

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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ON CHANCE AND UNCERTAINTY

SOME people believe that there are fixed laws governing the universe, but these laws are framed by a personal God. There are many events happening in the course of life, which we are unable to explain and then we attribute “chance” as their cause. Those who believe in a personal God account for this “chance” as the conscious exercise of the will of God for the good of his creatures. An instance is quoted to support this view. A certain person was sleeping in a room, as always he had kept by his side, a lantern and a stick. In the middle of the night he woke up on his own, lighted the lantern and leaped out of his bed, with stick in his hand. He looked up and saw a snake just above his bed. Just then the snake dropped down on the floor, which he threw out with the stick. This is considered to be *extraordinary phenomenon*, indicating “protecting hand of God.” The person narrating this incident has questioned that it is true that there are fixed laws of nature reigning in this universe, but these gaps called accidents, must be filled before we can accept the theory of an “Impersonal God.”

H.P.B. comments that considering that the incident happened in India, which is a country full of snakes, and given the understanding that people do wake up unconsciously and at the slightest noise, there is nothing extraordinary about this incident. It is absurd to say that it is the result of the will of the personal God. Instead of acting as body-guard to every man, woman and child, she argues that this

personal God could have, by a simple exercise of his will, either kept the snake away, or still better, not to have created snakes at all!

Likewise, in *The Theosophist* of February 1884, Dr. C. W. Rohner, contributed some interesting facts about people being found uninjured after falling out of fast-moving trains, or having other “miraculous” escapes from impending dangers, and seeking explanation for the same. H.P.B. mentions that some people might look upon these events as chance or miracle, while others may explain them on the basis of spirits, guarding and protecting these individuals, or as plain *Divine Providence*. Are we to believe that those individuals thus saved were important units of humanity, while thousands of those who die in man-made and natural calamities are useless dross, with no “spirit hand” to protect them?

H.P.B. narrates two other cases of “chance” or “miraculous” escape. In one case, two lap dogs who were madly chasing each other fell from the terrace of a house over sixty feet high. They remained unhurt, except for stiffness in the limbs. In another case, a young squirrel fell out of its nest and a voracious crow pounced upon it and caught it in its mouth for a second. Then, as if struck with some thought, he dropped it out of its mouth and flew lazily away, giving the mother-squirrel enough time to rescue her little one. Had these dogs and squirrel also “guardian-spirits” to protect them, or was it due to *chance*? asks H.P.B. Karma alone can explain such cases of unexpected escapes.

Chance, says H.P.B., is most certainly impossible. There is no “chance” in Nature, wherein everything is mathematically co-ordinate and mutually related in its units. “Chance” says Coleridge, “is but the pseudonym of God (or Nature), for those particular cases which He does not choose to subscribe openly with His sign manual.” Replace the word “God” by that of *Karma* and it will become an Eastern axiom (*S.D.*, I, 653). In other words, we might say that everything happens under the law. But occurrences for which we are not able to discover some obvious cause, we try to explain them away as “chance.” For instance, why are some children born

blind, lame, or with some congenital disease? Why does a good man suffer in spite of doing well? It is as if his good actions are bringing him bad results. Is it chance? The answer, in all these cases is that they are suffering the result of the cause sown in some past life.

Did our universe happen by chance? “Chance” also denotes randomness, and absence of plan, design or pattern. The modern Intelligent Design theory is the revival of an argument made by the British philosopher William Paley, in 1802, that unlike the stone, a watch appears purposely assembled and would not function without its precise combination of parts. Hence, “the watch must have a maker.” Paley argued that along similar lines, the complexity of certain biological structures implies *design*. Darwin’s answer to Paley’s argument was that natural selection could create the *appearance* of design. Darwin postulated a *series of natural forces working blindly—without aim and without design*. In the article, “Which is Vague, Theosophy or Science?,” Mr. Judge describes this as a wild and fanciful theory. There is not a single proof in the present life, in any of the lower kingdoms, of blind forces beginning work without design and finally producing a beautiful design, visible in the smallest form we see. It is like saying that if you leave a bunch of monkeys with a typewriter, in sufficiently long time they might produce a Shakespearean novel. The evolutionary theory put forward by Theosophy admits of both intelligence and design. The whole Kosmos is guided, controlled and animated by an endless series of Hierarchies of sentient beings or conscious Divine Powers who are agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws and they are “intelligent Beings who adjust and control evolution.”

Everything in the universe is governed by Law. We observe the working of this law in every department and kingdom of Nature. On the physical plane, we observe that when we sow corn, we reap corn, not strawberries or mangoes. If we eat rotten food it leads to indigestion. Similarly, in the psychic realm, we observe that watching obscene movies or reading trash books leaves an impression in our

minds and the same surfaces in our unguarded moments and throws us off-balance. Why then should there not be laws governing the entire universe and everything within the universe? The Law of Karma and the Law of Cycles are the supreme laws governing the universe. Cycle means return of that which was before. A universe comes into existence and goes out of existence, periodically, and within the universe there are major and minor cycles—cycle of seasons, cycle of four *yugas*, cycle of birth and death, etc. Cycles are the clocks of Karma.

The alternatives to “chance” are Law and “choice,” or “free will.” According to the Theological concept of Determinism everything in the universe happens in a particular way only because the universe is the creature of an all-powerful and an all-knowing God. The modern theories of determinism say that human actions are determined by social, economic or family environment of the individuals. A man steals because he is hungry. But because he is hungry, must he steal? Not all hungry men steal. Then perhaps he steals because he has been taught that stealing is permissible. Because of his wrong upbringing must he steal whenever he feels hungry? The choice is always ours.

Closely related to the concept of chance is the idea of uncertainty. Most of us live programmed lives, expecting that our life will go on following the same daily routine, with unchanging sameness. However, we are rudely awakened and shaken up, when uncertainty of life hits us in the face, at some time or other. We hear people say at sudden death of someone: “I met him just yesterday. He was hale and hearty. I never expected that I will never see him again.” After being happily married for 10, 15 or 20 years many have to undergo the unexpected trauma of separation or divorce. It takes only one earthquake or tsunami to reduce the rich and famous to the life of utter destitution and hardship. An intelligent and promising young man takes to drinks and drugs and ends up becoming a gangster. Such are the uncertainties of life, and they are not by sheer chance. When there are sudden reverses of fortune or changes for the better,

either in circumstances or character, it may be explained on the basis of Karma. It simply shows that one has come to a point in life where all previous causes being exhausted, new karma, or that which is unexpended (stored up), begins to operate.

The great French engineer, de Lesseps, was raised to a high pitch of glory for many years of his life, when he built the Suez Canal, but he was suddenly brought to disrepute and shame, through Panama Canal Scandal. We also have the example of Napoleon I, who rose to a very great fame, and then suddenly fell and died in exile and disgrace. When one kind of karma ceases to operate another set begins to precipitate. Through the uncertainties of life, we gradually acquire the wisdom to live one day at a time. We learn not to take people and circumstances for granted. We become acutely aware of impermanence of things. A little girl who unexpectedly lost her grandfather was so shaken by the suddenness of his death that she was obsessed with making sure that things were going as she had desired or planned. As a child, when she saw her mother sleeping, she would put her palm near her nostrils to make sure she was breathing. She soon realized the futility of trying to control things in her life, too afraid to leave anything to chance, and thus secure a semblance of certainty. Parents that have lost a child at young age tend to be extremely protective about the remaining children.

You may not be able to execute even your best of plans, and even if you are able to, they may not bear desired fruit. Hence, Mr. Judge says, “An occultist is never fixed on any particular mortal plan. So, do not fix your mind as yet on any particular plan. Wait. All things come to him who waits in the right way.” Lord Buddha, the greatest psychologist of all time, remarks, “‘Here shall I pass the monsoon; there shall I dwell in winter and summer.’ This is foolish reflection. He does not consider obstacles of existence.” Buddhist monks survive on what is put into their begging bowls. They are supposed to beg at fixed number of houses, two or three or four. One has to eat what is put into the bowl, mixing everything together,

without any concern for the taste. The day one finds nothing in the bowl one must be prepared to go without food. An ordinary person, on the other hand, takes all the care to provide for the future, making right kind of investments in gold, shares, bonds and property.

Under the law of Karma that works unerringly, impersonally and impartially, “the ocean of life washes to our feet and away again, things that are both hard to lose and unpleasant to welcome, yet they all belong to life, all come from the Great Self,” says Mr. Judge. Instead of trying to keep the rod of uncertainty entirely at bay, by clever planning and maneuvering, one might learn to cultivate detached attachment, determined to “suffer or enjoy whatever the Higher Self has in store for one by way of discipline and experience.” The calculation, “which way can I be safe?” does not work. Hiranyakashipu, the father of Prahalada, was the Daitya king, and the boon he extracted from Brahma, as a result of great austerities, was that he would not be destroyed by a common animal or man; he would die neither in the day or night, he would not die by weapon, he would not die inside or outside the house, and so on. Thus, he thought he had made himself invulnerable. Yet, at one occasion, Vishnu in the form of half-man and half-lion, came forth from the pillar, laid hold of the Daitya king by the thighs with his teeth and tore him up in the middle, standing on the threshold of the house, at twilight!

To embrace uncertainty whole-heartedly, is to have faith in the law. It means complete surrender to what the law brings, knowing it to be necessary for one’s growth and experience, and hence it must be something that one’s Ego desires and requires. In his book, *A New Earth*, Eckhart Tolle writes: “If uncertainty is unacceptable to you, it turns into fear. If it is perfectly acceptable, it turns into increased aliveness, alertness, and creativity.”

H. P. BLAVATSKY AND HER BOOKS

II

THE SECOND of her great books is *The Secret Doctrine*, “the synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy,” published in London in 1888. It has been called the Text-Book of the 20th Century. Vast in scope, it takes the reader back through millennia of time and opens before the mind’s eye the whole panorama of cosmic manifestation, of involution and evolution. This work also is in two volumes, one dealing with *Cosmogenesis* and the other with *Anthropogenesis*—the study of the cosmos and of man. It is based on the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, which antedate the Vedas. These Stanzas are the “records of a people unknown to ethnology; it is claimed that they are written in a tongue absent from the nomenclature of languages and dialects with which philology is acquainted.” It is further stated in the Introductory that “the SECRET DOCTRINE is not a treatise, or a series of vague theories, but contains all that can be given out to the world in this century.” The whole philosophy of Theosophy is based on the true concept of God-Law-Evolution explained in the book and known to students as the Three Fundamental Propositions of the Secret Doctrine, and these are to be used in every event of life as basic principles.

Commenting upon each “Stanza,” H.P.B. gives profound knowledge about the worlds invisible from which the visible manifests, and of which it is a reflection. She shows the differentiation of the one into many, through seven hierarchies of beings, indicating unity in diversity. She traces the evolution of Rounds and Races, and Chains of Globes, and how the One homogeneous gave birth to the heterogeneous. Symbols and glyphs are explained in a vivid manner. We get to know of submerged continents with their great civilizations, of the birth of self-consciousness in mindless primitive man and of man’s ultimate destiny. The Law of Cycles, of Karma and Reincarnation, is explained. If the book is studied subject by subject, and not merely read page by page, it will yield much more

and expand the understanding of the student, making him more intuitive and self-reliant. It gives us new values, changes our outlook on life and life's problems, and not only expands the mental horizon but also deepens the heart perception.

In the last century, great interest was evinced in the scholarly researches of Sanskritists and Orientalists, and in ancient religions, myths and emblems. These, however, were often distorted and gave out "the rude outward form in place of the inner meaning." This, H.P.B. says in the Introductory,

is the true reason, perhaps, why the outline of a few fundamental truths from the Secret Doctrine of the Archaic ages is now permitted to see the light, after long millenniums of the most profound silence and secrecy. I say "a few truths," advisedly, because that which must remain unsaid could not be contained in a hundred such volumes, nor could it be imparted to the present generation of Sadducees.

So, in these two volumes, misconceptions had to be removed and right ideas given out. Present-day scientists would make great strides if they heeded the scientific teachings contained in this work. For instance, in this atomic age, scientists would do well to consider what is said about an atom—"the most metaphysical object in creation" (I, 485). "Every atom in the Universe had the potentiality of self-consciousness in it, and is, like the Monads of Leibnitz, a Universe in itself, and *for* itself." (I, 107)

This Work H.P.B. dedicated "to all True Theosophists, in every Country, and of every Race, for they called it forth, and for them it was recorded." This shows the progressive advancement that had taken place since *Isis Unveiled* was published. Much had happened during those 11 years and the time was ripe for the publication of *The Secret Doctrine*. Madame Blavatsky had already been to India, formed centres of work there, started the Magazine *The Theosophist*, and, returning to Europe, had settled in London. By then, Theosophy had gained ground in all countries, and educated people had begun to show interest. The book was not written by H.P.B. alone and

unaided; it was *recorded* under the guidance of the Masters. As is stated in the Preface, "It is needless to explain that this book is not the Secret Doctrine in its entirety, but a select number of fragments of its fundamental tenets, special attention being paid to some facts which have been seized upon by various writers, and distorted out of all resemblance to the truth." So all these facts have to be noted in understanding the dedication of *The Secret Doctrine*, which shows how H.P.B. was working in terms of the need of the hour. She did not do anything haphazardly, but gave out that portion of the Secret Doctrine which the world was ready to receive.

In the year 1889 was published *The Key to Theosophy*, the third of H.P.B.'s great books. Its title-page describes it as "a clear exposition, in the form of question and answer, of the Ethics, Science, and Philosophy for the study of which the Theosophical Society has been founded." As stated by H.P.B. in the Preface, it is "a key to unlock the door that leads to the deeper study." What Theosophy is and how it originated, the aims, objectives and programme of the original Theosophical Society, fundamental Theosophical teachings such as those relating to God and prayer, the constitution of Nature and of Man, states after death, and spiritistic phenomena, Karma and Reincarnation, the Theosophical Mahatmas and how they work—all this and more is explained in simple language. The book is divided into Sections, each containing several sub-sections. There is a Section dealing with "Practical Theosophy," in which she gives true concepts about Duty, Political Reforms, Self-Sacrifice, Charity, Theosophy for the Masses. All these subjects energize the student and help him in living the Life. It is interesting to note what Gandhiji wrote about this book, in his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*: "I recall having read...Madame Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy*. This book stimulated in me the desire to read books on Hinduism, and disabused me of the notion fostered by the missionaries that Hinduism was rife with superstition."

(To be concluded)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE HONOUR SYSTEM

“FOR the examination this year,” the Headmaster told the assembled school, the day before the examinations would begin, “we have decided to adopt the Honour System. There will be no invigilator responsible for making sure that there is no communication between students. A teacher will be sitting on the platform to give more answer sheets if they are needed and to say when the time is up, but he will be reading a book, not watching you. You will each be handed the examination paper and answer sheets as you go in; and you will hand in your answer sheets filled in, as you go out.”

The Headmaster may have noted pleased expressions on some faces, for he hastened to add: “Don’t think this is a relaxation of strictness. It is only putting the responsibility on each of you. At the end of the last sheet there will be this statement, to which each one must sign his name: “I state on my honour that I have neither given nor received help in this examination.”

A boy stood up and asked: “Sir, what if we have been coached for the examination or we have helped somebody else to study for it?”

“That isn’t meant at all,” the Headmaster explained. “The statement means only that you have not given help or received help from any other boy during the time of the examination. And remember,” he added solemnly, “you are on your honour; you are being trusted, and to betray a trust is a very shameful thing.”

The assembly dismissed, the boys filed out silently, as was the rule, but outside in the compound there was a babel of voices commenting on the change. Most seemed to think it good.

“I never copy anybody’s answer, but it makes me nervous, feeling I am being watched.”

“Me, too, and if the invigilator sees a note passed and calls somebody up it puts your mind all off the questions.”

“It makes you feel inches taller to be trusted,” one boy exclaimed,

and several said, “That’s right.”

“It does not matter who sits next to you this year. No one can help you,” one boy, not among the brightest or most conscientious, remarked.

“Nobody could before without taking a long chance,” another retorted.

“No, but a teacher can’t look everywhere at once; and honour can,” another boy contributed.

“That’s a funny way to put it,” another laughed. “It’s just your own conscience anyway.”

“I can’t explain it,” the former answered, “but this is something even more.”

“That’s right Dick,” Roy Tucker, one of the best students, said; and he turned and walked silently and soberly away.

“It isn’t that I would copy, Mother” Roy explained at home; “but with us sitting two on a bench, each two at a long desk, it could be a big temptation for a boy who didn’t know an answer to copy from the fellow next to him; and it could be a big temptation to let him do it, especially if he had been out sick a lot, like poor Ned. And Ned might easily sit with me, because he knows I’m his friend.”

“I am glad that you feel sorry for Ned and want to help him, Son. If you had coached him and prepared him for the examination that would have been a real help, wouldn’t it?”

“I ought to have done that, Mother, but I didn’t think of it.”

“It is a pity, of course, that Ned is not properly prepared, but do you think it would do him any real good, if he has not learned what was taught in your standard, to go on to the next one?”

Roy shook his head doubtfully.

“But that’s not the chief question, is it, Son? It seems to me that there are values a good deal more important than passing an examination can ever be, and that if you and Ned signed on your honour something that wasn’t true it would weaken your character and undermine your self-respect and so would do you both great harm.”

The boy remaining silent, his mother added, “You are old enough to make your own moral decision, Son—and take the consequences that we know Karma is sure to bring. But let us see if Madame Blavatsky has not said anything in the section on ‘Duty’ that might make things plainer.”

She took the well-worn copy of *The Key to Theosophy* from the shelf and leafed it through till she came to this injunction: “...if he thinks it the right thing to do, let him do it openly and boldly, and if wrong, never touch it at all.”

Mrs. Tucker read it aloud to Roy, adding, “I know from experience that that one rule can save us from many a pitfall. Could you let Ned copy from your paper ‘openly and boldly,’ Son?”

“Of course I couldn’t Mother,” he admitted. “I could sign only ‘I have not received any help.’ That would be as much as saying ‘I have given help to somebody else,’ and then the boy who had sat beside me would catch it.”

“You know it would be wrong to sign on your honour anything that wasn’t true?”

“Of course, Mother!”

“Perhaps what would help you most, Roy, when you find yourself balked in a kind plan, is something Mr. Judge once wrote that has helped me many a time. He said: ‘Those plans we make may all be made ignorantly and thus wrongly, and kind nature will not permit us to carry them out. We get no blame for the plan, but we acquire Karmic demerit by not accepting the impossibility of achieving.’ Helping another is a good motive, but the method also has to be good, or we may hurt him and ourselves—and others who may follow our example.”

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

—W. Q. JUDGE

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

IMPURITY—II

THE CHAPTER is called *Malavaggo* or “Impurity.” Impurity can be at physical, emotional, intellectual and even at spiritual level. It signifies unwholesome state of body, emotions or mind. Impurity implies deterioration and decay, and hence impermanence. Why did Buddha consider it important to speak on this unpleasant subject? It is because the state of purity or impurity not only affects our present life but also our states after death and the next birth. In the Thirteenth Chapter of the *Gita*, even Shri Krishna asks us to meditate upon birth, death, decay, sickness and error. Such a meditation would help us to realize what is permanent and what is impermanent in life. It would enable us to appreciate the role played by body, emotions, intellect, and things and beings in attaining spiritual perfection. It gives us a balanced view of life so that we would not neglect these things but give them just enough attention, as we would in maintenance of an instrument to ensure that it fulfills its purpose. The Buddha tells us about various types of impurities and urges us to undertake purification without delay. However, he asks us to proceed slowly but steadily. He asks us to practice non-covetousness, contentment, abstaining from fault-finding and criticism of others. He tells us that when we neglect observance of *Panchashila*, which forbids killing, speaking untruth, stealing, adultery and use of intoxicants, we degrade and destroy ourselves.

1. *Lo! you are now like a withered leaf. The messengers of Yama (Death) are fast approaching you. You stand on the threshold of departure. And you have made no provision for the journey. (235)*

2. *Be wise. Make for yourself an island. Strive quickly. Purged of stains and sinless you will be ready for heaven, the world of the elect. (236)*

3. *Your life has now drawn to a close. You are approaching the King of Death, Yama. There is no rest-house*

on the way. And you have made no provision for the journey.
(237)

4. *Be wise. Make for yourself an island. Strive quickly.*
Purged of stains and sinless you will not return to birth and
decay. (238)

In these verses the Buddha asks man of the world to wake up before it is too late. He tells him to prepare himself for the great journey—the journey after death. All scriptures ask us to make provision for this journey. It is the journey to heaven or *Zannat* or *Swarga*. However, only those who have made provision for the journey may go to heaven, not all. Most scriptures also point out that after death, man may go to heaven or to hell depending upon the kind of life he has lived. They speak of the good, pious, virtuous man going to heaven and the cruel, evil and vicious man going to hell after death.

Unfortunately, we do not realize that each passing day brings us nearer to death. But when there is old age or critical illness, the inevitability of death hits us. We find that we are not ready to face death. But there is no escape. “Death is certain to all things that are born and rebirth to all mortals,” says Shri Krishna. “Death comes and carries off the man absorbed in cattle and children,” says the Buddha. And because our state after death depends upon what we do now, when we are alive, he asks us to make provision for the journey-after-death, while we are live.

This brings us to an important question. What is it that we can carry with us after death? What is it that will help us in making our journey to heaven smooth and swift? And the answer is that you do not carry with yourself your earthly possessions, money, power, position, status, academic qualifications, name and fame, etc. You carry with yourself your noble deeds and aspirations, unselfish love, sympathy and kindness for others, love for abstract things such as music, painting, sculpting, etc. Therefore, at the end of each day, we can review our day to see whether our time was spent on things that matter, or the things that do not matter much. We may argue:

“But I have to earn in order to sustain myself and my family.” “I need some rest and relaxation.” Very well! But it should not take up *all* your time so that you are left with no time for giving a helping hand to someone who has fallen down, or giving a sympathetic ear to troubled friend, or wiping tears from the eyes of the child who has broken his only toy, or say a few encouraging words to the youngster who feels tormented with self-doubt and lack of confidence. There must be some impersonal, unselfish and uplifting moments in our life each day, the prompting for which came straight from heart and not from our calculating and scheming mind. This is the harvest which the soul can carry with itself to heaven. If you have not gathered that soul-wealth while you are alive, you are unprepared to undertake the journey that takes you to heaven.

In the olden days, people used to prepare many months in advance before undertaking a long journey, especially to unknown lands. The journey was often by a bullock-cart or a boat and at times on feet, full of hardships, taking rest at the inns on the way. But in the journey after death there is no pause or resting place to re-charge ourselves. Whatever we need for that journey has to be gathered now. Hence, Buddha asks us to strive quickly, remove impurities and become sinless. He asks us to make an island which “no flood may overwhelm”—the island of good thoughts and deeds to which we may retire in the hour of need for guidance. In the ocean of deceptive world, which makes us see things unreal as the real, and the real as the unreal, we need an island which stands firm against the waves of the ocean. It is also the island of the inner, real self within; it remains unmoved through the vicissitudes of life. When we begin to live from the standpoint of the real self within, we would be ready to welcome death when the time comes. Then, the desire to live on, at any cost, would cease.

(To be continued)

SLEEP, DREAMS AND DREAMLESS SLEEP

IV

DURING sleep the astral body or *Linga Sarira*, the model or design body for the physical body, remains close to the sleeping form. However, it could be projected by some powerful desire generated in the higher *Manas* (mind), says H.P.B. While describing three kinds of astral body, in *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, H.P.B. speaks of *Linga Sarira* as the “Double” around which the physical body is formed. This double is born with man and dies with man and can never separate itself too far away from the body. It disintegrates *pari passu* with the body. She calls this “double,” as *Linga Sarira* or Plastic body. Since *Linga sarira* exists within the physical, as fibres of the mango in the mango pulp, projection of the *Linga sarira*, in a normal person (other than a medium) seems to be rare, and that is why perhaps we are told that most of us remain quite close to our slumbering form during sleep. However, during sleep, some powerful desire in the Higher *Manas*, can bring about its projection. It is difficult to comment on the nature of such desire.

Linga Sarira is connected to the physical form through a material cord and if it snaps, then it would result in death. Probably, that is why it is said that we should wake up the sleeping person, gently, for, “he is hard to heal, if his soul return not back to him.” In *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, H.P.B. mentions another type of astral body called *Mayavi Rupa*, which gets projected, especially when there is intense desire or thought in the dying person to meet another person. Then *Mayavi rupa*, which is the mirror image of the person, appears. *Mayavi rupa* is described as the result of unconscious exercise of *Kriya-sakti* or power of thought. It is in fact described as walking thought. It can pass anywhere. H.P.B. points out that in black Magic the sorcerer may evoke the *Mayavi rupa* of the sleeping person and learn from the apparition any secret he chooses, and the sleeper may be quite ignorant of what is occurring. If the sorcerer is not at a long distance then even *Linga Sarira* may be invoked, but it can

neither speak nor give any information. Here again H.P.B. suggests that when *Linga Sarira* is called by the sorcerer, it could get forcibly separated from the physical, and then the person may die in sleep.

Such happenings are rare. It appears that a Black Magician should be able to call the “double” of a passive or sensitive person. In *The Ocean of Theosophy* Mr. Judge mentions that the spirits of living men, sometimes visit the séance room, while their bodies are asleep, and take part in the activities there. But they generally do not recollect having visited the séance. It could be because they are passive, or it could be because they have cultivated an affinity for the séance rooms, in the present life or some past life. (p. 53)

The state of passivity is dangerous. Those individuals who remain passive most of the time, staring at a spot on the wall and the like, and are influenced by others to an abnormal extent, gradually slip into mediumship. Generally, passivity paralyzes the connection between the lower and higher principles—the connection with the divine nature is almost ruptured. In case of a medium, or the person who has made himself passive during his waking hours, even his divine nature is unable to protect him during sleep. Hence, for instance, H.P.B. points out that sometimes a person may dream of an entity in *Kama loka*, but then such a dream is likely to be a nightmare. If the dreaming person happens to be a medium or someone who has made himself passive during waking hours by wrong practices, then he runs the risk of being possessed by this entity in *Kama loka*.

Regarding a dreamer making connection with an entity in *Kama Loka*, there was a case mentioned in *The Theosophical Movement*, (Vol. 22), which was earlier reported by Sir Roderick Jones in “A Life in Reuters.” It is the case of Sir Roderick, who was on a world tour and stayed at a Government guest house in Singapore, where he had a very real and nightmarish dream. In this dream, he found himself entering into his room in the very guest suite in which he was then staying and found Lord Northcliffe in his bed, recovering from an illness. Lord Northcliffe glared at him and spoke harshly

to him. Then, leaping out of bed, he chased him down the corridors and up stairways. Terrified, Sir Roderick woke up to find to his relief that it was only a dream. Lord Northcliffe had long been a foe to Reuters, but had later reconciled. Later, Sir Roderick discovered that Lord Northcliffe had died two years ago, but a year before he died, he had undertaken similar tour round the world and stayed in the very same guest suite which he was then occupying. One night he was taken ill in that very room and in that identical bed. It is explained that the vividness of the dream and violent animosity displayed by the entity, could be possibly because Sir Roderick had dreamt of an entity in *Kama Loka*, and not a mere floating shell, but a shade of the dead, galvanized into life by the “Brothers of the Shadow,” (Black magicians). Fortunately, since Sir Roderick was free from passivity, he could come out of the encounter undisturbed, thereby avoiding the risk of becoming “possessed” by such an entity.

We see from the analysis of different kinds of dreams that: (a) It is very important to be able to bring to the waking state the experiences of dreamless sleep state, and (b) it is equally important to be able to interpret these dreams. It is said that a dream that is not understood is like a letter that is not opened. We are the only ones who can interpret our dreams. Just as in waking life thoughts of different people are different, so also dream is peculiar to a person. Except for an Adept who can look into the inner nature of a person and be able to interpret the dream, no other person, or dream books can do this accurately.

It is because, most of the time we are unable to remember dreams that we wake up feeling that we did not dream. H.P.B. mentions that all of us dream more or less, but with most of us dreams vanish suddenly upon waking. “Unspiritual men, and those who do not exercise their imaginative faculties, or those whom manual labour has exhausted, so that the ganglia do not act even mechanically during rest, dream rarely, if ever, with any coherence,” writes H.P.B.

Our ability to remember the real dreams depends upon the state of our consciousness before falling asleep. In the article “The

Psychology of Dreams” (*Theosophy*, Vol. 6), we are told that various classes of dreams are but the impressions made on the brain; and brain is the instrument of lower mind or waking human consciousness. The experiences remembered are subject to the limitation of the brain instrument, which could be palimpsest, in which case impressions from the higher states get mixed up with the impressions made in the waking state. Palimpsest means the manuscript which is written over twice. The first writing is rubbed and written over with something else, thereby causing confusion. Hence, the brain can act as a dull surface, mirroring shadows and distorted images. It can act as a polished surface, when it reflects brilliantly but evanescently. It can also be like a sensitive photographic plate, and then it will faithfully mirror and retain every impression of the soul.

To be able to remember dreams, the brain must be made porous and receptive. We are told that by living according to the dictates of the soul the brain may be made porous to the soul’s recollections. Our ability to recollect real dreams depends upon the ability of the inner Ego to impress the physical brain of the outer man. This in turn depends upon the spirituality or otherwise [materiality or sensuality] of the inner man or the incarnated consciousness. The more spiritual the man, the easier it will be for the Ego to awake the sleeping hemispheres, and arouse into activity the sensory ganglia and the cerebellum, and to impress the former with the vivid pictures of the subject so transferred. Therefore, in a sensual and unspiritual man, whose incarnated consciousness is entirely disconnected from its higher “Spiritual Ego,” [*Buddhi-Manas*] as also in him whom the hard, physical labour has so worn out the material body, so that the sensory ganglia do not even act mechanically during rest, dream rarely, if ever, with any coherence. In case of the non-spiritual person, as the waking time approaches, his sleep becomes lighter and his dreams are only the hazy grotesque reproductions of his wild habits in life. In case of the hard labourer, there is no state of semi-sleep in which he experiences dreams, but he is aroused at once and without

any interlude to full wakefulness. The ability to recollect dreams is also enhanced by our imaginative faculty. The more imaginative you are, the greater the facility for the brain to remember the dreams. That is why we find that artists, scientists, as also, the sensitive and sympathetic persons are sometimes able to remember and benefit from dreams.

To be able to bring back the experiences of dreamless state, the channel of communication from *Jagrat* to *Shusupti* and back, should be clear like a lens. What and how much our brain can remember of these dreams, depends upon how porous our brain is. For our brains to become porous we should lead virtuous life, have fewer desires, and lead a life along non-materialistic lines.

In the article, “Three Planes of Human Life,” Mr. Judge recommends that in order to bring back the memory of the experiences in *Sushupti* state, we should not only live life of concentration but also concentrate on high thoughts, upon noble purposes and the divine in us. As a result, one will be able to create a centre of attraction or focus in the waking state, to which all the energies flow. Then as he goes from waking to *Swapna* state, he goes as an integrated person, having greater clearness, and the energies from this focus will converge in the *Swapna* state, creating a focus there. Similarly he passes as a collected whole from *Swapna* to *Sushupti*, and is able to create a focus in *Sushupti*. Thus, the journey of a concentrated man from one state to another is like water passing through a clear pipe, or sun rays through the lens. However, Mr. Judge says that we may not accomplish it all in few weeks, or years or even in one life. It may take several incarnations. In case of the person, who is not concentrated, the experiences pass from *Sushupti* to the waking state, like sand through the sieve—*i.e.*, they are fragmentary.

(To be continued)

HIDDEN SCIENCE IN WORLD MYTHS

LEXICAL meaning of Myth is a story or a tale, or a series of tales relevant to, and having significant truth or meaning for, a particular religion, a culture, a society or a group. Religious philosophies, beliefs, customs and rituals of peoples the world over have each a mythological foundation. Whether it is the Vedas or the Bible or the Buddhist, Zoroastrian or the Egyptian canon, in every one of them without exception great ideas are expressed in mythical mode and they form the bedrock of the belief system, and shape the world-view of the respective peoples. To the intuitive student of comparative mythology certain distinctive common features are discernible in world myths, as well as strong evidence that each one of them has an underlying groundwork of truth, though they differ from each other in their outer garb.

However, the popular modern conception is that myths have no scientific basis and are fictitious. Most of the dictionaries define myths as purely fictitious narratives involving supernatural persons and events, embodying ideas of primitive people on natural phenomena. So ingrained is this notion among the educated classes that a thing is considered a myth in proportion to its being untrue.

In the nineteenth century there was the spate of literary output in the West on comparative religion and myths. Most of the eminent Western scholars, unacquainted as they were with the ancient psychological system and the science of symbology of the ancient peoples, translated the ancient scriptures into European tongues, taking the literal meaning of myths and legends in them, without suspecting that there might be deeper meaning hidden within the outer mythical garb. Further, they were constrained by their own mental bias which acted as another stumbling block in the way of a correct understanding and interpretation of world myths. Dead-letter biblical chronology that the world was created six thousand years ago was one such bias which unconsciously influenced them in dating the antiquity of ancient classical works. They would not, for

instance, assign a date farther back than three or, at the most, four thousand years B.C.E. to the Vedas. Modern anthropological evolutionary theory that mankind has emerged to the present day modern civilization and culture from savagery of the stone age, coupled with the general materialistic trend of the Western thought, were some of the other formidable biases which influenced their judgment. For instance, Max Muller, one of the greatest Orientalists, said that mythology was a disease of language and that ancient symbolism was something like a primitive aberration. Other writers of eminence held that mythology was the product of untutored imagination of the primitive man. There were however other scholars of ancient symbolism who did not hold such views but read in the symbols nothing more than phallic signification. For instance, Thomas Inman in his *Ancient Pagan and modern Christian Symbolism* concluded that all ancient myths have sexual foundation.

In contrast to the general trend of scepticism and materialistic bias there were also, at the same time, very rare scholars with deeper insight and better intuitive grasp of the ancient mode of thought. One such was Mr. Gerald Massey, a great Egyptologist of the 19th century. His was a thoroughly researched and considered view that mythology was a primitive mode of early thought, in sign language, founded on natural facts which are still verifiable in phenomena. He held that mythology is the repository of man's most ancient science, which, when truly interpreted once more, will give death blow to false religious beliefs and dogmas it has unwittingly given birth to. For instance, he showed that ancient Egyptians portrayed Moon as a cat which was held by them as sacred to Isis and honoured. This was not a superstition, he said, but represented a fact in nature: The cat saw in the dark, and Moon was the seer by night; Egyptians had also observed that the cat's eyes became full orbed and luminous by night, growing and declining following the phases of the Moon, shining like the two stars in the dark night, reflecting back the image of things as the Moon reflected the Solar light. Cat was then for them the astronomical symbol for the Moon.

H. P. Blavatsky writes in the Introductory chapter of her monumental work, *The Secret Doctrine*, that one of the reasons why she undertook the stupendous task of placing on record for the public education an extensive exposition of the ancient Wisdom-Science, now called Theosophy, was to challenge the wrong notions held by the Western scholars on ancient religions, and expound the profound science which lay hid in them, as far as it was permissible to reveal. She wrote:

The study of the hidden meaning in every religion and profane legend of whatsoever nation, large or small—pre-eminently the traditions of the East—has occupied the greater portion of the present writer's life. She is one of those who is convinced that no mythological story, no traditional event in the folklore of a people has been, at any time, pure fiction, but every one of such narrative has an actual historical lining to it." (*S.D.*, I, 303)

H.P.B. shows that Man, the Thinker, is essentially a spiritual being who began his career on earth in full awareness of his innate divinity before he gradually lost that awareness as he descended deeper into matter following the ascending cycle of physical evolution, with corresponding loss of spirituality. In those early epochs when spiritual element was dominant in him, she said, "there was on earth but one 'lip,' one religion and one science, namely, the speech of the gods, the Wisdom-Religion and Truth," which, later on, broke into thousands of fragments—into numerous religions and sects. Nevertheless, the primitive Wisdom-Science in its entirety as well as the "language of the gods" remains to this day in all its pristine purity on earth among the Brotherhood of Initiates and Adepts. She taught that the language referred to is the universal language of symbolism known to Initiates and their pupils in every part of the globe. Thus:

The great Archaic system known from pre-historic ages as the sacred Wisdom-Science, one that is contained and

can be traced in every old as well as every new religion, had, and still has, its universal language...the language of the Hierophants, which has seven “dialects,” so to speak, each referring, and being specially appropriated, to one of the seven mysteries of Nature. Each had its own symbolism. Nature could thus be either read in fullness, or viewed from one of its special aspects. (*S.D.*, I, 310)

The ingenuity of the construction of great scriptures of the world is such that they have two aspects: one is the outer vesture in myths and symbols conveying teachings on ethics and rules of righteous living for the common people necessary for their happiness and evolution in spiritual life; the other is the knowledge of the mysteries of Nature and of Spiritual life hidden within the symbols and myths, for the instruction of those who are fit to enter upon the arduous path of Self-knowledge and enlightenment, and to them only the keys to unlock the knowledge in symbols are revealed.

The universal language spoken of is the language of symbols and emblems in the form of geometrical figures, numbers, glyphs, mythical legends and allegories, all of which are mutually convertible, capable of multiple applications, yielding multiple meanings. Each symbol or mythical narrative could be made to yield one or several or all of the seven mysteries of nature by using the appropriate keys. The seven mysteries could broadly be said to pertain to cosmic, divine or spiritual, psychic or astral, psychological, astronomical and astrological, anthropological, and physiological, each having in its turn seven sub-divisions. Highest among the Initiates alone, it is said, have mastered all the seven mysteries of Nature and are in full possession of the seven keys—a state of omniscience. Every man, a potential God on earth, is an heir to the divine knowledge.

It would be out of place in a short article such as this to illustrate the application of keys to symbols which give us glimpses into the deeper cosmic and anthropological mysteries in world myths. But we can, for the purpose of illustration, consider a few which show how ingeniously ancients have clothed astronomical truths and pre-

historic geological events in myths and symbols.

In the Greek myth Diana Eilythia-Lucina is the daughter of Juno. Juno is devoured by Saturn but she is restored back to life by the Oceanid Metis. Saturn or Kronos signifies cycles of Time. Juno is the earth which is swallowed up in waters in one of the pre-historic cataclysm by flood, and she is freed when Metis, representing water, recedes in her many beds, thus freeing the continent from submergence. Thus Juno is said to be restored to her first shape. Ancients knew that geological cataclysms take place in larger and smaller cycles of time, and they kept the records of the same. (*Isis*, I, 266)

In the myth of Jupiter is found the astronomical facts of Planet Jupiter. The relative orbits of Uranus, Saturn and Jupiter were allegorized in Greece and Babylonia. Uranus was represented as the father of Saturn, and Saturn as the father of Jupiter, which symbolized the astronomical fact that the orbits of the three planets in the order mentioned were farther from the sun than the one next to it : Uranus taking 84, Saturn 29 and Jupiter 12 earth-years to go round the Sun (*Isis*, I, 267). If we recollect that Uranus was only discovered by modern Western science in 1781, the many myths concerning it shows that ancients knew of it ages before, and of the many mysteries symbolized by it. The order of paternity of the three planets, as mentioned, also symbolized other cosmic and metaphysical truths, which cannot be gone into now, besides the astronomical fact which is alluded to.

The Serpent Mantra in the *Aitreya Brahmana* (x, 189) is a most remarkable allegory, which, when read with the astronomical key, reveals that the ancient Sages not only knew the latest discoveries of the 21st century Astro-physicists, but much more. The Mantra speaks of the earth as the *Sarpa Rajni*, the Queen of the Serpents, and “the mother of all that moves.” H.P.B. mentions that the Initiates of the Sacred Science teach that our globe, before it became globular, was a long trail of cosmic dust moving and writhing like a serpent in the interstellar space. She said that, according to the ancient

doctrine, that was the condition of the matter of the earth before the energy of Cosmic Ideation directed the cosmic matter and made it assume the globular shape. The serpent symbolizes, however, many other truths besides the one referred to (*Isis*, I, 489). Modern Astrophysical research corroborates partly the ancient teaching. An international team of scientists led by Prof. Bryon Gaenslar of University of Sydney has published in the international science journal, *Nature*, an image of the turbulent gas in the Milky Way which appears like a pit of writhing snakes, (*News University of Tasmania*, October 7, 2011 and *The Deccan Herald*, Bangalore, October 8, 2011), which agrees perfectly with one of the significances of the Mantra alluded to. The description of the earth in its formative stages of encrustation is plainly evident in the said Serpent Mantra—that it was “in the shape of *round* and *bald* head which was *soft* at first, and became *hard* only from being breathed upon by the god Vayu, the lord of the air,” (*Isis*, I, 10). It is quite in consonance with the theories of modern science that the earth had been at first a gelatinous mass, bereft of vegetation, which gradually cooled under the influence of air and time, and became clothed with vegetation thereafter. These are yet other proofs that world myths have a scientific foundation and historical basis.

H.P.B. shows in her discourses that ancient myths contain knowledge of the physical, moral or the spiritual aspects of natural law, and embraced the visible and the invisible Nature, in its wholeness as well as in every particular. Thus:

Their metaphysical researches never clashed with scientific truths, and their religions may be truly termed the psycho-physiological creeds of the priests and the scientists, who built them on the traditions of the infant world, such as the unsophisticated minds of the primitive races received them, and on their own experimental knowledge, hoary with all the wisdom of the intervening races. (*Isis*, I, 263)

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: Now and then, we hear of cases where a person (not necessarily spiritually advanced) becomes aware of approaching death—his own or that of some other person. How does one explain it?

Answer: There are people who are psychically sensitive and they can get premonition of events to take place in the future. There are several examples of people dreaming about their own approaching death or that of a friend or a loved one. In *Transactions*, H.P.B. mentions that in case of a person suffering from consumption, his Ego is daily severed from his material body, and he grows more clairvoyant in perception. As death approaches, the body wastes away and ceases to be an impediment or barrier between the brain and his Higher, divine Self. “Consumption” refers to tuberculosis of the lungs, which is characterized by intense coughing and weight loss, where the person seems to be as it were “consumed.” There are certain diseases which seem to bring about change in the relation between the astral and the physical. In the article, “Facts and Ideations,” reprinted in *The Theosophical Movement* (Vol. 32), H.P.B. mentions the case of a certain Count that lived in Warsaw and was in his first stage of consumption, and when as yet, there was no immediate danger to his life, he gathered his friends and relatives and told them that he was going to die the next day, at 12 o’clock. He ordered his coffin to be made, which was to be ready by night. He made his will, and also paid in advance to the priest for organizing a certain number of masses. The next day, he dressed himself in black coat and white tie, and laid himself up in the coffin,

only a few minutes before 12 o'clock and died exactly at 12, as predicted. People were not willing to believe, so post-mortem was performed on the body, to find traces of poison, but there was no foul play. H.P.B. asks, was it premonition or *prevision* of death, or was it the result of a fixed idea, when the imagination is so over-excited that death becomes subservient to that thought?

While explaining the premonition, H.P.B. points out that normally the astral body is inextricably interwoven with the physical, but as death approaches, though the physical body may look to be still normal, the astral begins to disentangle from the physical and free itself from the jailor. During and after the dissolution of the inner man, many things are seen, especially the things belonging to the futurity becomes to the purified soul, as present. The physical self makes the way for the actual self or inner man, which has now greater facility for impressing the physical brain of the dying man. In the *Key to Theosophy*, (p. 130) H.P.B. points out that under abnormal conditions or certain physiological changes, the Ego becomes free from the trammels of matter.

The disease sets in at the astral level first, which a sensitive is able to sense. So, Mr. Judge points out that there are cases in which two or five years before the death of the physical body, clairvoyant is able to see the disintegration of the astral body beginning to take place. Thus, if a person is going to die naturally, which includes death by a disease, then the corruption, disintegrating or breaking up of the astral body may be perceived by those who can see in that way. When poet Keats shook hands with Shelly, he sensed death in the hands of Shelly, who died quite young.

Question: We find a peculiar account of the birth of storm deities called “Maruts” in the *Ramayana* and the *Puranas*. They are shown as allies of Indra, and at the same time they are described as “sons of Rudra.” Who or what are the Maruts?

Answer: Maruts are the storm gods who hold very prominent place in the Vedas, and are represented as friends and allies of Indra. In

the *Ramayana* and in the *Puranas* Diti is described as daughter of Daksha, wife of *rishi* Kasyapa, and the mother of the *Daityas*. *Vishnu Purana* narrates that having lost her children, she begged of Kasyapa a son of irresistible prowess, who should destroy Indra. The boon was granted, but with the condition: “If, with thoughts wholly pious, and person entirely pure, you carefully carry the babe in your womb for a hundred years.” She assiduously observed the condition. But Indra knew what was going to happen, so he approached her and attended upon her with humility, waiting for his opportunity. In the last year of the hundred years, one day Diti retired to rest without washing her feet. It is said that using his power, Indra shrunk himself to a tiny size and entered her womb. With his thunderbolt he divided the embryo in her womb into seven portions. Thus mutilated the child cried bitterly, and Indra being unable to pacify it, became angry and divided each of the seven portions into seven, thus forming swift-moving deities called Maruts. The name “Marut” is derived from the words, “*Ma-rodih*,” means “weep not,” used by Indra to quiet them, who in compassion converted them into Maruts. According to another account, Parvati pleaded with Siva to transform these lumps of flesh into boys. He accordingly made them into boys of like age and form, and gave them to Parvati as her sons, whence they are called “sons of Rudra”.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 613-615) H.P.B. explains the inner, occult significance of this account. She points out that Diti is a form of Aditi, or *Akasa* in her highest form, *i.e.*, the sixth principle of metaphysical nature. Diti, as the mother of the Maruts, is one of her terrestrial forms, and which represents the divine Soul in the ascetic, as also the divine aspirations of mystic Humanity towards deliverance from the webs of Maya and final bliss. Indra, who was one of the greatest gods of Hindu Pantheon has now fallen and become an opponent of asceticism and an enemy of holy aspirations. Thus, now, Indra is the cosmic principle *Mahat* and hence the mind in man which is dual: as connected with *Buddhi*; and that which is dragged down by passions and desires. Indra, as representing the

lower mind in man, entangled by passions and desires, seeks to save himself from destruction, by seeking to destroy the coming “babe” who was destined to destroy him. The “babe” in the womb of Diti represents the steady will of the Yogi, determined to resist all temptations, and thus destroy the passions within his earthly personality. But normally the personality gets the upper hand, and flesh conquers spirit. This is represented as Indra succeeding in dividing the embryo. Thus, higher aspirations and Will are frustrated giving upper hand to passions and desires. Thus, the Maruts represent, (a) *mystically*, the *passions* that storm and rage within every spiritual aspirant’s breast, when preparing for an ascetic life (b) actual conscious Existences, Beings of a cosmic and psychic nature.

During *Dwapara Yuga* when the Fourth or Atlantean Race was flourishing, there was much materiality, and degradation of spirituality. When fourth race perished few elect in that race were saved to lead the Fifth Race humanity. Thus, we might say, Indra succeeded in dividing the “Embryo” of the new divine adeptship, begotten once more by the Ascetics of the Aryan Fifth Race, into seven portions. This has reference to seven degrees of Adeptship and also to seven Root-races and each root-race having seven sub-races in a Round. Every Round starts with globe A, with its Root-Manu. For each globe in a planetary chain which produces seven root-races there is a minor Manu, produced by the Root-Manu of that Round. There being (7 x 7) 49 such minor Manus in a given Round, corresponding to 49 portions into which the embryo was divided.

In occult parlance, Maruts represent the Egos of great Adepts who remain in the invisible atmosphere of the earth to help mankind, by voluntarily renouncing *Nirvana*. “Therefore are the Maruts shown as the sons of Siva-Rudra, whose “*third eye*” [awakening of spiritual intuition], mystically, must be acquired by the ascetic before he becomes an Adept,” explains H.P.B.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Christianity has been destroyed by politics, priests and get-rich evangelists. Ignore them, and embrace Him (Jesus), writes Andrew Sullivan. When Thomas Jefferson was only twenty-seven years old, he cut out from the *Bible* those passages which reflected actual teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. He removed from the Bible, what he felt were the misconceptions of Jesus’ followers, who tried to explain things which they had not themselves understood. He called himself a real Christian, *i.e.*, the disciple of the doctrines of Jesus. Jesus’ doctrines were the practical commandments: Love one another. Love your enemy and forgive those who harm you. Give up all material wealth. Give up power over others. It is not important that we believe in Jesus’ divinity and resurrection, but that we try to live as these doctrines demand. In his book, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics*, Ross Douthat, a *New York Times* columnist, mentions that many suburban evangelicals have embraced a gospel of prosperity, seeking to be rich and prosperous by living the Christian life. There are those who still believe in biblical literalism, against all reason, that earth is only 6000 years old. Some refuse to accept that Canonized Gospels were written decades after Jesus’ ministry, and are copies of the copies of the stories told by those with fallible memory.

Today, Christianity is obsessed by issues such as, homosexuality or abortion, which Jesus never spoke about. He condemned divorce, which is commonplace among American Christians, and taught forgiveness for adultery. Christianity is in crisis. The greater portion of younger generation has been embracing atheism. Many have turned away from organized Christianity towards “Spirituality,” co-opting or adapting the practices of meditation or yoga. The polls show that a huge majority of Americans still believe in a Higher Power, but have not found the answers to profoundest human questions concerning the purpose of life and states after death.

How shall we go back to Jesus? One way is by adhering to the

genuine teachings of Jesus, as Jefferson did. But the other way is to emulate the example of St. Francis of Assisi. He renounced his inheritance, becoming homeless, and earning food by manual labour. He insisted on living utterly without power over others. He always sought to be the “lesser brother.” We must follow his example of humility, service and sanctity.

“I have no concrete idea how Christianity will wrestle free of its current crisis, of its distractions and temptations, and above all its enmeshment with the things of the world. But I do know it won’t happen by even more furious denunciations of others, by focusing on politics rather than prayer,” writes Sullivan. This true Christianity comes from the soul. It does not seek worldly recognition, or success and it flees from power and wealth. What we need is doing what we can to fulfill God’s will. “Something inside is telling us we need radical spiritual change,” writes Sullivan. (*Newsweek*, April 9, 2012)

More and more devout Christians feel that today, Jesus is unwelcome—we have crowded him out. With our parties and merry-making and artificial lights, at the time of Christmas, we have forgotten the real Jesus. We need to differentiate between Christianity and Churchianity. The rise of the Church with a mass of dogmas and doctrines, rituals and ceremonies, obscured the true teachings of the Christ. “Christianity can never hope to be understood until every trace of dogmatism is swept away from it,” writes H.P.B. For instance, the pernicious doctrine of vicarious atonement teaches that no matter how enormous our crimes against the laws of God and of man, if the sinner believes in the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of mankind, the stain of crime will be washed away in the blood of Christ. H.P.B. observes that those who believe in it are led more “easily to the threshold of every conceivable crime.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 220-21)

H.P.B. shows how important it is to follow the ethics taught by Jesus, which are universal ethics. She says that Count Leo N. Tolstoy did not believe in the *Bible*, the Church or the divinity of Christ; and yet no Christian surpassed him in the practical bearing out of

the principles alleged to have been preached on the Mount.

That the rules of conduct laid down by Jesus are admittedly hard to follow is shown by the declaration of the high prelates that the religion of Jesus cannot be the basis for diplomatic relations nor for the governing of the state, writes Mr. Judge.

In the article, “The Esoteric Character of the Gospels,” H.P.B. points out that the Christian canon, especially the *Gospels*, *Acts* and *Epistles*, are made up of fragments of Gnostic wisdom, the groundwork of which is pre-Christian and built on the MYSTERIES of Initiation. Hence, dead-letter interpretation leads to absurdities such as the world being created in seven days. H.P.B. compares “seven days” of *Bible* with *Seven Creations* mentioned in every Purana. These “Seven Creations” stand for seven periods of Evolution. “In the Bible the seven periods are dwarfed into the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest.” (*S.D.*, I, 446-47)

Scientists are still baffled as to how the homing pigeons navigate. Experts at Vienna’s Institute of Molecular Pathology do not agree with the claims that the bird’s feat is due to iron-rich nerve cells in the beak that are sensitive to Earth’s magnetic field. “The mystery of how animals detect magnetic fields has just got more mysterious,” says molecular biologist David Keays. Researchers used 3D scanners to search for the cells and sliced the beak of a pigeon into 2,50,000 wafer-thin slivers for analysis, only to conclude that the cells or particles which were credited with homing skills were simply a type of white blood cells, and they cannot produce electrical signals which could be registered by brain cells and hence influence the pigeon’s behaviour. Researchers are hopeful that someday they will be able to find the cells that enable the birds and a large number of other species to detect the Earth’s magnetic field. The other theory is that the birds get navigational fix from sunlight or landmarks.

However, scientists are puzzled by the pigeons' sixth sense. (*Mumbai Mirror*, April 13, 2012, courtesy AFP)

Instinct is simply a direct perception of what is right, within its own realm. Animals have right instinct in regard to what to eat, and in regard to what is dangerous to them, for their instinct is acquired experience. One such instinct is migratory instinct. Our body is made up of atoms, and atoms are made up of "lives." Every atom has a life and memory of its own. Memory in the "lives" when *innate* is called instinct. Instinct functions through readymade nerve connections, which ensure that such-and-such a response will occur in a certain situation. Instinct being acquired experience, various experiences teach the animals their "do"s and "don't"s in achieving their ultimate purpose of survival, proliferation and progress. Instinct, we might say is the result, the culmination of the slow process of acquirement, retention and transmission of useful learning. It is the memory of past experiences which is exhibited by animals. There is Dhyan Chohanian intelligence behind the acquired experience or instinct exhibited by plants and animals. While the instinct for nest building itself is inherent in a young jackdaw, it does not have the instinct as yet for selection of right material for nest building. But, it learns this skill quickly.

While the fixed character of instinct is on the whole beneficial, once acquired, the animal follows it blindly. It does not reason about it. So, an animal will do all that his instinct permits it to do, but beyond that it has to perish if its skills are found to be insufficient due to change in environment. The trend may continue for some time before the guiding intelligence impels it to acquire new skills for its survival in the changed environment. H.P.B. mentions Lemmings which try to swim across the Atlantic during the time of migration, and thousands of these rodents perish while crossing the Atlantic. It seems that earlier, there existed, in the middle of Atlantic ocean, an island to which they used to migrate which has long since sunk, leaving the exhausted Lemmings to perish.

Could science dislodge religion one day? An increasing number of people, probably inspired by evangelical atheists such as Richard Dawkins, feel that very soon science will overtake and replace religion. They consider religious people to be simpletons and maniacs. Statistics shows that in the recent years, in the United States, the number of atheists, agnostics and people who do not profess any religion, has been gradually increasing. And yet, there is little chance that religion will be sidelined so quickly by science. According to another poll conducted in 2009, which polled members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which may be regarded as the cream of scientific community, and hence must profess non-belief in God, but it was instead found that 51 per cent of them expressed their belief in "higher power."

Science might find it difficult to dislodge religion, because for thousands of years religion has co-existed with science and even accommodated it. Though, initially, Church arrested Galileo for saying that sun was at the centre of the universe, and vilified Darwin because his evolutionary theory went against *Bible*, but in the end, accepting its mistakes, it has accepted the new ideas. The same is not true about science. Then again, for most of the Eastern religions, the conflict between rationality (or science) and faith (or religion) does not exist. "The second most important reason is, for the vast majority of people religion is imprinted from a very early age via parental, social and cultural influences and controls. Not only that, some latest theories indicate there may be an evolutionary urge towards belief in the supernatural...religion is learnt from the inside out. By contrast science is largely a didactic imposition which comes a little later through educational institutions and is perceived as counterintuitive," writes Mukul Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree* [*Sunday Times of India*], April 8, 2012)

In her article, "Is Theosophy a Religion?" H.P.B. has dealt with, at length, the nature of true *religion* and true *science*. The English word religion is derived from the Latin *religio*, which means "to bind back," as it is made up of the root, *re* (again) and *ligare* (bind

or connect). Likewise, *Science* is derived from *sciens*, present participle of *sicre*, “to know.” Science is a word which covers all forms of knowledge. It is “orthodox religion” and “modern science” that are at loggerheads with each other. The modern materialist insists on a gulf between science and religion, pointing out that conflict between science and religion has ended in the triumph of the science and defeat of religion. H.P.B. points out that Theosophy refuses to see any conflict or gulf between science and religion. She argues that if both science and religion are pursuing truth, and nothing but the truth, then since truth is one, it can be approached from two different ends. There never was any conflict between true science and religion of antiquity. Science and religion can be reconciled, if only religion could be cleared of its cobwebs of dogmatism and superstitions, and science of its materialism and atheism. She describes modern science and orthodox religion as two dragons; one devouring the intellects, the other the souls of men. Science and religion can be reconciled, if they are ready to clean their houses of dogmatism, superstition, blind belief, atheism and materialism.

Religions, as a general rule, discourage intellectual study of belief. True religion must seek to replace blind belief by reasoned and then intuitive faith. Science is analytical and experimental and therefore believes that nothing can be known about the constituents and properties of a plant or stone without subjecting it to the mechanical and chemical processes. Nor can we understand the thoughts and feelings of another until they are expressed in words. The reason being that science is reluctant to accept the existence of astral and spiritual senses, or a realm beyond the material world.

WE are responsible beings, and the feeling of responsibility
is the first step towards selflessness.

—ROBERT CROSBIE