

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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OVERCOMING MENTAL BIASES	3
SLEEP AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE	9
STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA—THE SELF—III	13
LUCIFER—THE FALLEN ANGEL	17
MAN—MORTAL AND IMMORTAL—I	23
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	28
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

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### OVERCOMING MENTAL BIASES

BIAS means prejudice. A Hindu may be biased towards Muslim and *vice versa*. A white-skinned person may be biased towards a dark-skinned person, and so on. But bias is also mental inclination or leaning, or any special influence which sways one's thinking. It is one particular way, or a fixed way of looking at and understanding things. We speak of optimistic and pessimistic outlook on life. An optimist sees half-full glass, while a pessimist sees half-empty glass of water. Each person sees life, man, Deity, from his own viewpoint. For instance, “man” is a different entity for different people. To a scientist he is a bundle of atoms which combine in a definite way. To a psychologist, man is a collection of sensation-impressions and reflexes; to a theologian, man is a soul fashioned by God which he has to save through prayers. Likewise, a novelist sees in the drawing rooms of society and in the hovels of the poor, only the material that may serve as the basis for his next novel. A social climber sees in the society only the means of gratifying pride and ambition, and an artist can see in it only play of colours and arrangement of figures.

Seldom is ordinary man interested in complex activities which have no direct bearing on his day-to-day life or business. A common man has mainly utilitarian point of view. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, mentions that in Kalimpong he went for a walk with a Nepalese friend. Pointing at a magnificent pine tree, he exclaimed, “Is it not a beautiful tree!” The Nepalese friend agreed, saying, “Yes,

it is a beautiful tree. There is enough firewood there for the whole winter.” He did not see the tree at all. He only saw a certain quantity of firewood. Sometimes we tend to look at human beings also from such purely utilitarian point of view. There is body-shopping in recruitment for security guards. Someone engaged in flesh-trade, looks at a woman from the point of view of her skin colour and body curves! Sadly, for some, a woman is only an instrument for sexual gratification!

The sole object of *Mundaka Upanishad* is to teach the highest knowledge, or knowledge of the Brahman. *Mundaka* means “shaving,” and it helps to cut off the errors of the mind like a razor, and enables one to attain to knowledge of the Brahman. Errors grow largely out of preconceptions and notions which are educated into us by our schools and colleges, our religion, family and society to which we belong. Our occupation plays an important role in influencing our mind in certain direction. If you do something for seven or eight hours a day, five days a week, fifty two weeks a year, and if you do this for twenty, thirty, or forty years, it is not surprising that it leaves a mark on you. In the olden days people could recognize the followers of certain trades by physical effects. The dyer always had his hands deeply stained with dye, while a tailor would have a hump back. But there is an even greater effect on mind, writes Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher. Certain professions make one predisposed to viewing everything rationally and logically, while others make one inclined to view things emotionally. Jane Goodall is well known for her work for the protection of wildlife, especially the chimpanzees. As she sought consolation in the forest of Gombe, after her husband’s death, she experienced ecstatic mystical moments of oneness with Nature. Recounting that experience she wrote:

There are many windows through which we humans, searching for meaning, can look out into the world around us. There are those carved out by Western science....Yet there are other windows through which we humans can look

out into the world around us, windows through which the mystics and holy men of the East, and the founders of the great world religions, have gazed as they searched for the meaning and purpose of our life on earth....That afternoon, it had been as though an unseen hand had drawn back a curtain and, for a briefest moment, I had seen through such a window. (*Reason for Hope*, pp. 174-75)

A wholly practical or entirely mystical mind is not well balanced, writes Mr. Judge. One who aspires to apprehend the Truth must be both mystical and practical. A mystically inclined person is meditative and inclined to turn inwards. He seeks for direct inner communion with God. Great Beings are both, practical and mystical. When a hungry and tired wayfarer came to a Buddhist monastery, the disciples began to preach *Dhamma* to him. But Buddha directed his disciples to feed him, before giving bread for the soul. We cannot insist upon having a self-certifying mystical experience before we can accept certain doctrines. For instance, we may first accept the doctrine of rebirth, based on logical arguments, instead of waiting for the time when we can remember all our past lives; which happens only when our soul is *en rapport* with the divine nature.

Mr. Judge advises that someone who wants to apprehend truth must be able to lay aside his preconceptions. If he holds on to his preconceptions, he can never really acquire a new idea or a new point of view. Some people come to Theosophy, bringing with them their own background, and because they hold onto their own ideas, they are unable to grasp the philosophy of Theosophy. They seek to read *new* books on Theosophy, instead of re-reading a few old books. There is a need to enter into the author’s thought. Even when someone says that he has mastered a certain book, a closer examination reveals that actually, only that which coincided with his previous training and line of thought has been grasped.

Some people are naturally inclined to ethics or solving human problems, rather than struggling with metaphysics. Should we not, rather, work along the lines of our natural inclinations, like paying

attention only to philosophy concerning Karma and Reincarnation, skipping all those difficult tenets concerning Rounds, Races, Moon-chain, Earth-chain, Sevenfold constitution of man, and so on? Someone who wants to grasp entire truth, from all its aspects, must be willing to cultivate both ethical and metaphysical viewpoint. Sooner or later, a true seeker of truth has to learn to deal with metaphysics, because ethics and metaphysics are like two wings of a bird. We may be more inclined towards ethics, and hence metaphysics feels irksome, but then let us become aware of our mental bias. Mr. Judge suggests that we must try to give up our own mental bias, and enter into the bias of another's mind to see his viewpoint. That "another" may be a speaker or a writer.

It is extremely difficult to become aware of our own mental leaning, and even more difficult to give it up and adopt, for a while, mental leaning of another. The first step consists in learning to *listen* attentively to the spoken or written word, by submitting our mind to the author and by trying to contact the mind of the author. Every form, no matter how crude, contains the image of its "creator" concealed within it. So does an author's work, no matter how obscure, contains the concealed image of the author's knowledge, writes H.P.B. The more we change inwardly, the more our perceptions open, enabling us to have greater understanding of the work, and *vice versa*. This is applicable especially to the study of the *Secret Doctrine*, as it is not a book to be understood using mere intellect. In "*Some Observations on the Study of the Secret Doctrine of H.P.B.*," we are told that the *Secret Doctrine* is written in an unusual style, and the specific method used is to bring out the faculty of spiritual perception in the reader. It is the power of the mind to alight upon a subject and be able to suck everything that is in the subject. This is the penetrative faculty of mind. We are required to read "not only between the lines, but within the words as well."

It is not easy to enter into mental leaning of another. We have to train ourselves. Even in everyday affairs it would be a good practice to endeavour to see things from another person's view point. We

not only need to listen, carefully and sympathetically, to another person, but if need be, get into another's shoes.

At times, we just refuse to consider the thoughts of another person because his personality is disagreeable to us. We do not like the way he dresses up or the way he talks, or because he is not logical and clear in his exposition, and so we are mentally switched off. Mr. Judge points out that when a person is expounding the philosophy, and if we are not even ready to listen, then we are losing sight of an occult law. The law is that it is under Karma that the speaker was led to address you and others, and give you an *opportunity to give up your favourite point of view* and consider life as seen through the eyes of another. We are being impolite and uncharitable when we refuse to even listen to another person. We must, instead, make an effort to control our irritation and dullness. Even when the view point is wrong, you will gain something, because in order to know what a thing is, you must know what it is not. Often there is an ounce of truth hiding in a ton of rubbish. The first step in acquiring a well-balanced mind, which can look at events, people and thoughts from all sides, is to acquire the breadth and depth of mind. A well-balanced mind is practical, logical, as well as, mystical.

*Anekantvada* is one of the most important and fundamental doctrines of Jainism. It refers to the principles of pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints, the notion that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth. There is the story of six blind men who were asked to describe an elephant by feeling different parts of the elephant's body. The blind man who feels a leg, says, "the elephant is like a pillar"; the one who feels the tail, says, "the elephant is like a rope"; the one who feels the trunk, says, "the elephant is like a tree branch," and so on. All of them were right because each one had touched a different part of the elephant. The Jaina theory of Judgment says that every object has innumerable aspects or characters. A person who is omniscient can have direct

knowledge of various aspects of an object at one go, but the same is not possible for an ordinary being, and hence the understanding of an ordinary human being is partial, and therefore, valid only from a particular point of view. This is called *nayavada*, which points out that in daily life our judgments regarding objects are conditional because they are true only from a certain standpoint and as regards certain aspects considered. From this arises the theory of *Syadvada*. We must realize that an individual can never present complete knowledge of an object because of limited understanding, imperfection of speech, etc. Therefore, the Jaina logic insists that every judgment (*naya*) should be qualified by the word (*syat*), i.e., “somehow” or “in a way,” to emphasize its conditional or relative character.

Similarly, it is important to accept limitations of our judgment *vis a vis* divine judgment. A child playing on the ground used to watch his mother embroider on a cloth. From where he sat he could see only the underside, and he would tell his mother that all he could see was some messy work, a patch of threads in tangles. His mother would ask the child to play and come back after she was finished, so that she could make him sit on her knees and show him the work from her side. Always, what looked to be only a jumble of threads from the ground, turned out to be some beautiful pattern, when looked from mother’s side, because the mother was following some “design” as she embroidered, which the child could not see. That is exactly how we feel when we see our life from our side as God or Law embroiders our life. We question the choice of colours and ask for more of brighter colours, and so on. But if we could only look at things from the point of view of the Divine, we would find order and pattern, and appreciate that there are no accidents in life, nor a misshapen day.

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HAPPINESS...is achieved only by making others happy.

—STUART CLOETE

## SLEEP AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

ANY man, even the most unlearned, realizes that his consciousness functions at times on the moral, but at times on the amoral, planes of existence. In the moral man, selfish desire is made dormant, and in consequence actions are performed on basic principles without any regard to results, which may be either painful or pleasant. The amoral person may not be immoral as the world calls immorality. Yet is he separated by a wide gulf from the moral and the spiritual person. The amoral person acts with motives that get tainted by his selfishness.

What does sleep do to these divergent aspects which doubtless exist in each student as they exist in the world outside? Can the states that follow upon sleep be helpful in leading the life? Can man when in sleep reach the *Akasic* heights and bring the divine knowledge gathered there into waking consciousness? Theosophy has answers for these questions. It has definite knowledge of the disciplines that will enable one to reach the high states that are open to him during the sleep of his physical body. What is required is that he knocks at the right door and that the hand uplifted to knock is cleansed of all impurity.

During his waking hours, the person weaves around himself a fabric made of thoughts, desires and feelings that may either be induced by outside influences or be self-generated. It is like so much food which he ingests. Having taken his fill, he rests to allow the essences of that food to be absorbed by the various aspects of his complex make-up. The body, then the desire nature, followed in its turn by the intellectual and moral aspects of himself, each will receive its own nutrition, or—and this is important—go without it if one has been callous enough not to provide food for any particular sheath. The neglected sinew gets weakened and then atrophied. So is it with the inner make-up of the person.

Each Constitution varies from the others in the quantity of inputs which it can tolerate. When that limit is reached, exhaustion

supervenes. The nerve centres and the ganglia of the brain are tired out. The waking life has become too strong for the physical organism and the time is reached when the force of the life current must be broken by changing the waking for the sleeping state. The food has now to go figuratively to the bones and the sinews, the flesh and the blood.

During the sleep, all volition is suspended. The brain ceases to cerebrate, and lies dormant. The brain sinks to sleep in easy stages. As it falls into oblivion, it shoots forth spasmodic flares and occasional flames. It is these emissions of memory pictures—not volitional but automotive—that become the basis of chaotic and unconnected dreams. These may have their base and origin in a physiological reaction or an irritation set up by indigestion or by an idea or event which has impressed itself deeply upon the person during his waking state. Quite a few hours of sleep are thus not put to constructive use if during the day the body and the brain have been ill-used or abused. The more this stage in sleep is lengthened, the less time will there be for the more important stages that lie ahead. With the close of this first chaotic state, the psychic or *swapna* state is reached.

The psychic is the plane of desires which here run rampant, unchecked by any considerations of conscience or morality. It is the region of the astral light in which are stored the scenes of human iniquities. If the dreaming entity is psychologically attuned to evil, it adds its quota of depravity to the astral records and in turn is vampirised by them. During the sleep of the body the principle of desire gets mechanically activated by electrical shocks which it receives from the various nerve-centres. If these centres are charged with desires of the flesh, if they have stored in them memories of ill-deeds and of cravings for wrongdoings, then they are pollutants of the psychic atmosphere. It is only when the psychic impulses subside during sleep that the real “dream” or “deep sleep” stage can commence.

The dream sequences caused by biological reactions and those

caused by the lower desires are now over. The selfish egotist, the unbrotherly person and the combative animal man lie in slumber, their activities neutralized by exhaustion. The unselfish moral nature is now in its element untrammelled by the clogging weight of materiality. It now breathes the atmosphere of *Akasa*. Here, the questing soul may find the object of his search. Altruism, brotherhood, the knowledge of the imperishable is here, and it is from here that the moral and noble part of the person seeks and receives the knowledge which is consubstantial with its nature.

But the time for waking is near. Back goes the consciousness the way it came. From *Akasa* to astral light to earthly atmosphere; from the moral to the psychic to the material comes the soul. Much of that which was touched upon in the stage of deep sleep is lost on the return journey, repelled by the plane of emotions and desires. The little that survives the transit may or may not make any impress on the brain, depending on whether the latter has been made porous or impervious to the whisperings of the Soul. The person may wake up completely ignorant of the long journey undertaken through subjective realms unknown to his waking physical brain. He may even say that he has not dreamt at all.

For one who believes in the existence of Soul and Spirit and has faith, certain disciplines are enjoined which would enable him to make a quick transit through the psychic atmosphere of the astral light. Combined with this discipline is the one which will enable him to stay longer in the moral or the *Sushupti* state. Still another discipline must be undertaken to make the brain porous and retentive of the reminiscences of the Soul.

The brain is coarsened and its sensitivity dulled by sin, over-indulgence and an attitude which makes one segregate mankind into opposing camps of sex, caste, colour, creed, nationality and socio-economic status. Figuratively, it is like the fogging of lenses in a viewing instrument, which may render vision hazy and even distorted. Discipline to clear the brain of fogs created by such causes is self-evident. “To overcome a sin, practice the opposite virtue” is



a truism, and if the student desires progress, he *has* to create a new atmosphere and learn to live in it.

The other discipline which borders on asceticism is the deliberate turning of the consciousness to the Spirit in all moments of leisure. Duties done, services rendered, studies completed, must end in a return to the centre. The spiritual centre is the home from which one goes out for specific works, and the duty done, without loitering or going into by-ways one must return to the only haven of refuge—the Self within. It should be the endeavour of the student to create on this side of sleep a centre fit in major respects to receive the impulses from *Sushupti*, without distortion and with sufficient awareness to interpret their meaning and value. The influences which are thus obtained are received in trust for imparting instruction and help to others. Knowledge thus gathered, if used to gain personal stature or to obtain progress for oneself, dries up the channels of communication.

To safeguard oneself against the attacks of pride and ambition, one more discipline is enjoined. It is the adoption of a watch-dog attitude towards one's acts *vis-à-vis* the obligations undertaken. At the end of each day, every day, the court must be constituted. The judge, impartial and impersonal, assumes the dignity of his office. His codes of laws are the rules of life, and the special laws which the neophyte has agreed to observe. Each act, thought, emotion and word of the day just closing has to be brought forward for the scrutiny of the judge. The court pronounces its judgment based on the code. It is in the form of advice and guidance—not necessarily a down-to-earth solution of problems arising out of the review, but oft-times it takes the form of an indication as to where the solution may be sought for and found. In later times, the student may realize that the voice of the judge is in no way different from the one that he hears in the silence of the still night—a voice which speaks where there is none to speak, the Voice of the Most High.

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

### THE SELF—III

*9. Evil is done by self alone; by self alone is one defiled. By self alone is evil left undone; by self alone is one purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself. No man can purify another. (165)*

THIS verse clearly tells us that we, ourselves, are responsible for our present state. There is no use blaming our heredity, our environment or other people. In the past we have chosen to do evil. Now, it is up to us to choose good over evil, right over wrong and change ourselves. No one else can do it for us. Others may extend their help and give us support, but the effort has to be made by ourselves. However much the mother may love the child, the child has to eat and digest the food—the mother cannot do it for the child. Likewise, the holy ones give their teachings to mankind which each one has to understand and practice. In the canto on *The Path*, we are told: “You yourself must strive; Buddhas are but sign-posts.” No one can purify another, not even a Buddha, unless there is inclination and aspiration to change. Hence, it is humorously said that people would not bother to follow even the Ten Commandments if there was eleventh commandment which said “Thou shalt not be found out.” The chapter also suggests that you should not interfere with another's Karma without invitation. If the other person seeks your help; if he wants you to show him the way then only you should help. You cannot force things on people. We can have good society with good men but we cannot have good men merely by imposing laws. There has to be willingness to change.

This verse also gives us hope that it is possible for the personal self to undo the mistakes of the past and purify itself. In the *Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. writes:

What every man needs first is to find himself, and then take an honest inventory of his subjective possessions, and,

bad or bankrupt as it may be, it is not beyond redemption if we set about it in earnest. (pp. 52-53)

It may be difficult but not impossible. We can transcend the circumstances, and refuse to provide a chink in our armour through which evil may enter into us. All may drink, take bribe, but one person can choose to abstain, though it may be extremely difficult for him to swim against the current. A little laxness in a person who is normally pure can lead to disastrous results and hence, sustained effort is needed. In doing this, one may experience enormous pressure, but one can take courage from Mr. Crosbie's advice:

So we should strive for calmness, patience, and fortitude, and also have full confidence that the tide is bound to turn, even at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour. "If the candidate has faith, patience and confidence, verily he will not have to wait too long." There is one thing that should be remembered in the midst of all difficulties; it is this—"When the lesson is learned the necessity ceases." (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 10)

10. *Let no one neglect his own good work for the sake of another's however great. Once a man has discerned his own work let him devote himself to it.*† (166)

(† This sounds like selfishness; what is implied is that one cannot do good without self-culture—*Atmartha*.)

The verse reflects the same idea which occurs in the third chapter of the *Gita* which says: "It is better to do one's own duty, even though it be devoid of excellence, than to perform another's duty well. It is better to perish in the performance of one's own duty; duty of another is full of danger." The *Gita* says that all creatures including the wise man, act according to their natures; according to *samskara* or impression, of *dharma* and *adharma* arising out of past actions. Moreover, attachment and aversion of each sense for its respective object is natural and inevitable. With the result, man following the dictates of his nature through attachment and aversion, neglects his own duty and undertakes duty of another. He must not

do so, as there are deep philosophical reasons behind this advice.

Firstly: Each one of us is born in a particular body, in a particular family, nation and a race in accordance with our past actions. In fulfilling the duties of our particular station in life, we fulfil our Karma, liquidate our debts and learn the necessary lessons. Abandoning one's duty means running away from our duties and responsibilities, and that may be considered an act of omission. When we shun our duty because it is irksome, unexciting, boring, tiresome, uninteresting, we are going against the Law which is sure to place us in similar situations till we learn the lessons they have to teach us. Mr. Judge says that by attending to the irksome work, one attains to discipline. He writes: Try to take pleasure in doing your duty, especially in little duties of life. Never growl at anything you have to do, but take it as good thing you have to do.

Secondly: Instead of doing our own duty, we may choose to do another person's duty and do it exceedingly well. But what is the use? In doing so, we not only neglect our own duty, but also deprive another person of the benefit that accrues from performance of his own duty. What would happen if the parents started doing the homework for their child? Will it not hinder the progress of their child, while parents fail in fulfilling their duty of raising the child in a manner that would make him self-reliant, upright and a contributing member of the society? Moreover, if one chooses to do only that which one is already good at, there is very little possibility for one to learn anything new. It does not mean that you must not help another person. But you must have wisdom to help in a manner that will not make him your dependant.

Thirdly: The whole world is sustained on the basis of the principle of interdependence. Every human being has a role to play—none is unimportant or useless. As Krishna tells us in the *Gita*, the universal wheel of sacrifice is kept revolving by each person doing his duty. We know well how everything comes to a standstill if the motormen running the trains go on strike; what a stinking havoc is created when the municipal sweepers refuse to pick up the heaps of garbage

dumped by us in our dustbins; if the milkman does not bring milk or the grosser stops stocking the essential goods. Every cog in the wheel is vital for efficient and proper functioning of the machine. So also, the work of the world requires each one of us to contribute our share, not according to our likes or dislikes but in accordance with our duty. It teaches us to respect every job and be thankful to others for what they do for us.

Fourthly: There is this concept that you can give your best contribution to the world when you do that which is your duty. You make the world your debtor. If it is not your duty, you can complicate the matter. You can turn a simple fracture into a compound fracture or create confusion in the minds of other people as to your role. Mr. Judge in his letter says: “If a man knows he is bad at business, he should mortify himself by making himself learn it, and thus get good discipline.” And if he has mastered everything, then also, he must do what King Janaka did—set an example in performance of duty. “For whatever is practised by the most excellent men, that is also practiced by others.”

(Concluded)

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ACCORDING to the kabalistic doctrine, the future exists in the astral light in embryo, as the present existed in embryo in the past. While man is free to act as he pleases, the manner in which he *will* act was foreknown from all time; not on the ground of fatalism or destiny, but simply on the principle of universal, unchangeable harmony; and, as it may be foreknown that, when a musical note is struck, its vibrations will not, and cannot change into those of another note....The past no more exists than the future, as we have said, only our memories survive; and our memories are but the glimpses that we catch of the reflections of this past in the currents of the astral light, as the psychometer catches them from the astral emanations of the object held by him.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

## LUCIFER—THE FALLEN ANGEL

RELIGIOUS scriptures mention the fall of disobedient angel from heaven, who was punished for disobedience. In Latin, from which the English word is derived, *Lucifer* means “light-bearer” or “light-bringer,” (from the words *lucem ferre*). There are legends in Jewish and Christian traditions associated with Lucifer as a fallen angel. Some legends describe Lucifer as an angel of light, while others depict him as an archangel or even as son of God. Lucifer’s fall is ascribed to his pride and ambition, as he tried to take the place of God himself. The fall of Lucifer is described in *Isaiah* (14, 12-15), thus:

How you have fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How *art* thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend to heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God....I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the side of the pit.

Some argue that the above passages ascribed to Lucifer’s fall, actually refer to the story of a Babylonian king, who had exalted himself as being deity himself, after which God would cast him down. It was Gregory the Great who was the first to apply this passage of *Isaiah* to Satan, and ever since the bold metaphor of the prophet, which referred, after all, but to an Assyrian king inimical to the Israelites, has been applied to the Devil, writes H.P.B. However, she adds that so deeply rooted, indeed, is this preconception and aversion to the name of “Lucifer” that no one has seemed to ever ask himself the question, how came Satan to be called a *light-bringer*?

Lucifer is the name given to Venus, the morning star. In the article, “History of a Planet,” H.P.B. points out that in Hesiod, planet Venus is decomposed into two divine beings or two brothers—Eosphoros or Phosphoros the morning star, and Hesperos, the evening star. He



is the “beautiful morning star.” As a morning star he is called *Venus-Lucifer* or light bringer. Lucifer is the *pale* morning star. It shines timidly at dawn to gather forces and then shines brightly to dazzle the eye at the sunset, as his own brother “Hesperos.” Venus corresponds to Mind in man, which is dual. Like the pale morning star, the lower mind or incarnated mind within the sheaths of astral light is unable to exhibit the bright radiance and powers of the Higher Mind, and is also said to be the “alter Ego” through which the Higher mind works.

According to John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Lucifer is Satan, “a rebellious angel,” fallen through the idea that “To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell; Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.” There are those who like to rule over the masses by deceit and lie, than to serve the Truth. However, the Roman Church gives two-sided interpretation of the term Lucifer, because Lucifer is also the name given to Jesus: “I Jesus...am the...bright and morning star” (*Revelation*, 22:16). Having already associated Lucifer with Satan, we are told that Christ (Jesus) is the “Morning Star,” the *divine* Lucifer; and Satan the *usurpator* of the *Verbum*, is the “*infernal* Lucifer.”

H.P.B. explains that account of the revolt of Venus-Lucifer, or rather of the Ruler of planet Venus, is based on the great sidereal catastrophe mentioned in *Revelation*. Accordingly, Venus-Lucifer tries to usurp the place of the Sun [symbolical of God] and is conquered by Mercury (Michael), who is then given the possession of this planet. In the oldest Mazdean allegories, Mitra conquered planet Venus and defended the Sun. This shows that the theological story of Lucifer was built upon various myths and allegories of the pagan world. The Satanic myth of Lucifer-Venus is based on purely astronomical personification, and is full of occult meaning, but has now become a Christian dogma. H.P.B. points out that the Sun reflects his beams in Mercury *seven* times more than it does on our Earth, and *twice* more in Lucifer-Venus.

The fall of Lucifer and the myth of “fallen angels” have many

implications. It is said that Lucifer did not fall alone from Heaven, he brought down with him one-third of angels from heaven, as suggested by *St. John’s Revelation* (12:4). “Lucifer was once a prince of light, admitted to the councils of the Most High. He fell through pride, and dragged downward in his fall all who worshipped the demon of pride. This is no foolish fable, but a terrible tragedy, enacted at the gates of paradise, in the face of the assembled universe, and reenacted in the heart of man,” writes Mr. Judge. Pride and ambition are the worst foes of a spiritual aspirant. There are stories of Rishis and sages falling from great height of spiritual advance due to pride.

H.P.B. points out that if one analyzes the rebellion of Lucifer, one finds it to be merely an assertion of free will and independent thought. The theogony of every religion speaks about “gods” who refused to create man and thus opposed or rebelled against the God. Thus, the *Archangels* of the Christians, the *Ameshaspendas* of the Zoroastrians, or Solar angels (*Agnishwatta Pitris*) of the Hindus, are all variously termed Satan, Asura (no-god), because they refused to create men. H.P.B. explains that their refusal was not because their pride was too great to share the celestial power of their essence with the children of earth, but because they were formless and intellectual, and hence they could not build the *form* of man, however, they endowed him with *mind*. The rebels and Satans were the celestial beings who refused to create the physical body of man, because they did not possess the *physical creative fire*. In Greece they were symbolized under the name of Prometheus. These rebellious angels, or first mind-born sons of Brahma, who refused to create physical man were hurled down to Earth. These are the three classes of *Arupa pitris*. In other words, one-third of the Dhyanis were doomed by the law of Karma to be reborn on Earth. That is what is also meant when in *St. John’s Revelation* we are told about the great Red Dragon “whose tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth.” (12:4)

In the history of evolution of man, after the separation of sexes,

the divine beings refused to incarnate or light up the mind of early Third Race, saying, “We have wisdom, we can choose,” and that the forms were not ready. The one-third of the Dhyanis that obeyed the law incarnated in early part of Third Race and created “Sons of Will and Yoga.” The second third who deferred a little were punished by having to incarnate into inferior forms. The last third deferred till the Fourth Race. These beings of third race committed the sin of uniting with huge she-animals. The Sons of Wisdom saw this and said that the mindless beings had defiled their future abodes, and then incarnated into those defiled bodies. They failed to do their karmic duty and thus became responsible for the sin of the mindless. “This was the ‘Fall of the angels,’ because of their rebellion against Karmic Law,” writes H.P.B.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 237 fn.) H.P.B. points out that Demon Mahasura is the Hindu Lucifer, who is said to have become envious of the Creator’s resplendent light, and to have rebelled against Brahma, and for which Siva hurled him down to *Patala*. However, in Hindu mythology, this devil is made to repent and thus given the opportunity to progress. Allegorically, and *esoterically*, Mahasura represents a sinful man, who can, by *yoga*, devotion and adeptship, reach union with the deity.

Lucifer or “Light Bearer” is in us: it is our Mind—our tempter and redeemer, our *intelligent liberator and Saviour* from pure animalism. Without this principle of mind, we would be no better than animals, writes H.P.B. In the Article, “The Fall of Ideals,” H.P.B. writes that the present state of the society is due to “fall of values,” *i.e.*, the failure to live up to the values of civilization. *The real obstacle in reaching the ideal of human perfection is the devil within man, and not any external anthropomorphized devil invented by the Church.* Satan is an elastic term, and no one has yet ever given even an approximately logical definition of the symbolical meaning of the name. The first to anthropomorphize it was John Milton.

H.P.B. then compares the concept of Satan given by various poets. Satan is simply an adversary, not necessarily a “persecutor of

men,” but possibly also a foe of evil. He may thus become a Saviour of the oppressed, a champion of the weak and poor, crushed by the minor devils (men), the demons of avarice, selfishness and hypocrisy. But Victor Hugo was the first to intuitively grasp the occult truth. There is nothing *human* in the Satans of Milton and of Byron. Milton’s Satan wars with angels who are a sort of flying puppets, without spontaneity. Byron deals with the concept of evil in his dramas—“Manfred,” “Cain,” “Heaven and Earth,” and “The Deformed Transformed.” Evil is defined as selfishness, and rebellion to God or lack of respect for God. Good is defined as unquestioning obedience to God. In “Manfred,” the hero is shown to suffer from eternal guilty conscience but refuses to pray to god, rejects god as unable to help him. Milton’s Satan is devil personified, which was used by the church to perpetrate the idea of personal devil. However, Hugo’s Lucifer fights a fearful battle with *his own terrible passions* and again becomes an Archangel of Light, after the awful agonies ever conceived by mortal mind.

Hugo’s Satan is not devoid of goodness. In fact, there is in him the spark of divine love for Light and Harmony, that no HATE can wholly smother, and this causes in him unbearable moral agony. Hugo visualizes the Satan sobbing in superhuman despair. He sobs, out of baffled rage that he cannot destroy the love for divine Goodness (God) from his nature, and also out of despair at imagining himself to be cut off from the divine love. This feeling of despair is the salvation for Satan. We are told that as the Satan *falls*, a feather drops from his wing, and is lighted up by a ray of divine radiance, and is transformed into a bright Being, the Angel LIBERTY. She is Satan’s daughter, the child jointly of God and the Fallen Archangel, the progeny of Good and Evil, of Light and Darkness. It is this Angel Liberty, Satan’s daughter who saves him. At the acme of despair at feeling himself hated by LIGHT, Satan hears the divine words, “No; I hate thee not.” Saith the Voice, “An angel is between us, and her deeds go to thy credit. Man, bound by thee, by her is now delivered.”

Victor Hugo's concept of Satan is close to theosophical concept. The "fallen angels" are the *manasputras*, who fall into generation and matter, endowing man with mind and self-consciousness. As H.P.B. points out in the *Secret Doctrine*, Satan, Lucifer or "light-bearer," is our Mind. It is our Tempter and Redeemer. Hugo speaks of Satan's daughters—the twin sisters—angel Liberty and angel "Isis-Lilith" or Protest. Isis represents the earth and Lilith is first wife of Adam, who was a demoness and thus together Isis-Lilith may be taken to represent the lower, earthly aspect of mind, protesting the divine. But an aspect of the incarnated mind also aspires for the good and divine. The moral agony of Satan or man is caused by duality of his nature. The feather dropping from the wing of the Satan and being lighted up by the divine radiance and getting transformed into Angel Liberty, might represent the mind free from Kama, when it becomes an organ of free-will in man, and guide of highest mental faculties. As a Master of Wisdom says, no one is utterly condemned in the eyes of the Master. Just as the lost jewel may be recovered from the very depths of the tank's mud—because it is a jewel and keeps its identity even in mud—so can the most abandoned snatch himself from the mire of sin. So, God tells Satan that Man is bound by him, but by her—Liberty or Free-will—can be delivered. H.P.B. applies this at the level of entire humanity and points out that in modern civilization we have the atheists, anarchists and men of terror personifying the angel Protest. But however obscured and covered over, there is that love for Humanity in human heart, which needs to be kindled. For angel Liberty to be born all humanity must reunite into a Brotherhood, and for that greed, bias and prejudice must disappear and give place to altruism and justice.

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THE MAHATMAS are the *servants*, not *arbiters* of the law of Karma.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

## MAN—MORTAL AND IMMORTAL

### I

RIGHT from the ancient times to our modern days, desire to live on, desire to prolong life-span, desire to keep the body young and strong has occupied the minds and efforts of large portion of mankind. Alchemists spent precious years of their lives in search of "elixir of life"—the substance that would indefinitely prolong life. The French physiologist and neurologist, Dr. Brown-Séquard declared that he had "rejuvenated" himself by subcutaneous injections prepared from freshly killed guinea pigs and dogs. Even today, in some of the countries like India and China, one can obtain medicines prepared from animals which are said to enhance vigour and manliness. Science fraternity is expending considerable resource on "stem-cell" research, which promises to enable us to grow organs and body parts which can replace the worn-out or diseased organs in our body so that we can continue to live forever. All these attempts clearly indicate man's desire for immortality, the desire for eternal life. Death is shunned or feared; because in death, we see an unquestionable proof of the end of life.

And yet, the belief in the "future life" has survived through all generations. It has been embedded in the consciousness of every nation and tribe, civilized, semi-civilized or savage, writes H.P.B. in her article "The Popular Idea of Soul-Survival." In Christian Russia, Wallachia, Bulgaria and Greece, the Church enjoins that offerings of rice and drink be placed upon the graves on All-Saints' day. In India, the same propitiatory gifts of rice are made to the departed. The poor savage of New Caledonia (north Britain or modern Scotland) makes his sacrifice of food to the skulls of his beloved dead. The same belief in surviving spirit prevails even among the most learned spiritualists of our own modern time; who conduct séances to communicate with the spirits of the dead. Thus, the belief in the survival of the ancestors is the oldest and most time-honoured of all beliefs, writes H.P.B.

This brings us to the most important question—what is man? Is he a mere mortal, an immortal, or both? What happens to him after death? Teachings of religions and views of science differ a great deal on this question. Some of the religions view man to be the creation of God; who judges him based on his conduct of a single life, long or short, and casts him into eternal hell as a punishment for doing evil or grants him the joys of eternal heaven as a reward for being good. A little reflection shows, that there must be something within every man that continues to live after the death and destruction of the body on funeral pyre or through decay. Otherwise how can he possibly enjoy eternal heaven or suffer in eternal hell if he is nothing but his body? For science, there is no life beyond physical existence. With the death of the body, everything comes to an end. It denies altogether the existence of the inner, invisible, real man. For those who hold this view, it would be worthwhile to reflect on the “Proofs of the Hidden Self,” presented by Mr. Judge. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 118)

The first proof is our experience of dream state. In this state, both the body and brain are asleep and yet, upon waking, we report having passed through the dream experience. Dream experiences are very real and vivid in which we also experience various emotions such as joy, fear, love, anger, etc. Obviously, there must be in man the Hidden Self which participates in the dream events and remembers them upon waking. Also, there are prophetic dreams in which the dreamer sees the future event. Abraham Lincoln dreamt of his own death. It is presence of the Hidden Self which sees plainly the future and the past in an ever present that can explain the fact of prophetic dreams.

Waking clairvoyance or seeing at distance provides second proof of the existence of the hidden self. Swedenborg saw the great fire at Stockholm, from almost 240 miles away, and told about it to his friends. In this case, since the brain and its organs of sight and hearing are too far off, it is the Hidden Self which sees the event and then impresses the picture upon the bodily organs of the man.

The third proof is that of a feeling of identity, of our being the same “I,” which persists throughout our life. This feeling of identity remains although we fall asleep each night. Even when there is loss of memory due to some kind of accident, the feeling of identity remains. Even when the outer personality undergoes changes in the body, ideas, emotions, we know ourselves to be the same “I.” These proofs bring us to the inevitable conclusion that we are the Hidden Self and that Self is above and beyond the body and brain.

These proofs convince us of the existence of the invisible, hidden man behind the visible, physical man. But Plato tells us that man is both mortal and immortal.

Plato regarded man as constituted of two parts—one eternal, formed of the same essence as the Absoluteness, the other mortal and corruptible, deriving its constituent parts from the *minor* “created” Gods. Man is composed, he shows, of (1) A mortal body, (2) An immortal principle, and (3) A “separate mortal kind of Soul.” It is that which we respectively call the physical man, the Spiritual Soul or Spirit, and the animal Soul. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 89)

The three-fold man is further divided into seven principles in Theosophy. Thorough study of these principles can explain to us the mysteries of life and death, secrets behind the powers exhibited by some men, and show us how we can acquire immortality or *moksha* or salvation. These principles are: body or *Rupa*, astral body or *Linga-Sarira*, *Prana* or Vitality, *Kama* or desires and passions, *Manas* or Mind, *Buddhi* or Spiritual Soul and *Atma* or Spirit.

The physical body which occupies all our attention is considered to be transitory, impermanent and illusionary by the Masters of Wisdom. Constantly undergoing destruction and renovation, our body undergoes a complete change in every seven years. So complex is the nature of our physical body that even after centuries of detailed study, science is unable to fathom all its mysteries. This form was not developed in a day. Long period, spanning billions of years, had first evolved simple forms, before more complex forms



were evolved, giving rise to mineral, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms; each exhibiting higher degree of consciousness and intelligence. Since man has passed through all the lower kingdoms, he has within him the knowledge and experience of all the lower kingdoms. Nature's forces impelled by the life within evolved various forms according to the plan or ideal forms outlined by divine intelligences working in nature. However, the design or the model for the development of the physical body of man, which has brain of better and far deeper capacity than that of any other animal, was the gift of our lunar ancestors called "lunar *pitris*" or "lunar Gods." Mr. Judge describes how this model becomes the basis for the formation of the physical man.

So at the present time the model for the growing child in the womb is the astral body already perfect in shape before the child is born. It is on this the molecules arrange themselves until the child is complete, and the presence of the ethereal design-body will explain how the form grows into shape, how the eyes push themselves out from within to the surface of the face, and many other mysterious matters in embryology which are passed over by medical men with a description but with no explanation. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 44)

The invisible astral body is thus the blue-print or design for the formation of the physical body. The astral body is made up of cosmic or starry matter which is electrical and magnetic in its essence. It has great tensile strength, so that it changes very little during a lifetime. This explains why we have same general appearance from maturity until death. It is elastic, plastic, and extensible to a considerable distance. In it are present the real organs of sight, touch, hearing and smell; outer organs being merely an instrument for making coordination between nature and real organs inside. Astral body has a complete system of nerves and arteries or currents for conveyance of astral fluid or vitality which is like blood to it. In ordinary man, it is present in the physical body like the fibers of the

mango in a mango pulp and hence cannot go more than a few feet from the physical body. But by stringent physical, mental and moral discipline, a person can extricate it from the physical body and use it at will, independent of the physical body. It is through the conscious or unconscious use of this invisible astral body and astral senses, for which space or gross matter are no barriers, that some people have the powers of clairvoyance, clairaudience, apportation (moving the objects without contact), etc.

The astral body of man retains the impressions or record of man's thoughts, feelings, actions and all that ever passed before the person when living. And it is this invisible body which goes to form a ghost or the shell in combination with lower desires and passions of man at death. This shell then throws off these impressions, repeating thoughts and experiences of the dead person, under the conditions provided by the séance room with seeming intelligence that deludes the sitters into thinking that they are communicating with the spirit of the dead. But it is only a shell, the discarded remains, from which the real man had long since fled. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, pp. 45-46)

Prana is the "Life" principle or vitality in man. It is said to be the radiating force or energy of *Atma*. It is a universally pervasive principle. The earth and every being, as it were, floats in the ocean of life. It permeates the globe and every being and every object on it. When we occupy a body, we merely use a more specialized instrument for dealing with *Prana*. *Prana* means breath, and breath is necessary for continuance of life in the human body. When life is withdrawn, the body disintegrates. The organs and tissues in the body absorb life according to their more or less morbid or healthy state.

(*To be concluded*)

KINDNESS is the golden chain by which society is bound together.

—JOHANN GOETHE

## 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:** According to Theosophy, Ego survives the death of the body. A person whose near and dear ones have passed before him, could he or she meet them in the other world, after death, and plan up next earthly life together in any relation? Can intensity of love and affection unite them on a common goal of higher mission or would their individual karma create hindrance to it?

**Answer:** Theosophy points out that after the death of the body the Ego finds itself in a state called *Kama-loka* (purgatory) clothed in another type of body called *kamarupa*. *Kamarupa* is an ethereal body impregnated with earthly or lower desires and passions of the dead person. To plan anything, the Ego must be aware of the presence of other Egos on that same plane, and be able to communicate with them. Mr. Judge says that there are many different kinds of states in *Kama-loka*, and Egos in *Kama-loka* are generally not aware of other egos in that state. If two beings are in *Kama-Loka* state at the same time, and for similar reasons, and with the same magnetic currents, they may recognize each other. However, each Ego is too busy freeing itself from the astral body and passions and desires, preparing to escape to the higher state of consciousness or *Devachan* (*Swarga*), and hence pays no attention to others around him, writes Mr. Judge (*“Forum” Answers*, p. 51)

Next, the real man, the immortal Ego, after shedding the *Kamarupic* body, goes to another state called *devachan* or paradise. It is the state where the Ego takes much needed rest. The stay in *devachan* may be conscious or unconscious. It is stated that a person who lived a morally pure life and believed that soul or consciousness

survives the death of the body, for such a person *devachan* is an idealized and subjective continuation of his earth life. It is a state of complete and unalloyed happiness where the person in *devachan* surrounds himself, *subjectively*, with everyone he loved on earth. On the other hand, a materialist who may be good, but has denied existence of soul or surviving consciousness, will not have *conscious devachan*.

Even when we say that a person has *conscious devachan*, that Ego is not aware of other Egos in *devachan*. Each Ego lives in his own ideal world created by it. When it is time to take the next birth, the ego wakes up from the illusion of *devachan*. The length of stay in *devachan* is different for different souls, and is determined by the unexpended psychic energies and aspirations. If the Ego lived a good life of altruism and compassion, dwelling on the abstractions like music, art, mathematics, then the stay in *devachan* for such an ego is likely to be longer than a materialistic person and even an average good person. Thus, we can see that in the case of ordinary people, there is no scope for planning their next birth *during* the *devachanic* period. Even *after* the period of *devachan* is completed, and when the Ego takes the preview of the Karmic stock, to decide the next environment of its birth, it is not stated that it is able to communicate with other egos in *devachan*. Moreover, since length of stay in *devachan* is different for different people, those who were relatives or loved each other on earth, may not wake up from *devachanic* sleep at one and the same time, or within short period of each other.

It is true that the *Ego* decides the environment in which to take birth, and yet, “coming back to earth in the company of certain individuals,” happens under the law of Karma. Mr. Judge points out that there is no safe ground in calculation about *Devachan* and rebirth based upon the times when people die after or before one another, because each rebirth has power to immensely alter the forces. Two people can meet again after two lives and may be separated for many, many lives before they are able to meet again. “If it were

all an iron bound rule and dependent on man's free will and mental action, it would be easy to calculate." Moreover, in every life the Ego is likely to meet someone who will alter his course of thought, no one can safely say when he will meet again any Ego he has met before, explains Mr. Judge (*"Forum" Answers*, pp. 60-61). However, we are promised that those who love each other or are like unto each other will be born together when conditions permit.

As for the spiritually advanced persons, they are *conscious* after the death of the body, but in their case the Ego does not enter the states of *kamaloka* or *devachan*. Since Adepts and initiates have risen above illusions, they have no *devachan*. Such beings can decide to take birth for accomplishing some work. If the help of other high souls is needed in that work, probably, such beings may plan to take birth more or less at the same time. From the description given by Mr. Judge of his first meeting with H.P.B. we get the feeling that in their case one soul recognized the other, and they had come together to carry on some unfinished work. He writes:

It was her eye that attracted me, the eye of one whom I must have known in lives long passed away. She looked at me in recognition at that first hour....Not as a questioner of philosophies did I come to her...but as one who wandering many periods through corridors of life was seeking friends who could show where the designs for the work had been hidden....It was as if but the evening before we had parted, leaving yet to be done some detail of task taken up with one common end; it was teacher and pupil, elder brother and younger, both bent on the single end. (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 3-4)

**Question:** What is the theosophical interpretation of the Christian "Holy Trinity"?

**Answer:** The trinity of "Father, Mother and Son," of the *Secret Doctrine* is the antitype of the Christian type—Father, Son and Holy Ghost, writes H.P.B. (*Transactions*, p. 37). Antitype means that which is represented by a type or a symbol. According to the Christian

doctrine of Trinity, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost," are three persons in one Godhead, *or*, God exists as three persons, but is one God. In other words, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, have exactly the same powers and attributes as God the Father. God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, and God the Father are infinitely wise, infinitely Holy, eternal, omnipotent and omniscient. Father is God; Holy Ghost is God; and Son is God, but they are not three Gods, but one God. The idea of "Trinity" or "Three Persons in One God," became established as Christian Doctrine, in the 3rd or 4th century A.D., after the document known as *Nicene Creed*. In the *Athanasian Creed* which is a more detailed version of *Nicene Creed*, we are told that in this Trinity, none is before or after the other, none is greater or lesser than the other, but that all three Persons are co-eternal and co-equal.

We can see a great similarity between the teaching of three Logos and the teaching of Christian Trinity of Father, Holy Ghost and Son. *Logos* means outward expression or effect of the concealed cause. The plan for the phenomenal universe resides in the Divine Mind, which is like unexpressed thought. *Manifested Logos* or *Brahma* is the expression of Divinity. The third or manifested logos is the synthesis of creators or intelligent Masons, who fashion matter according to the ideal plan. At the first logos stage the creators exist only as potentiality, and the second logos becomes *abstract* collectivity of creators, or Builders of the Universe.

The three logoi are described as *triple*, yet one in essence. We cannot speak of them in space and time, or being before or after another. The three logoi are the personified symbols of the *three spiritual stages of Evolution*. Thus, Father, represents, Unmanifested stage. The second stage is manifesting, or semi-manifested, represented by "Mother," with a tendency to polarize or differentiate into spirit and matter. The manifested stage is represented by "Son." This trinity of Father, Mother and Son is also represented as Spirit, Substance and Universe; Spirit, Soul and Body; and Universe, Planetary Chain and Earth. In the *Secret Doctrine* (I, 113 fn.), these

stages are described as three strides of Vishnu (*Trivikrama*) which relate metaphysically to the descent of Spirit into matter, of the Logos falling as a ray into the Spirit, then into the Soul and finally into the human physical form of man. These are symbols of Spirit, Soul and Body (MAN) (*S.D.*, I, 113). We might also take Father and Mother to represent creative forces (in potentiality and in abstraction) and the “Son” to represent Universe, the result or effect of those creative and sensitive forces.

In *The Ocean of Theosophy*, Mr. Judge tells us that the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost represents *Atma* (Spirit), *Manas* (Mind or Son) and *Buddhi* (Holy Ghost). In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. tells us that this trinity represents the Holy Ghost, the Father and the Son and answers to abstract spirit, differentiated spirit, and embodied spirit (p. 67 fn.). *Atma* is the abstract spirit, *Buddhi* is the differentiated spirit and *Manas* is the embodied spirit. Gnostic Sophia, or “Wisdom,” is “the Mother” or Aditi of the Hindus, and the Holy Ghost of the Christians (*S.D.*, I, 72 fn.).

The Holy Trinity of the Christians is also comparable to the Hindu *Trimurti*. Thus, *Hiranyagarbha*, *Hari* and *Sankara* (or Brahma, Vishnu and Siva) are the three hypostases, *avasthas*, or the purely metaphysical abstract qualities of formation, preservation and destruction of One Reality. But the *orthodox* Christian separates his *personal* creative Deity into the three personages of the Trinity, and admits of no higher Deity. (*S.D.*, I, 18-19). Quoting from *Padma Purana*, the *Glossary* describes *Trimurti* as the three persons of the one godhead, composed of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. It is Vishnu as *Narayana* who issues from his one side Brahma and from the other Siva, and from his middle portion, Vishnu—the *Trimurti* being personification of the three *gunas*. All the three “persons” of the *Trimurti* are simply the three qualificative *gunas* or attributes of the Universe of differentiated matter. Vishnu himself stands for the *Sattvaguna*, Brahma, the creative power stands for the *Rajoguna* and Siva stands for the *Tamoguna*—stagnation and decay.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Sometimes, taking care of the world outside can massage the ego far more than being there for one’s own close ones, writes Megha Bajaj, a seeker and a regular contributor to the magazine, *Life Positive*. Such a realization dawned on her when she decided to volunteer at an old age home, and her 84-year-old grandmother requested to be taken along, whenever she visited the old-age home. The reason being, the grand-mother wanted to spend some time with her, and the same was never possible at home, because the grand-daughter was always busy. It was an eye-opening and deeply humbling experience for her. As she spent that afternoon with her grandmother, she reflected: “I was feeling so proud of my decision to go to an old age home and envelope the people there with my love and wipe their loneliness away, whereas, here my own grandmother was craving for a single undivided hour from me.” She looked back in her life and realized that there were several instances when she had done something good out of the ego of doing something good. It is good to work and make a difference to the society, but first you must be there for those closest to you. “Buying a gift for the neighbour’s child is bound to be greatly appreciated whereas being there for one’s own child may always be taken for granted. Yet, it is from my own home that I need to begin to make a difference,” observes Bajaj. (*Life Positive*, March 2011)

We are often reminded of the saying, “Charity begins at home, but it never stops there”—the emphasis being on expanding the circle of love and concern. But, these days especially, we are in need of reverse reminder. To boost our ego, or simply to get away from home, some of us take up social work, neglecting the duty towards our families. Often, those who dedicate themselves to some noble cause of social or national reform have no time for their own families, and as a result, the virtues and values they are trying to inculcate in the society are found to be lacking in their own children.

If we shirk family duty, some day we might discover with shock



that this tendency extends in all directions. Some day we might find ourselves becoming apathetic to our nation, to our own divine nature, and even to mankind. “From the loving example of one family a whole state may become loving; and from its courtesies, courteous,” says Confucius. Explaining the importance of family duties, a Master of wisdom writes:

Does it seem to you a small thing that the past year has been spent only in your “family duties”? Nay, but what better cause for reward, what better discipline, than the daily and hourly performance of duty? Believe me my “pupil,” the man or woman who is placed by Karma in the midst of small plain duties and sacrifices and loving-kindnesses, will through these faithfully fulfilled rise to the larger measure of Duty, Sacrifice and Charity to all Humanity.

It is only by careful performance of small plain duties that we are fitted for greater duties. If we are restless, or feel bored attending to prolonged sickness of an old parent, do we think we would be able to serve humanity, life after life? It is no use coveting responsibilities of proven souls, without deserving.

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In the novel, *Dying Inside*, by Robert Silverberg, the protagonist David is able to read other people’s minds and he presumes that like him others could do the same. When Ankit Ajmera, a reporter for *Mumbai Mirror* newspaper, read this novel, he went hunting for a telepath, to learn telepathy, as he was of the opinion that there would be less misunderstanding in the world if people could read each others’ minds through telepathy. When he met Rustum Taraporewala, a telepath, he was told that “the purpose of telepathy was not to read someone’s mind. It could only be used to deliver and receive messages, just like an instant Messenger. Telepathy generally works between two people who know each other well, such as, spouses, friends, siblings and close relatives.” “According

to Taraporewala, telepathy works because there is one large cosmic tower, a bit like a cell phone tower, on planet Earth. This facilitates transmission of brain waves between individuals,” writes Ankit Ajmera (*Mumbai Mirror*, April 21, 2011). Telepathic occurrences are not rare, only we are not aware of them. For instance, when we are thinking about a person close to us, we find that very person calls up or we may find him standing at our door, explains Taraporewala. Our brain is like a gun, and the person to whom we wish to send message is like a target. One must learn to concentrate well and focus on the message one wishes to send out, says Taraporewala.

Telepathy is the communicating of thought or idea from mind to mind, at no matter what distance. It is a natural power. Among birds and beasts, telepathy is instinctually performed. We are using telepathy every day, in common life, in our communication with each other. Every thought produces an image or a picture. Telepathy is closely related to clairvoyance, which is the ability to see with the inner senses, pictures and images in the astral light or in the mind of another. It is with the aid of this power of clairvoyance that we are able to convey to another any idea whatsoever, says Mr. Judge.

A person, who considers telepathy to be a mere superstition, will not be able to exercise this power. And yet, it is possible to bring this art to perfection and exercise the power against obstacles and distance. The *rationale* of telepathy is that if two minds vibrate or change into the same state they will think alike, *i.e.*, receive the impression sent by the other. “When two minds are sympathetically related, and the instruments [brains] through which they function are tuned to respond magnetically and electrically to one another, there will be transmission of thoughts from one to the other, at will.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 289)

Some of the experiments in telepathy were carried out by M. Warcollier, a French chemical engineer, in 1940. He suggested that to succeed in sending a message telepathically, the sender should think intensely. It would help if the receiver tries to go in imagination

towards the sender, using photographs, letters or any other objects belonging to the sender. This will help to create “telepathic atmosphere.”

It is fine for impersonal scientific investigation to test one’s ability of mind-reading, with consent and co-operation of that person, but it is quite another matter to read another’s mind without his permission or try to impose our thought and thus influence another mind. So long as we are not free from human weaknesses, trying to use telepathy consciously would be dangerous, because one is likely to have almost irresistible temptation to pry into another’s mind out of curiosity or make a mental suggestion. Even to send a strong thought to a particular person, asking that person to ring up, or concentrate one’s thoughts on a person and make him turn his head, is undesirable.

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People who are in search of deeper meaning and purpose of life, sometimes experience, what has been described as a spiritual emergency, religious crisis or, more metaphorically, as the “dark night of the soul,” by the 16th century Spanish poet and mystic, Saint John of the Cross. The “dark night of the soul” is spoken of in almost all the religious traditions and it is considered to be a phase in a person’s spiritual life, marked by loneliness and desolation. It is looked upon as a test of faith, endurance, inner purification and surrender. It is annihilation of a previous lifestyle and the beginning of a new one, bringing on an internal crisis of identity, uncertainty, confusion and unspeakable despair. Mother Teresa is said to have endured such a crisis from 1948 until almost her death.

In Buddhist *Vipassana* meditation, the practitioner passes through “Sixteen Stages of Insight,” of which five steps focus on “Knowledge of Suffering,” which include knowledge of fearfulness and Disgust, and a beginner is cautioned not to take these steps lightly. Unfortunately, behavioural scientists have regarded this

phenomenon as a temporary aberration, self-induced delusion or even a full-blown psychiatric affliction. As a result, people undergoing spiritual crisis were institutionalized and even drugged, often against their wishes.

However, in the recent years, a new category called “Religious and Spiritual Problems,” is included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* published by the American Psychiatric Association, where such distressing experiences are acknowledged as being non-pathological. The inclusion of this new category is envisaged to encourage clinical training centres to address the religious and spiritual dimensions of human existence. Such sudden paradigm shift has been attributed to Transpersonal psychology, which has its roots in the works of William James and Carl Jung. “Its practitioners are particularly interested in the many ways of expanding human consciousness and in the synthesis of Eastern and Western thought—a perspective based on the reality of a higher or deeper self within every individual that monitors our lives.... There is no doubt it will also contribute to a greater understanding between science and religion in the future,” writes Mukul Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree*, [*The Times of India*], March 27, 2011)

Theosophical teachings draw attention to sevenfold constitution of man, and to the importance of middle principles, of *kama* (passions and desires) and lower mind, to understand strange psychic phenomena. Likewise, cognizance must be taken of higher spiritual principles to correctly understand spiritual phenomena. While science is skeptical and brushes aside certain phenomena as fraud, religion tends to regard them as supernatural occurrences, attributing them to supernatural powers or Will of God.

Another case in point is insanity. In *Vernal Blooms*, in the article on “Occult Vibrations,” H.P.B. explains that in case of colour blind man, the same amount of vibrations corresponding to red colour, say, reach his physical eyes. But the physical eyes pick up or perceive only certain amount of vibrations, while the astral senses are able to see the true colour—picking up correct number of vibrations.

However, the perception of the physical eye overcomes the astral perception and hence the astral man reports to the brain whatever is reported by the physical eyes. In many cases of lunacy the confusion among the vibrations of all kinds is so enormous that there is no correlation between the inner and the outer man and then we have a case of aberration. And then in some of these unfortunate cases the person inside is all the time aware that he is not insane, but cannot make himself be understood. Thus, people are often driven really insane by wrong treatment.

Similarly, while discussing reports of magnetic phenomena produced in the presence of peculiarly endowed individuals, H.P.B. points out that these strange happenings were not supernatural, but simply expressions of unknown laws of nature, which science must investigate. Thus, for instance, there was the case of a farm-servant in Russia, who attracted all objects to herself. When she stretched out her hand to get some piece of crockery from the shelf, other earthenware plates and cups would begin to jump and tremble, and then fall with a crash at her feet. While spiritualists attributed these to “spirit” agencies, only one researcher was willing to explore the occurrences, and that was Baron Von Reichenbach of Vienna. He stated that the body of a human being is filled with an aura, “dynamide,” “fluid,” vapour or influence and it is specially given off at the head, hands and feet, and it is polar, like the aura from the magnet. Reichenbach remarked that to the magnetic force as it exists in the magnetic needle and lodestone, we must add this force, which he called *odyle*, and stated that magnetism is a compound instead of a simple force. He observed that similar aura or power existed also around the crystals. However, human body is, at times, *abnormally charged with vital magnetism* and gives out true magnetic aura like in lodestone.