

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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ON DIKSHA OR INITIATION

THE TERM *Diksha* may be regarded as Sanskrit equivalent of the English word Initiation. The dictionary meaning of the term initiation is, to begin, to set going, to admit a person, especially with rites or ceremonies into office, secret or in mysteries. In an extended sense it can also signify a transformation in which the initiate is “reborn” into a new role. Examples of initiation ceremonies might include Hindu *Diksha*, Christian *baptism* or *confirmation*, as also, acceptance into a religious order or a secret society. Initiation rites in Buddhism take the form of ordination or initiation into monkhood. In a Christian Church, the initiation rite of “Confirmation” is the act of confirming one’s faith in the main teachings of the Church. The *upanayanam* or the Hindu “Sacred thread” investiture ceremony is an initiation rite, and is held when a boy is between the ages of 8 and 12, and it indicates that the boy is ready to receive religious instructions from his religious guru or teacher, and to achieve spiritual re-birth, or become a *dwija*, through spiritual discipline. Etymologically, the term *Diksha* is derived from the verb root *diks* means to consecrate, and hence *Diksha* is translated as a “preparation or consecration for a religious ceremony,” which typically includes the taking on of a serious spiritual discipline. Among the Jainas, a rite performed to become an ascetic is called *diksha*, consequent to which the status of the person changes from that of a householder to an ascetic.

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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The term *diksha* has large spectrum of meaning and implication. For instance, the term *diksha* is also taken to be composed of two syllables, “di” and “ksha.” *Di* or *Da* means to give, or the person capable of bestowing divine grace, and *ksha* means one who is capable of assimilating. Swami Vivekananda points out that every human being is potentially divine, capable of attaining the state of perfection. Though we shape our destiny by our own thoughts, words and actions, it does not preclude our receiving help from the outside. The quickening impulse, whereby higher powers and possibilities of the soul are quickened and the spiritual life is awakened, does not come from the study of books, but must come from another soul. This impulse can be conveyed from the *guru* to the *chela*, where the *guru* is capable of transmitting it, while *chela* is fit to receive it.

In this context it is said that *diksha* can be of various types, through the teacher’s sight, touch, or word, with the purpose of purifying the disciple or student. Initiation by touch is called *sparsha diksha*. Likewise, *Mantra-Diksha* is given through a *mantram*. The disciple is expected to perform the *japa* of mantra, *i.e.*, repeat the *mantram* with faith and devotion. Through *mantra-diksha*, the guru rekindles the dormant powers of the aspirant.

Interestingly, in the Second Chapter of the *Gita*, having expounded the wisdom concerning Sankhya or the logic of thought in a philosophy, by which the true nature of the One Reality is grasped, in verses 40 to 52 Shri Krishna begins to expound the wisdom concerning *devotion through work*. We are advised not to shirk Karma because by abhorring we only create new Karma. The true course to be followed is, “let the motive for action be in the action itself, never in reward; not to be incited to by the hope of the result, nor yet indulge a propensity to inertness.” The attitude to be assumed is, do every act, small and great, trifling or important, because it is before us to do, and that we are only instrumental in carrying out the will of the Deity. In other words, we should not only renounce the attachment to both good and bad consequences,

but also, renounce *kartabhav* or doership. This attitude, combined with the effort to see the one Spirit in all things and all things in It, is described in verse 40 of the *Gita* as constituting the system of initiation. Mr. Judge mentions that there are several secret societies, with signs and passwords, but these initiating occult societies are merely faint and incomplete copies of the real system of initiation, in which the disciple or aspirant himself has to progress by his own efforts before he is ready to be taken in hand by the guru or the master.

Mr. Judge explains that *all human beings* are working through this system of initiation. *Gita* (II, verse 40) promises that in this system there is no loss of effort, nor are there any evil consequences, and a little of this practice saves a man from great danger. This refers to the Law of Karma. Whatever efforts may have been made towards achieving purity and perfection, are not lost, but on taking up the new body, we begin from where we had left off in the previous incarnation. This life is in itself an initiation, wherein we succeed or fail just as we learn the lessons of life.

Initiation may be described as a trial or a test, which every earnest spiritual aspirant has to pass through and which helps to determine if the aspirant is ready to take the next step on the Path. There are levels and levels of initiation, wherein the aspirant is subjected to progressively difficult trials. Just as, when one learns horse-riding, one is made to ride the horse that initially walks, then trots, then canters, and only finally is he given to control a galloping horse, the same holds in the process of Initiation. We need guidance in the process of unfoldment, so that we do not get into serious psychological and moral problems.

We might say that there are two kinds of initiation. Initiation can be a set and solemn occasion, for which the candidate is prepared and is aware of in advance. But before coming to that stage, writes Mr. Judge, each aspirant has to learn to face “daily initiations,” which come from moment to moment. They are met in our relation with our fellows, and in the way we react to all

circumstances of life. And if we fail in these, we never get to the point where greater ones are offered. If we cannot bear momentary defeat, if a chance word from someone shatters our self-esteem, if we give way to the desire to harshly judge others, or if we are oblivious of our most apparent faults, then we cannot build up necessary strength to be masters of nature. Further:

Do you think that if a Master accepted you He would put you to some strange test? No. He would not, but simply permitting the small events of your life to have their course, the result would determine your standing. *It may be a child's school, but it takes a man to go through it.* (*The Path*, September 1889)

In *From the Book of Confidences*, when the disciple expresses his desire to know something concerning initiation, the sage advises him not to look for a special trial and that there would be hourly trials and daily initiations. The sage speaks of initiation through one's daily duties, and the one who dislikes repetitive duties of everyday life can never hope to achieve even minor initiations. Likewise, it is through making choices, and learning from mistakes that one prepares oneself for initiation. When the disciple expresses his desire to be guided, the sage replies that if he were to guide the disciple through clear-cut instructions as to what to do, and how to do, the disciple would surely fail in his initiation.

When one aspires to reach perfection and enlightenment, one is faced with strange and awesome trials of initiation. We are mistaken if we look for some special difficult test or trial through which we can show our moral strength. Mr. Judge writes:

It seems to me that many who think that they would earnestly seek the light do not comprehend the true nature of the temptations to which they are continually subjected. They are looking for something unusual, something hard in the way of a trial, and think: If something of the sort would only come along, how I would show my power to stand it! At the same time, by their daily yielding to the small vexations of life they show

their unfitness for meeting greater trials. Even if one who has waited long and patiently asks, "Why am I not given an opportunity, since my conduct deserves it," he shows by the very question his unfitness....When a person loses his temper over a trifle, he is hardly likely to meet any greater temptation in the right spirit. Every time we successfully overcome even the slightest obstacle, we have made a step in our initiation into the mysteries. Let us remember that it is the unexpected that always happens in the way of trials to the novice. The devil never sends a herald to announce his coming....When we have learnt to encounter every vexation absolutely without complaint, either internally or externally—if it disturbs us in the slightest degree within, it is just as bad as if we expressed it in words or action—then, and not till then, can we expect to be given the opportunity to take a decided step forwards. For the secret of advancement is the development of the will through its union with the Divine Will. By meeting the ordinary ills of life with unvexed soul we educate and strengthen our will, fitting us for further advancement. Humbleness, Patience and Content are the first three steps that lead to the door.

For the earnest and devoted workers of Theosophy, Mr. Judge mentions that it is likely that they have successfully passed through some trials and have been initiated in some past life, but they do not carry its memory in the present life. He writes: "None of us, and especially those who have heard of the Path, or of Occultism, or of the Masters, can say with confidence that he is not already one who has passed through some initiations, with knowledge of them. We may already be initiated into some higher degree than our present attainment would suggest, and are undergoing a new trial unknown to ourselves. It is better to consider that we are, being sure to eliminate all pride of that unknown advance we have made."

There are various degrees of initiation. An occultist can see in the aura of the person signs and marks that indicate the degree of his advancement. Mr. Judge mentions that it is no use *pretending*

to be more advanced than we actually are. He writes:

In just the same way as a polished diamond shows the work which gives it value and brilliancy, so the man who has gone through probation and teaching under the Adepts carries upon his person the ineffaceable marks....One who has progressed, say, three steps along the way, will have three marks, and it is useless to pretend that his rank is a step higher, for, if it were, then the fourth mark would be there, since it grows with the being's development. Now, as these signatures cannot be imitated or forged, the whole inner fraternity has no need for concealment of signs. No one can commit a fraud upon or extract from them the secrets of higher degrees by having obtained signs and passwords out of a book or in return for the payment of fees, and none can procure the conferring of any advancement until the whole nature of man exactly corresponds to the desired point of development. (*Echoes from the Orient*, p. 37)

In some so-called esoteric bodies there are initiations performed for money, with elaborate rituals and ceremonies. In the ancient times, initiations took place in the crypts, caves, temples, and pyramids where the neophyte underwent a series of physical and psychological trials, through which he proved his strength and readiness for spiritual rebirth. During the Mysteries, the candidate for initiation was taught, by dramatic representation, the origin of things, the nature of the human spirit, its relation to the body, and the method of its purification and restoration to higher life.

Exoterically, there are four grades or degrees of initiation, but esoterically, there are seven degrees of initiation. After passing through a series of initiations, at the last initiation, the disciple comes face to face with the Dhyani Buddha of the hierarchy to which he belongs, and he is allowed to behold his future self—the *Augoeides*.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“MASTER, HOW WONDERFUL THOU ART!”

AN ALLEGORY

UP AND DOWN Bharatvarsha, for many years the teacher wandered. He taught in village and in city to Sudra and to Brahmin, to farmer and to merchant. He spoke of life and death, and of the life hereafter. He spoke of duties, to wife and child and to the Wise.

As years passed and the teacher grew old in body, his eyes would trouble him so that he could not see properly, but the soul being ever young, he wandered on, teaching the Good Law.

One day there came a Sudra to hear the teacher speak. After the master had ended his sermon the Sudra took him home and fed him and gave him new raiment, and, seeing the trouble in the teacher's eyes, unto him he gave his faithful Das, saying, “This dog hath faithfully served me; thy need of him is greater than mine; he shall be thy servant and see for thee.”

One day, while the master rested in the shade of a tree, Das taking the master's begging-bowl, went in search of food for him. Coming upon the King's hunting party, encamped beside the road, Das went up to the King and laid at his feet the begging bowl. The King ordered it filled. When the dog carried it back to his master the King and his retinue followed Das to the master's feet.

After partaking of the food, the sage spoke of kingship and laws that govern kings and men alike, of the duty of the King and the responsibility of the citizens. And, when the teacher was silent, the King, desiring to show his appreciation, cast his eyes around for something that he might give the sage. He saw nothing that he valued except his beautiful chief hunting dog, Mitra. So to the master he gave the hunting dog.

As the teacher walked from place to place on his mission of teaching, the dogs followed him. The King's dog followed close behind the master. During the day as they walked, the pit-pat of the dog's feet would be heard by the master, at night his even

breathing. When they came to a hamlet or a city, Mitra with proud steps walked the main street, as if they were saying, “My Master is the most wonderful Master there is.” Those seeing the lordly dog would follow him saying, “The master of this dog must be great, let us follow and see.” Thus, this dog served the master.

Das was not beside the master often. On a hot day as they walked, he often left the master, giving a bark to say good-bye, and went in search of water and shade for the master to rest under. While passing through barren tracts or through forests where the road was not marked, Das, leaving the master, would run in all directions to find the nearest way to the next village or resting place. When he found the needy man by the roadside he would lead his master to him so that the needy man might be attended to. When the monsoon clouds gathered he would go in search of a cave near the habitations of men so that the rain and wind would not reach his master, but near enough to where food might be got.

On reaching places where men stayed, Das would take from his master’s hands the begging bowl and go to the back of the house, where the kitchen was, and laying the bowl on the door-step, would wait for the lady of the house to place some food in it. Then, taking the begging bowl in his mouth, he would trot off in the direction of his master. The woman watching would say, “What kind of master has this dog, that, though thin and tired itself, it first takes the food to its master before itself resting or eating?” Thus saying she would call her husband and gather their children together and follow the dog to the feet of the master. Then from the master’s lips they would hear all manner of good things about the Oneness of Life.

In the fullness of time it happened that the master, quitting his mortal frame, went to the Land of the Immortals. Mitra wandered now the streets where the master had spoken and taught. No longer was he fat and sleek. In his eyes was to be seen the sorrow of his loss, and people, seeing the dog and remembering the master, said, “Alas! the Master is dead.”

Das, returning to the hard roads where the master had walked,

would lead the traveller to water and to rest or, tugging at the hem of the traveller’s garment, would lead him back to the right road, getting him to come away from the roads that lead to sorrow, thirst and weariness. Men who had known the master said, seeing this dog, “The master lives, for his teachings are still practised. Some live for the Master instead of only dying for the Master.”

Mahaparinibbana Sutta or the *Book of the Great Decease* contains the farewell message of the Buddha to his disciples. The Buddha addressed his disciple Ananda, who was grieving at the thought of parting away from the Blessed One, and said, “Just as a worn-out cart can only with much difficulty be made to move along, so the body of the Tathagata can only be kept going with much additional care. Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamp unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Seek salvation alone in the truth.” The Blessed One said to Ananda not to weep at the thought of the Buddha’s death, and remember that whatever is born, brought into being, and organized, contains within itself the inherent necessity of dissolution. The Buddha is also not free from this law.

Even when the teacher is no longer present in his physical form, he continues to live in his teachings, for those who are alive and sensitive to it. Those who showed devotion only to the “personality” of the teacher are sure to lose enthusiasm and faith, after the death of the teacher. If you want to know us, then know our philosophy; if you want to serve us then serve our humanity, said one of the Masters. It is said that each individual has to pay three kinds of debts: the debt towards the gods; the debt towards the *pitris* or ancestors which include those who gave us the body and the light of mind; and the debt towards our teachers. To pay this last debt we have to pass on what we have learnt, and then we shall have fulfilled our duty towards our teachers. But if we wish to make our *contribution* then we must give something additional by deep

thinking and reflection. No one is too small or obscure to make absolutely no contribution. Just like little Venus, in the sky filled with stars, makes its own contribution in lessening darkness, each one who has derived some benefit from the teachings can contribute in lessening the darkness of ignorance. Mr. Judge mentions an occult law which states that anyone who has derived any spiritual benefit must not willingly die, until he has communicated what he has learnt, to at least one other person. And by communication is meant, not just verbal delivery, but patient care, till that person completely understands.

To be a true disciple is to first become a servant, and his first act of service is to give some of his knowledge “to those who are not yet fit to stand where he stands.” But a true disciple has to exemplify the doctrines in his own life, so as to inspire others to live the higher life. Jesus says, “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven,” (*Matthew*, 7:21). In “An Allegory,” Mr. Judge mentions that when the pupil had finished the work of promulgation he asked the Master to give him some more teachings to spread. The Master tells the pupil that there are many in the world to teach *intellectual conceptions* of the Truth. However, Truth is not of the intellect, but of the heart. The pupil was shown Truth as though it were a White Light, unable to reach the plants and living things, because thick, dense layers of clouds were obstructing the same. But here and there, were seen faint rifts in the clouds, through which feeble rays of light could reach the earth. These chinks were caused by “vortex of vibrations” arising from a human heart. The Master tells the pupil, “Only by adding to and enlarging the rifts will the Light ever reach the earth.” To promulgate the truths, and *to so live the life* as to inspire and bring about the change of heart in people, are both necessary works, but only a few aspirants are ready to make an application of the teachings, so as to lead others on the right path.

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA THE EVER-DYING MAN—I

[Adapted from the Lectures on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, delivered at One West Sixty Seventh Street, New York City, 1927-28.]

THE FIRST part of Krishna’s answer to Arjuna was in terms of Sankhya Philosophy. The word *Sankhya* means number, and so this Science is the Science of Numbers, meaning, of course, the Science of Spiritual Numbers, or in other words the Mathematics of the Soul. Now, very many strange notions are afloat in regard to those ancient systems known today by the names of the Six Schools of Philosophy in India. However, we must understand that the teachings, as they are given in those Six Schools today, do not represent the accurate esoteric teachings such as were given by the real philosophers of those systems, so that when Krishna refers to the Science of Number, or Science of Philosophy, he does not mean the system known today in the Sankhya School, where the Sutras of Kapila are being studied, but the *real teachings* of Kapila. When we study arithmetic we must get the idea of Number one before we can proceed to learn about the other numbers, or the knowledge that can be obtained through the science of numbers. The same is true of the Mathematics of the Soul. Before we can understand the world of differentiation, we must begin with the fundamental basis of the One reality underlying all phenomena, which is the *first number* of the Sankhya philosophy that Krishna has expounded in the first part of his discourse, that is, the meaning of Number One, *the underlying Unity of all things*.

As you know, we call One Reality the Immortal “I” present in all creatures and beings, and to be found in our own heart. After having expounded what the “I” means, Krishna continues and says, “Now I will give you the answer in terms of the practical devotional system of philosophy.” So Krishna turns to the other philosophy—*Buddhi-Yoga*—or the principle of *Buddhi* in each one of us. In other words, he is going to explain to us that there is this Spiritual

Self within ourselves, only through another process of logic and reasoning. In the first answer, he started by telling us that we should understand One Universal Principle before we can understand the differentiated universe. Now he is going to begin in another way, and start showing us the differentiated universe, and return to the idea of the one Universal Self. *Buddhi-Yoga* is not the Yoga of Patanjali. Krishna refers to another system or philosophy. He says “If you unite yourselves with *Buddhi*, with that spiritual principle dwelling in your own heart, you will be able to recognize the Self of all creatures, to understand and get the right apprehension of the fact that the Immortal ‘I’ is everywhere present.”

To explain what this really means, and how we can realize the Self when we are united with *Buddhi*, Krishna proceeds to tell us that it is because of the principle known to us by the name of *Kama*, that we cannot unite ourselves to *Buddhi*, or realize the Self within our hearts. Those beings, who are identified and associated with the lower self, with *Kama*, the principle of passion and desire, are beings who have *Kama* as the energizing principle. Therefore, they are known in Sanskrit as *Kama-Atma*, having as the energy of their whole life not *Buddhi* but the principle of *Kama*. When we thus unite ourselves with the lower principle of our being, we go into the world of separation and of differentiation. This principle of desire is not a permanent, changeless and immortal one as the principle of *Buddhi*, but the opposite. It is a principle whose very nature is constant motion and change. It is that principle which constitutes the ever-dying man, the impermanent mortal man, that part which is constantly operating through change, flux and reflux, which gives us the feeling and impression of sensation, of constant opposites outside of us, and in our own desire nature. This *kamic* principle, then, instead of showing us the unity underlying the Universe, shows us the form side of the world, and gives us the impression that the world is all differentiation, that there is not one but an infinite number of opposites and contradictions.

When we begin to contrast these two *yogas*, which we can call *Buddhi-Yoga* on the one hand, and *Kama-Yoga* on the other hand, we see that there is from the very beginning one radical contradiction, and it is this, that in *Buddhi-Yoga* we can only have one object, one goal, that our faith is then of a steady nature, that it is of one aim and purpose in life, whereas in the opposite doctrine of *Kama-yoga*, we have infinite and great variety of objects, purposes, and aims in our life. Krishna immediately explains this, even before entering into the explanation of what this desire nature is, in verse 41, when he says: “In this path” being the path of *Buddhi*, of union with the Spiritual Soul, “there is only one single object, and this of a steady constant nature, but widely branched is the path and infinite are the objects of those who follow not this system.” The aspirant to the Higher Wisdom and understanding of the Spiritual Philosophy must pause and make a practical application, for this difference existing between the two systems immediately should take us to the point where we will ask ourselves the question, “What is my object in life? What is the goal I want to attain in this present incarnation?” And we find that very few are prepared to give an answer. In fact, very few people have determined what the object or goal in their life is.

We find that people fail because they follow the principle of separation, the *kamic* principle. They follow infinite objects and goals and opposing ideas in their own life. Thus, they go from one thing to another, without one steady firm basis of action, and, of course, it simply means that they are losing precious time and frittering away energy, because they have no actual determination and purpose to guide them in this incarnation. In fact, we know that in this civilization, it is supposed to be a mark of culture to be widely interested in various things. Now this is not so in terms of the spiritual science, wherein we want to realize that Self and sense it, so that we can only have one aim and object. Now this does not mean, as it has been thought, that because we are trying to unite ourselves to *Buddhi* and have that aim in life, we cannot be

interested in other things. In fact, the student of the Science of the Soul finds interest in every single activity of human life, and life instead of becoming monotonous becomes much more vital and interesting, because *all things are regarded as avenues to find this Self in ourselves, and outside* in the other objects.

What does it mean to have just one single object? It means that we are going to view all these varieties of differentiations as expressions of the One Self. We will only have the spiritual point of view, to determine the value of our manifold experiences. We will consider and examine all things from the point of view of *Buddhi*. Now this is not done in the world, and we have many illustrations of that fact. When a boy or girl, for instance, is trying to determine what profession he is going to choose, he begins to look upon different professions in the world, trying to see which one will give him what he desires, needs, or what *he thinks* he wants and needs in his own life. In other words, we see boys and girls in school and college trying to picture whether they are going to be teachers, lawyers, doctors, artists or what not, always in terms of what the profession is going to give to them. Now this is not the first essential question that boys and girls trained in the spiritual science would ask themselves before determining what they should choose. They would ask the basic question, “What type of man or woman do I want to be, regardless of the profession? I may have to choose from the surroundings in which I find myself, or the work which I might have to do in life, and then, when we have determined the kind of man or woman we are going to be, in whatever profession, then we have answered in terms of *Buddhi*. When we choose the profession without determining what type of man or woman we are going to be, then we have answered in terms of *Kama*.

Another good illustration which will give us an understanding of this point is that of marriage. Again, young men and women having decided to marry, begin to picture what their ideal companion is going to be like, and determine for themselves,

whether they want one type or another. We know young men in the world talk in this manner, and we hear one say, “I want an intellectual kind of a girl,” and another one will say, “I do not want an intellectual girl, I would rather have a beautiful creature but of the simple type,” and so on, based on individual desires. But this answer is from the point of view of the *kamic*, passionate, egotistical and personal part of our nature. In terms of *Buddhi* the first question to determine is: What kind of a husband or wife am I going to be, and how am I going to prepare myself to fulfil that duty or obligation? In other words, when we are looking at the problems from the lower point of view, we try to visualize what we are going to get from the outside world which will enable us to grow. When we look upon these very self-same problems from the higher point of view, we must first consider the proposition that we cannot gain any progress, advance, or growth, from the outside, but that we have to grow from within ourselves. Therefore, we must first determine how we are going to ennoble our surroundings and purify our experiences. This is not a question of rights and privileges, but a question entirely of responsibilities and obligations. This is what shows us how the egotistic consciousness, centred in the lower principle of our nature, is the ever-dying man in us, constantly changing, always trying to get benefit from the outside world by one way or another, by following one desire or another. The consciousness that we want to attain, were we taking the idea of *Buddhi-yoga*, is a permanent, immortal consciousness that is changeless, its expression is ever unfolding through the ever-dying man, the personality, but its very nature is always permanent. It is a consciousness having as its nature the quality to give, and to give more. In other words, all things in life, surroundings, opportunities, circumstances are viewed as avenues for greater service, so that the difference is a radical one.

(To be concluded)

MAGIC—SCIENCE OR SUPERSTITION?

II

MAGIC is the most ancient and venerable system of true wisdom, and a real magician is a man well versed in the secret or esoteric knowledge. This sacred body of knowledge was known to few wise men of every age, and it was the result of the observations made by these initiated sages of the workings of the laws of Nature, in every department and kingdom of nature—material, psychic and spiritual. Their spiritual perceptions enabled them to go beyond material limits and perceive the reality of things. The knowledge of modern scientists is limited, not only due to imperfection of instruments used, but because of their unwillingness to probe beyond the material realm. Science—not being able to weigh, classify or analyze the knowledge of the ancients—rejects it as fraud and superstition.

In *Isis Unveiled* Madame Blavatsky gives examples of infants born with missing limbs—cases of imagination of mother affecting the children in womb. In one case, a woman gave birth to a child with wounded and bleeding forehead, because her husband had threatened her with a sword pointed to her forehead. In another instance, a woman witnessed the beheading and went into premature labour, giving birth to a headless child. Physiologists have recorded such occurrences. While some have described them as “curious-coincidences,” only a few have been honest enough to admit their ignorance. Many have been too proud and have said: “*There is no reason to believe that imagination of mother can have any influence in the formation of these monsters*; besides, productions of this kind are daily observed in the offspring of other animals and even in plants.” Madame Blavatsky remarks, “How perfect an illustration is this of the methods of scientific men!—the moment they pass beyond their circle of observed facts, their judgment seems to become entirely perverted.” (*Isis*, I, 387)

Theosophy says: “There is no miracle. Everything that happens

is the result of law—eternal, immutable, ever active. . . . There may be laws once ‘known,’ now unknown to science.” The performance of magical feats and miraculous phenomena require extensive knowledge of the various and now forgotten branches of natural science; expertise in occult chemistry, physics, psychology, as well as physiology; intimate practical knowledge of the laws of electricity and magnetism and their effect on human and lower kingdoms of nature. And above all, it requires a perfected human will, combined with powerful imagination and faith.

Behind the visible, tangible world, there exists an invisible, but real world which has not yet been explored by our science. Man as well as nature possess this invisible “astral” nature. It has its own laws. Just as there are laws governing physical nature, there are laws governing super-nature. One of the constituents of invisible man is the astral body—*sukshma sarira*. Astral body is *design body* or model body on which physical body is built. The real centres of sense organs for seeing, hearing, etc., are within the astral body. The powers of seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing and the sense of touch are all in the astral body. The physical sense organ would be useless if the corresponding astral sense organ is damaged.

Using the astral senses one is able to see in the astral light, which is the invisible register carrying the impress of all our thoughts, actions, feelings and events. Clairvoyance (*clear seeing*) or seeing things that are happening at a distance or in the past or future is the faculty of seeing in the astral light with astral eyes. Similarly, clairaudience is hearing things happening at a distance, using the inner ear.

All of us are communicating *telepathically* with one another all the time, but most often, both the sender and receiver of the message are not conscious of it. 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. 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)

Normally, astral body is inextricably interwoven with the physical body, cell for cell and fibre for fibre, like the fibres of a mango in the pulp. However, people, who strive towards perfection in concentration, and follow rigorous discipline of mental and moral nature, can *consciously and voluntarily*, withdraw their astral (inner) man from the outer man (physical body). Their astral form can go anywhere, penetrate any obstacles—neither time nor space offers any obstacle. In *Ramayana*, Rama’s brother Lakshmana had been mortally wounded in the battle and the only thing that could save him was the Sanjivini (“life-giving”) herb, which grew far away on Dronagiri mountain in the Himalayas. Hanuman, it is said, flew to the Himalayas, lifted the entire mountain and brought it back to Lanka, as he was unable to locate the required plant. In such instances, it is the astral body which goes from one place to another. The physical body cannot fly from one place to another, though it can be *levitated*, lifted up in the air like a bird. How does this happen?

We are told that earth is a magnetic body charged with one form of electricity, say positive. All the organic and inorganic bodies on earth are charged with the opposite form of electricity, *i.e.*, negative.

Hence, there is an attraction between earth and all the bodies on earth. Changing the electrical polarity of the object on the earth, from negative to positive could counteract this attraction. This change of polarity can be achieved by a well-regulated will. The juggler determines beforehand that he will levitate, for how long a time and to what height, and regulates the occult forces accordingly. H.P.B. mentions that the priest of Siam, while in pagoda, rises fifty feet in the air with a candle in hand, flying from idol to idol, lighting up the niches, self-supported, and stepping as confidently as if he were on solid ground. However, there could also be unconscious levitation, as has been observed in the cases of somnambulism or in some patients with epileptic fits, who are seen to rise two to three yards from their beds, during seizures.

“We are all magician,” says Theosophy. An Israeli mentalist, Lior Suchard, calls himself the “Supernatural entertainer,” as he has left people entranced and wonderstruck by his mental feats. He seems to be naturally gifted, as he has been performing some of these magical feats from childhood. For instance, he says, “I shocked my mother at six when I moved spoons and stopped watches with my gaze. I could just look at something and say—Move! Bend!—and it would happen.” He can read minds and influence thoughts. His tools are intuition, telekinesis and Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

Each one of us has in him the germ of every power exhibited by the so-called supernaturally gifted people or even those in possession of a spiritually advanced person. Mr. Judge mentions that great musical ability is not usual or common but it is natural. Any person with proper training can learn music and even become a good musician. Likewise, with proper training of astral and spiritual senses, and following the necessary discipline, one can develop, or rather unfold, the psychic and spiritual powers.

“Imagination is the picture-making power of the human mind. In the ordinary average human it has not enough training or force to be more than a sort of dream, but it may be trained,” says

Mr. Judge. A wonder-worker in the east makes his audience see a snake, where there is no snake, because he was asked to see a snake before his mind's eye, right from his childhood, so that the image he forms of the snake is so strong that everyone in the audience *has to* see it. We are all magicians in that we can use the power of imagination. Mr. Judge once wrote:

If I desire to influence—say your mind—I do not formulate your subconscious plane, but firmly and kindly think of you and think of the subject I wish you to think of. This must reach you. If I am selfish, then it has more difficulty to get there; but if it be brotherly, then it gets there more easily, being in harmony with the universal mind and the Law. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 6)

Metta Bhavana meditation helps to cultivate loving kindness by counteracting hatred, and is a good example of exercising the power of thought, will and imagination. In this meditation, step by step, one visualizes the image of a good friend, a neutral person, and some “difficult person,” with whom one does not get along, and then tries to wish each of them happiness, by generating intense feeling of loving kindness for him. *Metta* or loving kindness is a powerful positive emotion. There must be overwhelming desire and wish, “May *all* the beings be happy.”

We must realize that man is a copy of nature, and all powers and forces that exist in nature, exist in him potentially. He can manifest these powers by purifying himself. Besides psychic powers, there are “creative powers,” such as, *Kriyasakti*, *Ichhasakti*, *Mantrika sakti*, etc., which exist *potentially* in the immortal aspect of man—*Atma-Buddhi-Manas*—and which he has to *actualize*. Thus, the power of *Kriyasakti* is described as mysterious power of thought which enables one to produce external, perceptible results. There is “creative power” latent in speech, but this power can manifest only through *proper and good* use of speech. Constructive or Creative speech which ever blesses is that of the sages and seers.

Speech consists of thought, feeling, will and sound. *The Secret Doctrine* mentions six *saktis* or powers, one of which is *Mantrika sakti*, the power or the occult potency of sound, words, letters and numbers that are used in the *mantras*.

Most of the supernormal phenomena are performed with the help of perfected human will. H.P.B. narrates several instances where a fakir is able to move or freeze the movement of a person or an animal by the power of will. “Determined will is the beginning of all magical operations,” says Paracelsus. *Ichha sakti* is the power of Will. Will is the force of Spirit in action, and it is illimitable and exhaustless, but we have contracted the divine power of spirit within to the pin-holes of petty, personal and selfish desires. Using the power of Will we must create ourselves anew. Michael Angelo said, “I saw an angel in the marble, and I carved until I set him free.” The “imperfection is only in the lower elements,” so that once we purify the lower principles we may manifest the divinity within.

The fact that we are always striving to obtain something for ourselves shows what kind of magicians we are, and why we have so little power. A vast reservoir of force lies within us, but we cannot use it as we are selfish and want to gain power without giving anything in return. The most wonderful powers that ever have been used can be obtained by any human being by understanding the teachings, and by living the life. By purifying our will, imagination and magnetism we can benefit others around us. In astral body is the magnetic fluid which all men possess and constantly radiate, especially through the eyes and finger tips, though generally unconsciously to themselves. Whenever we act, wherever we look, we affect other people with our magnetism, so that we are all practical magicians, whether we know it or not.

(Concluded)

THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF LIFE

THERE IS scarcely anyone who has not wondered, at some time or the other, whether life has a purpose, and whether there is meaning in the good and evil experiences which come to us continually. Everywhere, in every department of nature, we see ever-active, immutable and impersonal Law in incessant operation. Regularity, rhythm, intelligent design and orderly progression are clearly discernible in all nature, from the atomic to the cosmic. It is a futile argument of the theologian that God made all this, if by God is meant an extra-cosmic Being, apart from man and nature. Absurdities implied in the idea are evident. Equally absurd is the argument of the materialist that the universe is the outcome of blindly acting forces devoid of any design or purpose.

The most perplexing of the problems of life is that of good and evil. Why people differ from one another in their character, qualities, tendencies, inclinations, capacities, motives and actions; why some are good and some are evil; why often good people are seen struggling with adversities and misery, while evil-doers are favoured with fortune's bounties. All this also cannot be but due to the immutable decree of the laws of life. From ancient times this law has been known to be the law of cause and effect, called Karma, and its twin law—Reincarnation. St. Paul stated it plainly and simply: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (*Galatians*, Chap. 6, verse 7)

Harmony in the physical world, which science has observed and recorded, is Justice in the spiritual and moral world, which the great Sages have observed and recorded for countless ages. They have said that man is an Eternal Thinker, a moral being, and that Justice is the inherent virtue of his being. Circumstances of our lives, the experiences of good and evil, of happiness and sorrow, of health and disease, virtue and vice, and so on, are never accidental, but down to the smallest detail, the just and exact result of our own thoughts and acts in prior lives on earth. We produce

causes, and we experience the effects which flow from the causes that *we ourselves*, and none other, instituted. Hence the aphorism that there is no Karma unless there is a being to make it or feel its effects. Cause and effect can have no relation except through the individual who produces and experiences both. If that be so, none can receive and experience the effects of actions done by another, unless that one had, directly or indirectly, participated in any degree in the act committed by the other person or persons.

Hence, a knowledge of the law of our being brings to us the conviction that there is not an accident in our lives, nor a misshapen day nor a misfortune which cannot be traced to our own doing, either in this or in a prior life, and that no evil can touch us if we have not done evil, nor any good that we might have done fail to benefit us some time or the other. When we thus view life in the light of an understanding of the absolutely just law of our being—Karma—we realize the perfect justice of whatever falls to our lot, good or bad, and accept it humbly as just what we ourselves desired, with a full sense of responsibility. Such an attitude of acceptance and self-responsibility in the face of difficulties and adversities develops in us a moral power and a spiritual discernment, which enable us to learn the lesson of life which is implicit in the experience. It also helps us to gain wisdom to think and act in ways which bring about better results for the good of ourselves and of others.

None lives and acts in isolation. We all act in relation to, and in company with, our fellow beings. Like the ripples produced by a pebble thrown in a pond sets in motion every drop of water in the pond, so too, every act of ours affects for good or ill, not only every unit of the whole human family but all beings throughout the universe. As the ripples produced by the pebble falling in the pond spread out in all directions, to finally converge and expend their energy at the point from where the wavelets were generated by the falling pebble, so the effects of our actions re-converge on us who produced the cause by our acts. We experience these

returning impressions of our past actions as pleasure and pain in varying degrees of intensity exactly proportional to the moral quality of the causes we instituted. For example, we feel a natural sympathy with some people, and a spontaneous friendship and mutual sympathy develop between us. We observe that personal magnetism of sympathetic natures harmoniously blend. With certain others we feel a certain aversion, and then mutual hostility and enmity develops between antipathetic natures. Our varied feelings and attitudes towards others whom we meet in life are not chance happenings. They are a continuation of the sentiments we had mutually generated in the past life, and have potential for good or ill in the future, for us and for others. Mr. Judge has this to say:

Inasmuch as we learn almost solely from each other, as we are all for each other, the effect of affinities upon our acts and thoughts is enormous and wide. It anon saves us, and anon damns. For we may meet in our lives a person who has remarkable effect, either for good or ill, because of the affinities engendered in the past lives. And now our eyes are open, we act today for the future. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 4)

Mr. Judge illustrates this law by a hypothetical case, the likeness of which is commonly seen in life. Two friends with strong mutual sympathy have been so throughout their lives, and then they part at death. In subsequent lives, one of them develops dispassion, and progresses to a high level on the spiritual path, whereas the other goes about carelessly in the worldly ways. The power of magnetic sympathy, which the two had mutually generated between them in the past, unfailingly brings the two souls together in some future life. When they meet again the one who had grown in wisdom and holiness has a power to touch inwardly the life of his old friend, and influence him to pursue a nobler ideal in his life. Instances of contrary kind are also seen. Numerous are instances in which careers and fortunes of individuals have taken altogether new and unexpected turns, for good or ill, in similar manner, by the influence of someone they came in contact with.

People we meet, events which unfold in our lives, impressions they make on our minds, are all significant, and full of meaning, as these are continuation of the past, and have a potential effect on our future life. If, for instance, we have a feeling of aversion for someone, or a mutual antipathy exists between us and another, and if we act impulsively on the negative feeling towards the other whom we dislike, we will have produced such a reaction in that person that, in a future life, he will surely come into our life as an adversary, and work to hurt us or cause obstacles to be placed in the path of our life. The way of the average man of the world is to regard such as are ill-disposed towards him as his enemies, and allow ill-will towards such to take root and grow in his heart. But, if we are wise, instead of acting on the impulse of dislike or hatred, we should choose to mend our relation with our adversary by deliberately cultivating thoughts and feelings of good-will towards him, and acting in ways that practically benefit him. We will have then taken the first step in reshaping our relationship with him on a positive note. If we persist in charity and good-will towards our apparent enemy, the negative magnetism between us will progressively weaken and be substituted in time with one of love and friendship, and harmonious vibrations ensue between the two. A potential enemy is thus transformed into our friend and a helper. Hatred can never be overcome by hatred but conquered and transformed by Love alone.

The Purpose of life is to learn to so think, live and act as to be free from the binding power of attachment and aversion—from the pairs of opposites. If we have a personal liking and preference for anything, we become bound to it through attachment. If we dislike anything, any person or circumstances of our life, that feeling makes a deep impression in our psyche, and binds us to what we dislike. We cannot get rid of anything by turning away from it through disgust, anger or hatred. *Light on the Path* teaches:

Do not fancy you can stand aside from the bad man or the foolish man. They are yourself, though in a less degree than

your friend or your master. But if you allow the idea of separateness from any evil thing or person to grow up within you, by so doing you create Karma, which will bind you to that thing or person till your soul recognizes that it cannot be isolated. (p. 16)

That we cannot separate ourselves from our fellowmen, whether good or bad, whether friendly or inimical, is the lesson life is teaching us, even if it has to be learnt through pain and suffering. Good and evil are relative, and they have no absolutely independent existence apart from our consciousness, and they are an inseparable pair. As Karma of everyone is inextricably interwoven with the great Karma, no one can sin and suffer the effects of sin without adversely affecting others, nor can one progress in ethical life without benefitting humanity, even if it be in a small measure.

We cannot condemn one who may be doing evil because we do not know the Karmic causes which impel him to do evil. Moreover, the very painful experience of the ill effects of the apparently evil act may well be the means for the Soul concerned to awaken to a perception and a realization of the true and the good. We are here in the world, life after life, to learn to so live and act with wisdom and dispassion as to be free from the binding power of the pairs of opposites, of likes and dislikes, so that with a clearer light we gain thereby, we may become the better able to help others.

So if we follow *Bhagavad-Gita*, second chapter, we must do only those acts we believe right for the sake of God and not for ourselves, and, if we are regardless of the consequences, we are not concerned if they *appear* to be Good or Evil. As the heart and mind are the real planes of error, it follows that we must look to it that we do all acts merely because they are there to be done. It then becomes difficult only to separate ourselves from the act. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 23)

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: It is said that magnetic purity is required in a true healer. What is magnetic purity and impurity? Should each one of us aim at having pure magnetism?

Answer: Astral body is the vehicle of *Prana* or life energy, and just as blood circulates through the body, life energy or Pranic currents circulate in the astral body. The life energy circulating in the astral body ultimately stream forth as our magnetism in the form of magnetic fluid. Purity of magnetic fluid or “pure magnetism” is not to be obtained by water and soap, and though it is affected by cleanliness of skin, hair, nails, etc., it is not dependent on it. “Man makes his magnetism with his mind,” says an occult aphorism. The quality of *Prana* that partakes of man’s psychic nature is dependent on our thoughts. Since we are always thinking, our magnetism changes every hour, for better or for worse. A person who lives a morally pure life can purify his own magnetism and also the *psychic atmosphere* around him. Pure magnetism works as a wonderful talisman, repelling evil influences.

It is true that powerful currents of magnetism emanate from all physical bodies including human beings. Magnetic emanations of one object can affect another, quite unconsciously. However, since man is endowed with will, man alone can direct the magnetic fluid at will and control its quality. We impart our magnetism to whatever we touch or wear. We can take the example of the housewife in the kitchen: her bad mood, impatience or irritability can poison the food she is cooking. Not only has each foodstuff its own magnetic property, but there is also the magnetism of the housewife herself,

which affects the food she cooks. During the period of menstruation, bad elementals are easily attracted towards women. If the woman moves about freely in the house she would infect every person and thing in the house with the bad magnetic aura, and hence the seclusion of women during menstrual period is the time-honoured custom in several nations.

In India, people are reluctant to shake hands, because every person has a magnetic exhalation. These magnetic exhalations are more intense from the eyes, palms, fingers, soles of the feet, etc. Careful physicians wash their hands before leaving each patient. Just like physical disease, impure magnetism can be communicated by touch, and hence the reluctance to shake hands. As one progresses in one's spiritual life, he should be careful, and not allow his magnetism to become impure by external influences.

A *Lanoo* (disciple) has to dread external living influence alone (magnetic emanations from living creatures). For this reason while at one with all, in his *inner nature*, he must take care to separate his outer (external) body from every foreign influence: none must drink out of, or eat in his cup but himself. He must avoid bodily contact (*i.e.*, being touched or touch) with human, as with animal beings....A disciple has to live, so to say, in his own atmosphere in order to individualize it for occult purposes. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

A mesmeric healer projects the magnetic fluid from himself to any object or being, *consciously* and under the guidance of his will. A pure and healthy mesmerizer cures his patients by projecting or imparting his healthy, vital fluid. When a healthy operator mesmerizes his patient with a determined desire to cure him, the exhaustion felt by the former is proportionate to the relief given to the patient. A process of endosmose takes place, and the healer parts with a portion of his vital aura to benefit the sick man. H.P.B. explains that impure magnetism has in it the germs of early death. Moreover, when a physically diseased healer tries to heal, he often imparts his illness to his patient, and robs him of what strength he

may have, and in such healing, there is only displacement of disease, from one organ to another, so that the person thinks that he is cured of the disease, but that disease re-appears later in some other organ. Writes H.P.B.: "But, what if the healer be morally diseased? The consequences may be infinitely more mischievous; for it is easier to cure a bodily disease than cleanse a constitution infected with moral turpitude....The healer, in such a case, conveys to his patient—who is now his victim—the moral poison that infects his own mind and heart. His magnetic touch is defilement; his glance, profanation. Against this insidious taint, there is no protection for the passively-receptive subject....The evil that one such 'healing medium' can effect is incalculably great; and such healers there are by the hundred." (*Isis*, I, 217)

Question: Some of the scriptures speak of One Reality as "He," "Him," etc., calling It the "creator of the world." Why does Theosophy object to the words "creator" and "He" as applied to One Reality or God?

Answer: The dictionary meaning of the word, "create" is to bring into being, to form out of nothing. "Creation" implies a creator and material for creation, and that the two are separate. It is like a potter creating a pot where the efficient cause, *i.e.*, idea or design for the pot comes from the potter, while the material for the pot, *i.e.*, clay is outside of him. Even the creation, *i.e.*, pot is separate from the potter. Since there is nothing outside of the omnipresent One Reality, the word "creator" cannot be applied to It, else we are likely to think of God as an extra-cosmic Being, apart from man and nature. The Upanishads give the analogy of a spider weaving the web, in which the material for the web comes from the mouth of the spider, as also the idea or design for the web. Likewise, both the material and plan for the universe are within the One Reality, as also, the universe itself.

Theosophy teaches the *manifestation* of the universe, implying that, that which was hidden or potentially present is now manifest or expressed, just as spoken word is an outward expression of

concealed thought. In fact, Theosophy differentiates between evolution and emanation. While Science speaks of evolution from the simple to complex forms, taking place as a result of working of blind forces of Nature, the “Doctrine of Emanation” speaks of divine intelligences guiding this process. Nothing may evolve except it has first been involved.

However, in Theosophy, third logos or *Brahma-Prajapati* is called the “Creative Logos,” which is the synthesis of the progenitors or of creative powers. Only at the third stage, Brahma separates his body into two halves, male and female, and creates in them *Vach* and *Viraj*. At this stage, there is separation into spirit and matter, *purusha* and *prakriti*; and matter is shaped by the intelligent forces, according to the ideas in the divine mind. Even regarding *Mulaprakriti*, described as a veil thrown over the *Parabrahmam*, H.P.B. says that the first differentiation from the absolute IT is spoken of in most cosmogonies as *feminine*, only as a figure of speech; in strict philosophy it is sexless (*Transactions*, p. 3). Moreover, man connects the concept of procreation more with the *feminine* aspect, and man knows his mother more than his father (*S.D.*, I, 5). Thus, till the third stage of differentiation is reached, there is no male and female, and hence, matter at the highest level—the undifferentiated, primordial matter—is not fecundated by some act in space and time, but fertility and productiveness are inherent in it (*Transactions*, p. 88). Theosophy avoids using “He” for *Parabrahmam* to avoid materialization and anthropomorphization. H.P.B. mentions (*Transactions*, p. 3) that in the Kabbala of the Talmudists, Ain-Soph (transcendental Reality) is described as boundless, infinite, etc., and yet that absolute principle is referred to as *He*! In addition, the Light that emerges from that Boundless Circle, is *Sephira*, and is described as She, the wife of Ain-Soph. This is anthropomorphizing the Absolute to an unusual extent! In the Occult Philosophy the transcendental Reality is always referred to as THAT, IT or TAD.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

All religions claim that the authority of their scriptures is based on the spiritual experiences of their prophets and founders. All of them affirm that though these experiences are beyond the scope of linguistic expression, in order to be able to influence the society, these experiences were put into words. However, these verbal expressions are coloured by the mind-sets of human beings who try to express the experiences into words, as also, by the mind-sets of the society they were trying to influence. “These were essentially relative attempts to capture the essence of transcendent experiences and then were given absolute status and glorified as the word of God! Giving absolute status to the scriptures creates friction in the name of religion. All scriptures, by definition, have to be relative....A Hindu Upanishad recognizing the contextual nature of all scriptures proclaims that spirituality cannot be encapsulated through any linguistic enterprise. Religious scriptures, however authoritative, are at best, mere indicators of a deeper reality,” writes Jay Lakhani.

The author points out that some theologians now accept the limitations to their scriptures and are ready to acknowledge that in some aspects their scriptures are purely allegorical, especially when it comes to the creation and evolution debate. How can any religion claim that unless people of other religions embrace the teachings of that religion they are doomed for eternity? Unless such divisive scriptural injunctions are highlighted and challenged we would not be able to combat religious violence. If we are ready to emphasize rationality, dropping some of the offensive and divisive religious injunctions, only then we can again make religions the cohesive force in society.

Transcendence means undifferentiated, and hence the transcendent experience of one prophet can never be different from the transcendent experience of another prophet. Thus, when Jesus speaks about his Father in Heaven, or when Moses mentions

interaction with the burning bush or when Hindu prophets speak about the glory of *Brahman*, we might say that the same or similar experience was being expressed in different words. “It can be claimed that the reconciliation between different religions lies at this experiential level, but at the level of expression a variation is inevitable....Scriptures are not word of God, but are words of men, and this is where the problem lies,” writes Lakhani. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, April 5, 2015)

The scripture of every religion contains philosophy that is the result of direct perception of one or more individuals, who have tried to put their experience into one comprehensive system of thought. These beings are called sages, seers, prophets or the Enlightened Ones. For instance, Vedas are said to be the result of direct perception—an immediate insight into ultimate Reality. We also find that teachings of every religion remained pure as long as the prophet-reformer or the Teacher was on the scene. In most cases, these teachings were transmitted orally and were reduced to writing only after the death of the Teacher. It is at this stage that there is found to be conscious as well as unconscious corruption of the original teachings, with gradual shift from the study and application of ethics to rites, rituals and ceremonies. As a result, today religion plays a major role in dividing man from man.

Somehow there is a feeling that religion is a matter of beliefs and emotions in which there is no scope or need for enquiry, questions, seeking of explanation. It is out of moral cowardice, out of fear of public opinion that we are afraid to step out of the circle of wrong religious ideas, and continue to follow the beaten track. How shall we distinguish true from false philosophy? Any philosophy that is presented as “revelation” can never be a true philosophy. A true philosophy must be impersonal, universal in its application and true at all times. It must enhance the feeling of goodwill and brotherhood. Similarly, a true teacher always presents the truth in the spirit, “Thus have I heard,” and leaves it open to be accepted or rejected. We must understand that the teachings of all

the scriptures put together do not contain the whole truth. Every religion is in possession of only relative truth, and therefore, must be tolerant of other religions.

Is old age a curse? There are several cases of harassment and ill-treatment of old parents by their children. Children argue that the parents have not done any favour in rearing them, but have only fulfilled their responsibility. The concept of a nuclear family precludes from the definition of “family” all others apart from a pair of adults and their children. Accordingly, old parents become “outsiders” who do not figure in their scheme of things. “All through the ‘formative’ years of their kids, the aged father or mother are ‘assets’; but the moment they have ceased to serve their utility purpose, the senior members are nothing but liabilities to be unceremoniously discarded as used diapers,” laments Pachu Menon. Aged parents are in demand so long as there is need for a domestic hand to do household chores and to take care of the little ones. Gone are the days when mother and father were considered to be like a god, *i.e.*, divine, and also when there used to be children like legendary “Shravan,” known for exhibiting extreme devotion towards his parents. What could be more disturbing than couples wishing they had no children!

“Out of every ten elderly couples in India, more than six are forced by their children to leave their homes....The old-age homes are clear cut reminder of this dismal show of abhorrence for the old, feeble and helpless parents with more and more of the elders being pushed into the confines of such homes at the slightest sign of discomfort for the children,” writes Menon. But happily there are still to be found rare examples of children going out of their way to look after their aged parents. Besides the indifferent attitude of children, there are other equally pressing matters such as, deteriorating health, malnutrition, fear, depression, non-productivity and financial incapacity, that are the most common

problems faced today, by the senior citizens all over the world. Though there are separate queues, reservations, discounts and concessions offered for senior citizens, there does not appear to be any concrete efforts made to address the issues of the aged. Efforts must be made to introduce a series of such programmes that would keep the elders busy. Let the young people remember that old age is an inevitable stage, as one progresses through life. Instead of ritualistically observing 1st October as “World Elders Day,” it would be a “welcome change to have teams of youngsters coming forward to assist the elders in their times of need,” writes Pachu Menon. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, February 28, 2015)

Break down of the joint family system and the advent of nuclear families has contributed to erosion of some of the good values, such as, sharing and caring. In the name of independence we have alienated from each other. Our outlook towards the institution of marriage and family life has undergone radical change. It looks like our generation wants to eat the cake and have it too! We want companionship of other human beings, *minus* the responsibilities. There exists a very special bond between the parents and children. Our parents have given us the body through which the soul can gain experience. Each one of us must recognize that no human being is an independent evolution, and that several people have contributed in making us what we are today. Both old age and child state is characterized by helplessness and vulnerability. H.P.B. defines duty as that “which is due to Humanity, to our fellow-men, neighbours, family and especially that which we owe to all those who are poorer and more helpless than we are ourselves.” The neglect of the old people reflects the overall deterioration of human relationship.

On the other hand, since old age is an inevitable stage, for most of us, in life’s journey, it is only wise to prepare ourselves for old age, with its accompaniments—loneliness, boredom, depression and physical infirmity. The Buddha says, “Men who have not lived the disciplined life of a chaste mind, who have not gathered soul

wealth in young age, pine away like old cranes in a lake without fish.” We may begin by learning to be self-dependent while we are surrounded by the loved-ones—in terms of doing one’s own things and learning to do the “crying and sighing” within ourselves. We might learn to spend some time, every day, in solitude. *Right Loneliness* is to be achieved by one who combines in himself the capacity of a voluptuary and a stoic—one who is able to enjoy all the pleasures of life to the fullest, and yet, is not cast down if any or all the pleasures are denied.

Storytelling has always been one of the most powerful and delectable ways to convey the truths of life. In India, with its ancient tradition of oral narration of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, *Panchatantra* and *Jataka* tales, and multitude of regional folklore, storytelling has held pride of place. Attentively listening to the stories motivates children to ask “why,” to question norms and help to cultivate patient listening skills. With the advent of visual media like cinema and television, watching movies, cartoons and serials have become the preferred form of entertainment to storytelling and listening.

“We have found that stories are a good way for families to bond. They also increase the attention spans of children and make them more patient and reflective. It improves their social and language skills and has an overall harmonious impact on children,” says Ameen Haque, founder of the Storywallahs, an organization offering story sessions to kids, adults and corporates alike. We may have forgotten the Archimedes Principle or the Pythagorean theorem that we learnt in our school days, but almost all of us remember the story of the thirsty crow, and there lies the significance of oral storytelling in education, says Haque. According to him, stories have power that we do not leverage.

Sudipta Dhruva, a Mumbai-based storyteller confesses that storytelling has helped her become better at organizing her thoughts,

and helped to build empathy. Currently, there has been considerable revival of interest in story-telling, with inclusion of storytelling in the state board schools by Karnataka government, as also, in CBSE curriculum, and is part of the Open course at Azim Premji University. “Stories engage people at every level, teach values and stimulate the imaginations, drivers of real change,” writes Punya Srivastava. (*Life Positive*, March 2015)

We all love to read and hear good stories. Some of the creative fictional stories allow us to escape from the stereotype of reality of our own lives to enter into the consciousness and lives of others, and allow us to see things from another’s point of view. Stories could be excellent tool for drawing attention of people to social corruption and the dire need for corresponding reform. Science-fiction books tend to transport us into the future, compelling us to exercise our imagination. “Creative fiction, like meditation, expands your consciousness, and at times allows you to explore forms of consciousness other than human,” writes Jug Suraiya.

Mythologies, fairy-tales and folk-lore have distinct value of their own. We might say, Myths convey cosmic and anthropological facts, just as fables convey truths about the social behaviour of men and women. Similarly, fairy tales reveal one aspect of the human subconscious, the psychic nature of every man. The word “Myth” is derived from the Greek *mythos*, which means story or tale. A myth is a fabulous statement (story) containing some important truth. “Mythology is the repository of man’s most ancient science...There is ‘history’ in most of the allegories and ‘myths’ of India, and events, real actual events, are concealed under them” (*S.D.*, I, 304 and fn.). Joseph Campbell is of the opinion that any good story would enchant us and teach us, something, but ‘myths’ are distinct in that they are potent, timeless tales which inspire and have the power to shape and control our lives. These stories reveal something about man and the universe.