency of its father. The oneness can be achieved by following the path—it has only to be crossed.

Adoration may be of entities unseen and unknown, but if the adorer invests the adored with the properties and qualities that are not its, then sooner or later disillusionment sets in and the adoration to that extent goes in vain. It is, therefore, dangerous for the mortal part of the soul to have concrete and rigid ideas about its immortal counterpart. It is only through occasional intuitive flashes that he may get a glimpse sufficient for him to have an unshaken faith in its existence. Yet, that flash shakes him loose from his moorings in materiality. He has breathed a rarer atmosphere and that memory does not utterly desert him.

The intuitive flash that comes is no chance occurrence. The man's efforts at seeking the true and his struggles against vice and the failings that are the adjuncts of materiality have all led up to that particular moment in time when the vision becomes possible. Nature and his own higher Ego have joined hands to embellish his moment of truth. Will he cherish the memory of the moment and, gathering further strength from it, strive more assiduously towards the goal? He may not. Materiality strikes when least expected. Yet, there is

cause for encouragement. The impress of that glimpse normally generates a craving to be worthy of it, to seek the company of the vision, to revere it, to long for its guidance. It is when the aspirant reaches this stage that adoration starts. The word begins to have a meaning for him—and a message.

Under the warmth of this experience, service of others acquires spiritual overtones. Once under the influence of the spirit, service loses its compulsion. It is no longer monotonous nor reduced to a drudge by routine. Its *raison d'être* is in the joy that the soul feels on meeting other souls and therefore it welcomes the sharing by itself of a part of their sorrow and burden. The service may be back-breaking and produce bodily exhaustion, and yet the soul with joyous exultation will fling itself into further labour. It just cannot stop. Its well of service is full of the sweet waters that will assuage the thirst of the many. The well tastes not its own waters. Its soul-desire is to give, and it stints not in the giving.

The human mind has many facets. It will remain steady and constant over long spells, and then suddenly it goes limp and winds sweep over it, leaving it a fluttering, quivering mass. The mind of the adorer who has had the first glimpse of the True is in no way different. The wise beginner prepares for the time when squalls will darken his horizon and hit him good and hard. When the path gets boulder-strewn, when service offered is brushed aside or rejected, when friends and co-workers avoid his company and in little or big measure do him injustice, then does darkness descend upon him. The strength that makes for a steady adoration begins to fail him. Now is his hour of trial. To him it appears as if his adoration has brought him no dividends, that when he needed help the most, the subject of his adoration had remained passive. These thoughts are not worthy of him. If he expected a reward for his act of adoration, he was trying to commercialize the spiritual. The divine is not a commodity in world markets, neither is it for barter. When the windows of the soul are darkened, such thoughts creep in because of the darkness. Probably, at the very hour when strength could

have flowed in from the Adored, the afflicted individual by harbouring such thoughts may have been blocking the channel of communication and effectively stopping the higher in-flow. Where did he err?

There may have been several causes that contributed towards the fall. For instance, it may be that he had invested the Adored with the semblance and qualities of the popular concept of a god, and when darkness fell, he reverted to the old habit of bended knees, joined hands and fervent prayers. Or, it might be that he believed that his adoration laid up in heaven a store of merit which in times of crisis could be drawn upon and made to convert itself into material boons. Long-cherished errors are apt to resuscitate and storm their way into a weakened consciousness. But the most probable cause might be that in his ignorance the aspirant had felt that all the wrongs he had done in the past were by his adoration erased and that somehow he had become immunized to their ripening effects. A greater error could not have been committed; and errors do entail painful results. Further, and this is important, in his new-found enthusiasm he may have been exhausting the higher force in the course of his enlightened service and may have forgotten to recharge his fast exhausting batteries. Figuratively, the breathing-out and the breathing-in have to be regularized as also harmonized.

When the truth of this, dawns upon the student, a further awakening comes upon him. He finds that he has to provide the time and the energy to keep his channel of communication with his Self as efficiently operative as his efforts can make it. This channel is his most precious possession. He can neglect it only at considerable risk to his progress. He has to be aware of the fact that while treading the spiritual path it is incumbent on him to preserve his balance on even as on broken ground, and that since this effort is in its initial stages, he has to be prepared for falls and bruises. If, however, the adoration was on right lines, he would have sufficient stamina to pick himself up, brush off the dust and dirt acquired during the fall and carry on from where he fell. Even during the fall and the

consequent prostration, the memory of the Highest has to be preserved and the sinking fires of aspiration have to be fanned into a brighter flame.

Right companionship and right occupation are valuable helps in leading the higher life. They help the mind to latch itself on to the good and keep away from the influences of evil. Companionship of good books, the study of metaphysical truths and ethical verities helps to keep the student keyed to the correct vibration. Supplementing these and drawing heavily on the strength and knowledge, which they impart, is service—a service that lifts and ennobles the object and the act of service. Through his awakened self, the aspirant provides the needed outlet for the benign influence of unseen forces that are ever ready to help when the necessary conditions are provided.

The contribution of the adorer during the initial years of his endeavours may be puny compared to what is needed for a global spiritual effort. But that contribution, if it is gathered into a common pool containing the equally small contributions of other like-minded adorers, becomes of a sizable quantity that can be used by those who know where and how to direct its force. The strength of a bundle of sticks is always greater than that of any single twig within the bundle.

Finally, for the aspirant who sometimes pauses and wonders as to how best to comfort himself, *Light on the Path* gives this valuable advice:

The voice of the Masters is always in the world; but only those hear it whose ears are no longer receptive of the sounds, which affect the personal life. Laughter no longer lightens the heart, anger may no longer enrage it, tender words bring it no balm. For that within, to which the ears are as an outer gateway, is an unshaken place of peace in itself which no person can disturb.

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: Sometimes in life we find that we are kept in a situation for a long time, or we are put into a certain situation, over and over again. Is it because we have to learn more than one lesson from that situation?

Answer: We find ourselves in a certain situation as a result of one or more causes set into motion in the current life or any of our past lives. Though finite cause can only produce finite effect, the karmic effect, in terms of intensity or duration, is proportionate to the cause or causes. When causes sown are very strong, they produce far-reaching consequences. The first thing that we are expected to learn, when faced with any adverse situation, is to face it instead of trying to *dodge* it. When faced with adversities, we either grumble or seek to dodge them. We behave like an ostrich in the desert, who buries his head in the sand—hoping that the storm will go away if he ignores it—and finally gets buried under a heap of sand and dies. Some of us choose to pretend as if the problems do not exist. We fail to realize that confronting and solving the problem—no matter how painful the process—enables us to grow.

"Accept the woes of birth," says *The Voice of the Silence*. It has many implications. First, it means "accepting," i.e., being able to say that it is "my" problem and it is up to me to solve it. Many times we find ourselves putting the blame on others—parents, society or the circumstances of life. There are times when what is needed is patient resignation. *The Dhammapada* teaches: "Enduring patience is the highest *Tapas*." We seek to come out of an unpleasant situation *quickly*. We must understand that if the cause or causes had been

operating for a long time, the effect too would last for long time—just as the burner remains hot for a long time even after the gas has been turned off. "This too shall pass away," is a good maxim to remember—both when we are elated as well as when disappointed.

Patient acceptance of what is due to us makes us take a further step in our development. It is opportunity at two levels: (1) On the lower level, it is an opportunity to pay off the Karmic debt. (2) On the higher level, it is an opportunity for the ego to learn to deal with such a situation. For instance, a person interested in classical music might rebel against being transferred to a place where he cannot go to the concerts. Another with similar interest may accept it as good discipline and look upon it as an opportunity to cultivate some other interests.

Various situations of life are for learning the lessons and for the building of our character. As we proceed, we realize that it is a simultaneous process of breaking of the old mould and building of better character. Often we are called upon to modify or discard traits that we incorporated with great pain into our character. For instance, others may have praised us for being sentimental and sensitive and having great attachment for our family and friends. But we may be rudely awakened one day to learn that we are not supposed to make a distinction between *our* child and *other* children, and that we need to expand the circle. There is an aspect in us, which drives us to achieve *hundred per cent perfection*. If we are trying to conquer anger or greed or attachment, this inner taskmaster places us again and again in such situations till we have mastered them *completely*. As a person advances on the spiritual path, he encounters more and more complex and trying life situations. Karma precipitates not as pebbles, but as boulders. In the article, "Spiritual Progress," H.P.B. writes:

The trouble that comes upon us is always just the one we feel to be the hardest that could possibly happen—it is always the one thing we feel we cannot possibly bear. If we look at it from a wider point of view, we shall see that we

are trying to burst through our shell at its one vulnerable point; that our growth, to be real growth...must progress evenly throughout. Just as the body of a child grows, not first the head and then a hand, followed perhaps by a leg, but in all directions at once, regularly and imperceptibly.

Our trouble always seems to be the hardest. But we would not feel so if we realized that it is because we have not yet mastered that weakness or learnt to deal with that particular circumstance of life. Pain is nature's way of showing that we have missed out something vital in knowledge and character. We may regard it as our "vulnerable point," our "Achilles' heel," through which nature gives us the opportunity to grow, if we could only learn to handle it. It could be money for some, for others it could be sensuality, or anger, or anxiety, and so on. When the calamities come pertaining to that weakness, we find them troublesome and difficult. But if we handle them well, we are able to burst through the shell, i.e., overcome that one inhibiting factor in our character.

Once we have learnt to deal with a difficulty, the next time it ceases to be a difficulty. When the lesson is learnt the necessity ceases. The force of the situation weakens. But, more often than not, the cause of the problem is internal, i.e., within us, and often, it calls for a change. Often, the difficulty is solved when we are willing to change—our way of thinking, our feelings, our likes and dislikes—and ready to adapt or adjust ourselves to the problematic situation or a person in life—not temporarily but for good.

Question: What has Theosophy to say about surrogate motherhood?

Answer: Who is a surrogate mother? Surrogate means substitute. In medical parlance, the term surrogacy means using a substitute mother in place of the natural mother. Generally, a surrogate mother is a woman who carries a foetus for a couple with fertility problems and who surrenders the child to the couple once the child is born. A woman may agree to carry the child of an infertile couple without asking for any financial compensation except for expenses related

to the pregnancy and delivery. It might be with the altruistic motive of giving joy to the childless couple of having a child of their own, or to relieve another woman of the social stigma of being childless. This is termed *altruistic surrogacy*, which is comparatively rare. What has become very common these days is *commercial surrogacy*, in which surrogate woman is the one who "rents her womb," as she receives payment for carrying and delivering the child for a couple.

There are three types of surrogacy: social, traditional and gestational. Social surrogacy is where one woman gives birth to a child and another woman takes up the responsibility of raising the child. Shri Krishna had two mothers—Devaki was his biological mother, while Yashoda was his social mother, who brought him up. In traditional type of surrogacy, surrogate mother is artificially inseminated with the sperm of either the intended father or from a donor. However, since the egg of surrogate mother is used, she becomes *genetically* the mother of the resulting child. In gestational surrogacy the surrogate mother has no genetic ties with the offspring. Both the eggs and sperm are from the couple or donors, which after *in vitro* fertilization are implanted into uterus of the surrogate.

In vitro fertilization (IVF) is a procedure in which mature egg cells are removed from a woman, fertilized with male sperm outside the body, and inserted into the uterus of the same or another woman for normal gestation. *In vitro* fertilization has been a source of moral, ethical, and religious controversy since its development. Although members of all religious groups can be found on both sides of the issues, the major opposition has come from the Roman Catholic church, which in 1987 issued a doctrinal statement opposing IVF on three grounds: the destruction of human embryos not used for implantation; the possibility of *in vitro* fertilization by a donor other than the husband, thus removing reproduction from the marital context; and the severing of an essential connection between the conjugal act and procreation. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

According to Theosophy "life" starts with conception, so how correct it is to throw away unused embryos? H.P.B. describes have

foeticide as crime against nature. "The crime committed lies precisely in the willful and sinful destruction of life, and interference with the operation of nature." It is interference with the Karma of the mother and child. In this connection, we might notice that the case of Abraham and Sarah in the Bible is different. Sarah, Abraham's wife, arranged to have a child through Abraham and Hagar, her maid-servant, where Hagar was the surrogate mother. In this case, however, the child was produced *naturally*, through union of Abraham and Sarah.

At times, when the child born is handicapped or retarded, neither the couple nor the surrogate mother is willing to take the responsibility of that deformed child. It is difficult to justify surrogacy when a woman has no infertility problem but she resorts to it because she does not want to disrupt her career or because she does not want to ruin her figure! Such women look for a ready-made child without having to go through the trouble and pain of child-bearing or delivery.

Some doctors view surrogacy as win-win situation, where the poor woman gets a chance to earn some money, while the childless couple gets a baby. It is very difficult to comment on the morality of surrogacy. We may perhaps regard modern methods used in surrogate motherhood as an interference with nature. It is possible that through surrogacy, a complex karmic tie is created among the couple, the child and the surrogate mother. It is also possible that the Karma of the soul was such that its karmic affinity with the surrogate mother was only strong enough to carry it into physical existence. After that it continues the rest of his life in different surroundings, with different parents, as happens in the case of adoption. Motherhood is one of the archetypal experiences, which gives the opportunity and joy of creation. There could be karmic causes of the past that deny the woman that experience. Could it be that she resorted to abortion in some prior life? Could it be that she was indifferent to her children or ill-treated them in some past life? There could be several other reasons for which both the parents

to go through the pain of being deprived of parenthood. Hence, theosophically, the parents should accept under Karma, their state of being childless. The easier and the more compassionate choice for the infertile parents, is to adopt a baby.

It is true that one must make efforts to overcome Karmic consequences by every legitimate means, but it is very difficult to say whether surrogacy is a morally acceptable method of overcoming childlessness. It is said of certain metaphysical healing techniques that they do not cure the disease but only suppresses it, which may surface again in future. Likewise, when we resort to ceremonies and rituals, often, we are only postponing the karmic precipitation. "Not even the greatest of Yogis can divert the progress of Karma, or arrest the natural results of actions for more than a short period, and even in that case, these results will only reassert themselves later with even tenfold force," writes H.P.B. Thus, when one resorts to surrogacy to obtain a child, it is likely that one is only *postponing* the karma of remaining childless, to some future life.

We must also take into account the influence of the mother on the child in the womb. The imagination of the mother has deep influence on the formation of the physical form of the baby. In the *Mahabharata*, we have the story of Abhimanyu, who as an unborn child in his mother's womb, learned the knowledge of entering the deadly and virtually impenetrable *chakravyuha* (an array of army) from Lord Krishna, who was narrating the technique to his mother Subhadra. Here we have the hint that the child in the womb could be moulded by external influences, which must include mother's thoughts. Then again, blood is said to carry the psychic characteristic of the donor to the recipient. The same might be applicable to the mother and the baby in her womb. What could be the attitude of a woman towards the child in the womb, when she is only carrying it for someone else, and that too for money?

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Do we all possess a "Third Eye"? Like the sea lamprey and some species of frogs, the fossils of a small lizard-like tuatara found only in New Zealand, show that it possesses a third eye. It is a cleft-like opening on top of its skull, consisting of a lens and a retina connected by nerves to the brain while the skin covering this area has, over the years, become translucent. This "eye" is a vastly modified pineal gland—a gland which higher mammals and human beings possess.

Homer's *Odyssey* mentions Cyclops that possessed a third eye, *Grimm's Fairy Tales* mentions Sister Three Eyes, and there is the "Third Eye" of Siva or the "Third Eye of Enlightenment." In the 4th century B.C., Herophilus, the Greek anatomist believed that the pineal gland was a sphincter, which regulated the flow of thought and sharpness of vision. Rene Descartes considered pineal gland to be the "valve" mediating between body and soul. Till 1959 pineal gland was considered to be a vestigial appendage because its functions were not clearly understood. Aaron Lerner of Yale University discovered that melatonin, the hormone produced by the pineal gland, which is actually synthesized from serotonin, was secreted in appropriate amount to adjust to the changes in external light. In birds, the pineal gland helps in synchronizing the internal biological clock as marked by the cycle of day and night, and in lizards it helps to regulate body heat. In human beings, it is believed that pineal gland possibly plays a role in the regulation of sexual matters and might be the seat of paranormal modes of cognition. Significant development of pineal gland is considered to denote mystically and spiritually attuned person, capable of enlightenment, writes Mukul Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree, [Sunday Times of India]*, March 28, 2010)

In the year 2005, Dr. O. P. Jangir a Zoology professor in Bikaner, created frogs with three eyes in the laboratories of Dungar College. He removed the two eyes of a tadpole and treated the pineal gland

with Vitamin A, which gradually transformed into an eye having all the properties of a normal eye. He transplanted this eye in another tadpole, giving rise to three-eyed tadpoles. According to him, evolutionary history suggests that primitive animals, including some vertebrates, had three eyes on the frontal lobe. With time two eyes shifted sideways and the middle eye, losing its utility, survived as a vestigial organ, as a pineal gland. (*The Indian Express*, January 30, 2005)

H.P.B. mentions that in the beginning, every class and family of living species was hermaphrodite and objectively one-eyed. Prior to acquiring the "coats of skin" or the physical form, when man and animal were both ethereal, the third eye was the only seeing organ, the two physical front eyes developed only later, in both man and animal. This "Cyclopean" eye was, "and still *is*, in man the organ of *spiritual* sight, in the animal it was that of the objective vision"(S.D., II, 299). H.P.B. mentions that during the course of evolution there were races of men with three eyes and four arms. Before the human form became perfect and symmetrical in the Fifth Race, there are indications of the early Fourth Race being three-eyed. However, this third eye need not have been in the middle of the brow, in fact, it was at the back of the head (S.D., II, 294). Thus, the "third eye" was once a physiological organ, but later on, owing to the gradual increase of materiality and disappearance of spirituality, this "third eye" got atrophied, and was gradually transformed into a simple gland (S.D., II, 295-96). "*The third eye is dead*, and acts no longer; but it has left behind a witness to its existence. This witness is now the PINEAL GLAND." (S.D., II, 295)

Pineal gland is connected with spiritual visions, while pituitary body with pure psychic visions. Spinal Cord in man connects the Brain with the generative organs. Any excitement of generative organs leads to disturbance of the vital airs in the spinal cord, in turn hindering the functioning of pineal gland and the opening of the "Third Eye." The function of pineal gland is also affected by consumption of alcohol and drugs.

The "one-eyed" Cyclopes represent the last three sub-races of the Lemurians, the "one-eye" referring to the Wisdom eye; for the two front eyes were fully developed as the physical organs only in the beginning of the Fourth Race. Ulysses putting out with a fire-brand, the eye of Polyhemus [the Cyclopes] represents the psycho-physiological atrophy of the "third-eye"—the all-penetrating *spiritual* eye. (S.D., II, 769-70)

Can magnets sway moral compass? Neuroscientists at Massachusetts Institute of Technology have shown that people's moral judgment could be influenced by disrupting a specific region of the brain. Previous studies have shown that right temporo-parietal junction (TPJ), located at the brain's surface, above and behind the right ear, is very active when we think about the intentions and the thoughts of others. In the study at MIT, led by Rebecca Saxe, professor of brain and cognitive sciences, researchers disrupted the activity in the right TPJ. This was achieved by applying the magnetic field to the scalp and inducing the current in the brain, which in turn impeded the ability of nearby brain cells to fire normally. As a result, the ability to make moral judgment, which requires understanding other people's intentions, was impaired. The findings have been reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The researchers found that when right TPJ was disrupted, the subjects were more likely to judge failed attempts to harm as morally permissible, implying that their ability to interpret others' intentions was interfered with and that they relied more on the "outcome" information to make their judgments. A drunk driver who hits and kills a pedestrian is morally unlucky, compared to an equally drunk driver who reaches home safe without any disaster. Yet, moral blame is attached to the former. Liane Young, one of the researchers is studying the role of right TPJ in judgments of people who are morally

unlucky. (*Mumbai Mirror*, [*The Times of India*], March 31, 2010)

Brain is the instrument of the mind. The depth and variety of brain convolutions in man are caused by the presence of *Manas* (Mind), but they are not the cause of mind. If the brain is damaged or the connection between brain and *Manas* is broken then intelligence will not be manifested. Mind uses the brain for reasoning from premises to conclusion. If certain portions of the brain are affected, reason and judgment could also be affected.

The same person in normal state makes proper interpretation and judgment, thereby showing that the real *seat* of moral behaviour is in the inner man or the Ego. The impairment of the instrument inhibits the *expression* of true judgment or discrimination. Brain is not the *seat* of discrimination or reasoning, but only a useful instrument. The functions of the Higher Mind are independent of the brain. For instance, though ordinary memory is dependent on brain, not so the soul memory; and yet the instrument of the brain is necessary for bringing back the memory of deep sleep state or the memory of past lives, into waking consciousness.

Ethics is that Science of the Soul, which relates to the causative world of being—its field of operation is within the real man. The plan of what is to be, or manifestation, first arises in the Divine Mind, and is reflected upon the eternal substance. Ethical ideas are the reflection on the moral plane of that plan made manifest and may be described as Archetypal Ideas. These Archetypal Ideas were burnt into the very soul of Infant Humanity by Divine Instructors as *Innate Ideas*, which reside in *Buddhi-Manas*. The faculty of spiritual discrimination resides in *Buddhi*. But man has free will. When mind gravitates to passions and desires, man makes wrong or morally incorrect choice, but in conjunction with or under temporary influence of the divine nature, he makes morally correct choice.

In the last few months there has been a series of exposes on gurus and godmen in India, leading to confusion and scepticism among the seekers. We need to keep in mind a few points concerning gurus and our attitude towards them. First and foremost, we must keep an open mind and should not jump to conclusions, believing in the scandalous writings about a spiritual guru, as the media has a vested interest in building up and tearing down the reputation of prominent people. "We Indians are too prone to deifying our spiritual teachers. Surely, a more measured approach is wiser until one is utterly sure of the calibre of the guru," writes Suma Varughese. We get carried away by externalities like charm, charisma, good looks and magnetism. An enlightened soul is devoid of personality. The most important tool on the spiritual path is cultivation of intuition that will help us judge the quality of a person's soul.

We should not choose our guru in a hurry but take time and evaluate him for his responses to money, fame, power and sex. The real mark of an enlightened soul is freedom from desire. A true guru makes one self-dependent by helping to awaken the inner guru, the powerful guide within. We need not write off a guru on account of any controversies, because sages and prophets have always attracted controversies. Their greatness lies in their capacity to deal with such storms. We must also learn to segregate Teachings from the Teacher. Just because the Teacher is unable to live up to the full potential of his teachings, does not mean that the teachings are invalid. In Kali Yuga too many people are tempted to pose as gurus without striving to first acquire complete spiritual purity. A few false gurus must not dishearten us. "There are hundreds and thousands of genuine and enlightened gurus who do their work quietly and without fanfare, a source of support and succour to millions," writes Varughese. (*Life Positive*, April 1 2010)

Today, our life is becoming more and more complicated and troublesome. Hence, we find an increasing tendency in people to look *outside* for support. Any person who promises to provide immediate solution to one's problem is accepted as a "saviour." It is

this tendency which is at the base of the new age "guru-cult."

The Guru-chela relationship has been considered sacred, occupying a central place in Theosophy. One of the missions of Theosophy is to rescue and re-elevate the chair of the Guru to its noble height. The bond between Chela and Guru is a purely spiritual one. Beyond the physical and psychic worlds is the spiritual world, and there only the Guru of soul-life awaits the aspiring Chela. H.P.B. describes the "true Guru," thus:

...the real Guru is always an Adept in the Occult Science.

A man of profound knowledge, exoteric and esoteric, especially the latter; and one who has brought his carnal nature under subjection of the WILL; who has developed in himself both the power (*Siddhi*) to control the forces of nature, and the capacity to probe her secrets by the help of the formerly latent but now active powers of his being—this is the real Guru. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, p. 1)

Mr. Crosbie says, it is not the best thing to rely upon any *living person*, to the extent of *idealizing* him; for if such a person is even seemingly swept away in darkness—such as lapse in discipline, or is accused and slandered even falsely—then it would dishearten us. Many spiritual leaders have lost some of their followers because of accusation of their involvement—justly or unjustly—in a sex-scandal; or accusation of moneymaking, corruption, etc. Hence, both Mr. Judge and Mr. Crosbie advised fellow Theosophists, not to put them on any pedestal or to think highly of them. Mr. Judge wrote to one such member: "I am like you, struggling on the road. Perhaps the veil might in an instant fall down from your spirit, and you will be long ahead of us all." H.P.B. too, said: "Do not follow me or my Path: follow the path I show, the Masters who are behind."

NOTHING befalls a man except what is in his nature to endure.

—MARCUS AURELIUS