

**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”

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WORD OF HONOUR

A WORD of honour is a vow, or an oath, or a solemn promise. The dictionary meaning of promise is, “a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified.” We are making promises or commitments all the time, to ourselves and to others. We commit ourselves to meet a friend on a certain day, we promise ourselves to finish a certain piece of work in next three days, we promise our child that we will buy him a toy once he has finished his homework, and so on. No business can be conducted except on the basis of promises. But more often than not we fail to keep our promises. It is a useful exercise to note how many promises we break in a week or a month, and why. Such an exercise is likely to lead us to a better understanding of our own nature.

People today say, “Promises are made to be broken.” Rama held that his father must keep his vow even though it meant his own banishment. Actions reflect beliefs and ideas, and according to the sacredness attached to a promise, a civilization rises or falls. It is easy to see that men and women in our present civilization make promises and vows, casually, as they do not realize the sacredness of a promise. Almost in all walks of life we fail to keep our “word of honour.” A person who fails to keep a promise, most of the time, loses trust of people, and is labelled “unreliable.” For such a person the phrase goes, “you can write on water, what he says.” On the other hand, those who almost never fail to keep their promise, it is

said that his words are like a line carved on a stone.

We come across two kinds of people who break their promises. There are those who make a promise but almost always without intending to keep it. Those who tend to make promises casually, cheat themselves and also others. During election campaigns, it is usual for a candidate contesting an election to make promises—if he is elected he would construct roads and cheaper houses, make available electricity and water in villages, and so on. But alas, in most cases, the voters are largely disappointed. It is very common for an employee to make a promise to complete the work the next day, with the full knowledge that he is not going to attend office the next day. When we make a promise with full knowledge that we do not mean to keep it, it is equivalent to a lie. We make a solemn promise, and yet choose the contrary. We create a divide in our consciousness. We temporarily stifle the voice of conscience and kill our better nature, and thus commit a minor suicide. “The mortal sin is the suicide of the soul. This suicide would occur if the man devoted himself to evil with the full strength of his mind, with a perfect knowledge of good and evil,” writes H.P.B. There is no dearth of such people in our world today.

Oath is a far more solemn form of promise. For a very long time, there was a tradition in India when witnesses, in the courts of law, had to swear by the sacred book of his or her religion because it was assumed that a person who swore by the *Gita*, or the *Quran* or the *Bible* would speak the truth. Whether one swears by the sacred book or simply by God, he or she affirms that “what I shall state shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” Yet, so many are willing to bear false witness! An affidavit is a written document stating an oath of a person. A general affidavit is also known as “Declaration Under Oath.” This type of sworn statement is used to declare that certain facts are true. But experience shows that there are many who have no qualms of conscience in making an affidavit and declaring that which is contrary to the facts.

A vow is yet another kind of solemn promise, a word of honour.

No Hindu marriage is completed without the ritual of *saptapadi*, which literally means “seven steps.” *Saptapadi* involves taking of seven vows or seven promises by both the bride and the groom, with the sacred fire serving as the witness. In the last vow they promise to be true and loyal to each other, to take care of each other in any circumstances, and to remain companions and best of friends *for the lifetime*. In all the cultures wedding vows outline the same goals—lifelong commitment, devotion and mutual respect. Marriage is seen to be an everlasting bond, and the marriage vows reinforce the couple’s intent to stay together through thick and thin. The unprecedented increase in divorce rate seems to suggest that within few years, or even months of marriage, these vows are almost forgotten. When these vows are not taken with understanding the couple does not know what exactly they are promising to do.

One’s faith in human goodness and trustworthiness is re-affirmed when one comes across people who do not make lip-promises, but are ready to go to any length to keep one’s word. There is this very moving folktale about a tiger and a truthful cow. A Brahmin had a cow named Baula who used to go to the forest all by herself. One day, on her way back from the jungle, she met a tiger. The tiger wanted to eat her up, but Baula told the tiger that she had a three-day-old calf that was very hungry. She pleaded with the tiger to let her go back and feed it, promising to return after she had fed the calf. She repeated the promise three times and the tiger let her go. Baula fed her calf and returned to the tiger as promised, her calf running after her. When the tiger saw Baula and calf, he would not believe it. Out of pity he let the cow free.

Sometimes we make promises purely out of good intentions. We also promise things, at times, to get what we want. “Consider your schedule and ask yourself if this is a promise you can keep. It is always better to under-commit and over-deliver than over-promise and fall short,” writes Michelle Gielan, in *Psychology Today*. This brings us to the other category of people who make a promise and mean to keep it in all honesty, but they fail, either because they are

lukewarm in their effort, or they have not given enough thought to realize the probable obstacles in the way of fulfilling the promise. We normally like people who readily agree or even promise to do what we ask, than a person who is reluctant to commit. Over a period of time, our experience shows that the latter are sincere, thoughtful people, and hence they prefer to disappoint others, when in doubt, than make false promises. Is it not better to take time in evaluating the situation and then arrive at a fair judgment before we commit ourselves? It is said of the Rajputs that they would honour their word even at the cost of their lives. History is replete with examples of such Rajputs. “Every pledge or promise unless built upon four pillars—absolute sincerity, unflinching determination, unselfishness of purpose, and moral power, which makes the fourth support and equipose the three other pillars—is an insecure building,” writes H.P.B.

A vow or a pledge is a promise made to one’s divine nature. We must not allow our good intentions to remain mere intentions but act on them. The transcendental virtue of Sheela is, “harmony in word and act,” which also means “keeping our word.” If we have made a promise to a friend of taking a certain book for him, we must remember to take it. Mr. Judge says that the promises I make to myself, I consider them as important as the promises I make to others. Here, he speaks about importance of a vow or a pledge. When we make a promise, or take a vow or an oath without proper forethought and knowledge of how to overcome the difficulties then in breaking it we weaken something in our psychic and spiritual nature. A vow or a pledge is a sincere promise, a solemn resolution, born of absolute determination that there shall be no failure. In making a vow we invoke forces that are higher than the forces of ordinary thought. It is the higher or divine Will that comes into play. Hence, in breaking a vow or a pledge we sin against our higher nature. Vows which are self-energized and made after careful examination, when kept, produce an inner change.

We are caught up in our desire life—“I want, I think, I desire”—

and we make our vows and promises on the spur of the moment or in the heat of a desire. We fail to keep them because at some other moment another desire may take hold of the mind and take the place of the former. This goes on, and when we break a promise the power of the Will is weakened. Will is a colourless force or fluid and requires a proper vehicle to hold it. That vehicle is desire. Will is guided by desire. Desire is the mover of the will. But if we have too many desires it is like pouring water into a sieve. One of the chief aspects of the Will is its steady flow, and that is made possible at our stage only by the steady holding of the desire in the mind.

“A pledge once taken is forever binding in both the moral and the occult worlds. If we break it once and are punished, that does not justify us in breaking it again, and so long as we do, so long will the mighty lever of the Law [of Karma] react upon us,” writes Mr. Judge (*The Path*, July 1889). We must realize that to take a vow or a pledge to live the higher life, in dead earnest, is a very significant step in one’s life. The article, “Significances,” points out that to “pledge” is to promise, to devote and to dedicate. Since the Higher planes or conditions of consciousness continue from life to life, the pledge or a vow also continues; and the Ego must struggle with its personality in each present life to bring about either a renewal of past worthy vows or an offsetting of the karmic effects of those which were unworthy. (*The Theosophical Movement*, March 1938)

The article goes on to explain that the *Aphorisms on Karma* state that changes may be made in the physical body to fit it for a different Karma, “through the power of a vow” or a pledge. It is but natural then that in the earlier times wise teachers emphasized the sacredness of promises and pledges. There is a striking instance of this to be found in the story of King Arthur and his Knights. Arthur, the ancient Celtic King, who represents Wisdom, faced almost a ruin of his beloved Round Table Group when he learned that during his absence the impetuous knights had taken vows to seek the Grail. He told them unhesitatingly that they were not ready for that highest Quest. Yet, in spite of the losses to himself, he also said that having

bound themselves they must keep, even through pain and grief, their solemn word. He meant that once having taken the pledge, Karma would compel them to experience the results. If, therefore, as in the case of the knights, one takes a vow or a pledge in false enthusiasm, which is psychic intoxication, then nothing but disappointment and misery can be expected. How many vows, marriage and others, are taken unthinkingly now in our Kali Yuga!

When one takes a vow or pledge in earnest, one makes a solemn promise to one's divine nature, to be a better human being. When such pledge is taken in the right spirit, one calls upon every help and blessing from the Divine within to his assistance. By an intense desire to be under Its protection, one places himself also under the protection of the active and beneficent powers. When one is determined to keep the "promise" made to his Divine nature, and sincerely endeavours to overcome the weaknesses of his own nature, surmounting them one by one, he progresses ahead of ordinary humanity, "as a charger outdistances a weak horse."

However, such a determination also invokes opposition from the inner and outer planes, and those who aspire to move ahead without giving up, should possess tremendous moral power. We can accumulate the required moral strength by "unselfish acts, by kind thoughts, by detaching our minds from the allurements of the world," writes Mr. Judge. It is not easy, he explains, to continue steadily on the path, with little or no variation, because very few are strong enough to keep up the never-ceasing strain. "Time alone, and many ages of service [of humanity], can give them that strength" (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, pp. 71 and 94). What we call karmic stamina is the effect or fruit of past unselfish good Karma that has ripened. The ripening of the past good Karma depends upon stock of unselfish good thoughts in the present life. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 34*, p. 13)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT ON THE PERFECTION OF GENEROSITY

WHEN WE speak of the Perfection of Generosity, what do we mean? To surround men and animals with benevolent care; to have compassion on the multitude of those that are in error; to rejoice that wise men have succeeded in obtaining Salvation; to protect and succor all living beings; overpassing the heaven and overstepping the earth, to cherish benevolence wide as a river or as the sea, and to exhibit liberality to all living beings; to feed those that are hungry; to relieve those that are thirsty; to clothe those that are cold; to refresh those that suffer with heat; to offer prompt assistance with medicines; when it is a matter of chariots, horses, boats, vehicles, precious substances of all kinds, including famous jewels, husbands and wives, children or kingdom—whatever it may be that is asked for—to make gift thereof immediately—even as did the crown-prince Sudana, who exhibited his liberality towards the poor even as a father nourishes his children and who, when he was banished by the king, his father, entertained pity, but not hatred.

Thus have I heard: once upon a time the Buddha was keeping residence in the kingdom of Shravasti, at the Jetavana monastery, in Anathapindada Grove. The Buddha said to the monks:

Once upon a time there was a King named Kindly-and-Silent. This king conducted himself with goodness and fairness. He loved his people as if they had been his children. In governing his kingdom, he applied just laws, and there was no one among his people who entertained hatred for him. His kingdom was a large one, and every one that was there, was occupied with his own business.

This king always cherished sentiments of benevolence, and looked with compassion on the multitude of living beings. He was afflicted by their stupidity and by their errors, through which, in their folly, they brought only loss upon themselves. He sought after and maintained principles of wisdom, and it was his delight not to be ignorant of anything. He had pity on all living beings, and

protected them as does Shakra [Indra], king of the deities.

Murder, theft, lewdness, deceit, slander, falsehood, words of double meaning, jealousy, anger—none of all these evil things had left any trace in his heart. . . . He believed in the Buddha, he believed in the Law, he believed in the words of the monks. He believed that good deeds are rewarded with happiness, and that evil deeds are punished with misfortune. He kept the plain rules of the Ten Good Courses of Conduct:

Sinful Acts: (1) Thou shalt not take the life of any living being. (2) Thou shalt not take that which is not given. (3) Thou shalt not give way to the sins of the flesh. (4) Thou shalt not speak falsehood. (5) Thou shalt not speak harshly. (6) Thou shalt not utter slander. (7) Thou shalt not speak idle words. (8) Thou shalt not covet. (9) Thou shalt not wish evil to another. (10) Thou shalt not entertain false doctrine.

It so happened that in his kingdom there was a poor man in such a state of misery that he could endure it no longer. Being at the end of his resources, he committed a theft. The owner of the stolen goods arrested him and arraigned him before the king.

The king asked him: “Did you steal?”

The thief replied that he had indeed stolen.

“Why,” returned the king, “did you steal?”

The thief replied: “I was actually in terrible misery, and had no means of living; that is why, breaking your laws, so holy and plain, I walked into the fire and committed a theft.”

The king, penetrated with compassion, praised him for his frank sincerity, and quite embarrassed, felt ashamed of himself. Heaving a deep sigh, he said: “If there are among my people those that suffer from hunger, it is I that have made them hungry. If there are among my people those that suffer from cold, it is I that have stripped them of their garments.” Then he added: “I am so situated that I can bring it about that no one in my kingdom shall be in misery. On me alone depend the sufferings and enjoyments of the people.”

Accordingly he granted a general amnesty to his kingdom. He

brought forth all the precious objects which he had in his storehouses and dispensed them in largesse. Those who were worn out with hunger and thirst, he made to eat and drink. Those who were cold, he clad. Those who were sick, he provided with medicines. Fields, gardens, dwellings, gold, silver, round pearls, and irregular pearls—of all these, each person obtained, as much as he asked for. From the birds that fly, and the animals that walk, to the insects, all obtained all that they wanted, in the matter of the five kinds of cereals and products of the soil.

From the moment when the king dispensed these largesse, the kingdom was prosperous and the people lived in comfort. One person drew another towards wisdom. Among the people, no one killed any more, nor stole the goods of another, nor sinned with the wife of another, nor was cheat, or a slanderer or a liar or insincere in his talk, or jealous or angry: all these wicked and mean impulses subsided and disappeared. All men believed in the Buddha, believed in the Law, believed in the monks; they believed that whoever does good deeds obtains happiness, that whoever practices evil incurs misfortune. The whole kingdom was peaceful and happy; the punishment of the lash and stick were no more administered. The enemy kingdoms made their submission; the arms of war rotted in the magazines; in the prisons no more were prisoners put in the chains. The people praised this happy state of things, and said: “What happiness that we were permitted to live at such a time!”

The deities, the dragons, the demons, and the spirits—all, without exception, contributed to the rejoicing, and accorded their favours and their protection to this kingdom. Baneful influences disappeared; the five cereals ripened in abundance; households possessed them in abundance. But more particularly the king rejoiced; at that time he obtained the Five Blessings. These are the Five Blessings: (1) to live long; (2) to possess comeliness that grows each day; (3) to possess virtue which shakes the eight directions, the zenith and the nadir; (4) to have no sickness, and to have energy which increased each day; (5) to possess a kingdom whose four regions are at peace,

and to have a heart that rejoices without ceasing.

When, finally, the king died, he was at that moment like a man in full vigour, who eats heartily and delights to sleep. Immediately he was reborn in heaven among the gods of the Thirty-three. As for the people of this kingdom, they kept the Ten Commandments which the king had given to them, and there was none of them that went to be reborn in the form of a denizen of hell, a hungry ghost, or an animal; after that death, and they were all reborn in heaven among the deities.

The Buddha said to the monks: “At that time, he that was King Kindly-and-Silent was I myself.” Having heard this religious instruction, the monks rejoiced above measure; they bowed to the Buddha and then withdrew.

[Taken from *Buddhist Parables*, translated from the original Pali by Eugene Watson Burlingame.]

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The above story reminds us of the Sanskrit sloka, to the effect: As the land so the water, as the seed so the sprout; as the country so the language, as the king so the people (*yatha rajah tatha praja*). There is a similar saying in English, “Like father, like son.” In the *Ramayana* we get a detailed description of Rama as possessing all the highest virtues, and who puts his duty as a king even before his personal relationships. He persistently guards his character so that he can set an example for his subject. Fathers, leaders, kings ought to be role models for the laity.

A certain king of Persia was reputed to be a just king. Once he went on a hunting expedition. He and his servants stopped on the way for food, and discovered that they had forgotten to bring salt. The king sent his servant to the nearby village to bring salt, with the instruction that he should not forget to pay for the salt else the whole village will be ruined. The king went on to explain to the surprised servant, saying: “If the king, exercising his authority, plucks and eats even only one fruit from the garden of any of his subjects, then

his servants, following his example will destroy the whole garden, root and branch.”

In the *Gita* (III, 21) Shri Krishna says: “Whatever is practised by the most excellent men, that is also practiced by others.” The moral upliftment of society depends, among other things, upon the example set by leaders of the nation. It is by people following ideal role models that we have an ideal society. If the leaders of the society are corrupt, the entire fabric of the society is weakened. The function of a king or a leader is to set an example of his own life and inculcate in people, an internal recognition of value, so that they spontaneously exhibit righteous behavior.

“Therefore the Sage says: ‘So long as I do nothing, the people will work out their own reformation. So long as I love calm, the people will right themselves. If only I keep from meddling, the people will grow rich. If only I am free from desire, the people will come naturally back to simplicity,’” teaches Lao Tzu.

Like the righteous king in story above we should all realize that we are partly responsible for human misery. *Light on the Path* reminds us, “Remember, the sin and shame of the world are your sin and shame.” None of us acts in isolation. We are all united on inner and invisible planes, and are continually affecting each other through our thoughts, feelings and actions. To ignore the suffering of another by saying, “it is his karma!” is gross misunderstanding of the doctrine of Karma. It is difficult to say what portion of another’s karma is *strictly of his own making*. As Mr. Judge suggests, “The indissoluble unity of the race demands that we should consider every man’s troubles as partly due to ourselves, because we have been always units in the race and helped to make the conditions which cause suffering” (*Forum Answers*, p. 55). Besides individual karma there is also collective and distributive Karma. We must recognize that as members of the human family, we are united and we affect one another, and we have contributed in making the humanity as we find it today.

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

QUALIFICATIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP—I

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

IN THE THIRTEENTH Discourse, Krishna lays down the metaphysical or the knowledge aspect necessary for the understanding of what discipleship really means, and what it implies for one who wants to become a disciple. After having presented the metaphysical teaching, he also gives us the ethical and practical application of the same. Thus we find in the Thirteenth Discourse what we find throughout the Teachings of the philosophy of Theosophy, *i.e.*, both the knowledge aspect of that philosophy and the ethical and spiritual rules that are derived from that knowledge. In Theosophy, the knowledge and its application, go hand in hand, as knowledge is necessary to give us a firm foundation, a real basis for the practice of the ethical precepts, and as we practice what we have studied, we are able to grasp more of the real rules of the metaphysical truths for the ethical life. The ethical precepts are underlying the metaphysical background, so we must consider the question how we can become disciples ourselves.

Both the metaphysical teaching, as to discipleship, and its ethical application are taken up in this discourse. Krishna gives us the real basis to understand what it is necessary for us to know before we can hope to make of ourselves disciples, what is the constitution of our own nature, what we are not, and the various aspects of our being. Krishna then gives the constitution of the universe, and the constitution of man, who is the exact copy of that Universe, and this classification, he says, is a three-fold one. In the Seventh discourse, to which the Thirteenth naturally corresponds, Krishna had already presented the three-fold classification. He then speaks of his own nature as being three-fold, as being composed of his lower nature, *Mulaprakriti*, the material substance of the Universe; his own Higher Nature, *Daiviprakriti*, the energizing aspect of the

universe, and Himself—above, distinct and superior to both the material essence and the energizing principle of that matter, superior to both *Mulaprakriti* and *Daiviprakriti*, matter and force. Though in the Seventh Discourse, Krishna gives a definite description of his lower and higher natures, he only gives a few hints as to His own nature, or Krishna himself. But these hints are sufficient to identify Krishna himself as being above his lower and his higher natures, and with the Universal aspect of Nature, which H.P.B. mentions in the Ten Items of *Isis Unveiled*.

In the Ten Items H.P.B. says that nature and man are both triune. The higher principle of the universe is Spirit, the Source of all force, is alone immortal, eternal, and indestructible, and its two lower aspects constantly change, whereas this Spirit never, ever changes. Krishna is that Spirit, Source of all Force. Considering Krishna in Man himself, we see that Krishna is the spirit, the immortal and sovereign lord, who is above the body and the incarnated soul in the body, and overshadows these two, and illumines both. H.P.B. adds that man alone, the soul—the second aspect of our constitution, the animating and vitalizing principle—the real man, alone, when he succeeds in merging himself with the spirit above, gains his own immortality, because he unites himself with that immortal principle, or becomes that immortal, principle. On the understanding of this great fact in spiritual life, depends the understanding of what discipleship really means. A disciple is that man, that soul, who has succeeded in thus merging himself with the “Father in Heaven,” with the Divine Source from which he himself is derived, with that over brooding Spirit, the sovereign and immortal Lord. Thus the disciple is the man who becomes self-consciously immortal and without that union of the Soul with the Spirit above, self-conscious immortality is not possible for man.

As a result, Krishna finds it necessary to once again explain man’s nature. He wants to let us see clearly, so as to make us perceive what we now are, and what we may make of ourselves through following the path of discipleship. To let us see how we are mortal

beings today, but how we can become immortal beings, and what there is for us still to learn and understand. Krishna makes this clear by giving us three definite and distinct pairs of opposites which relate and correspond to this dual nature of the Universe, *Mulaprakriti* and *Daiviprakriti* or matter and energy (or force). In each case, in explaining these three pairs of opposites, Krishna also tells us of that higher principle from which the two are derived—that higher principle, therefore, which includes both—and thus we can see that what Krishna does is not only to present three pairs of opposites but three distinct trinities, the two opposites and the higher principle above the two opposites. In some of the Sanskrit editions of the *Gita*, there is an additional verse in the Thirteenth Discourse, a verse which opens up the Discourse, and in it, Arjuna asks Krishna to explain to him these three pairs of opposites. This opening and additional verse reads: “I wish to know, O Keshava, about *Prakriti*, *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna*, *Purusha*, *Jnana* and *Jneyam*.”

Prakriti and *Purusha* simply mean matter and energy, or force; *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* means the field and the knower of the field; *Jnana* and *Jneyam* means knowledge and that which is to be known. The whole discourse is simply the answer of Krishna to this three-fold question of Arjuna. Shri Krishna takes up each of these three pairs of opposites and explains what they are, and at the same time shows the relationship and the correspondence among these three definite pairs. Krishna begins with the explanation of what *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* are, perhaps because it is easier to understand that particular pair of opposites, for it relates directly to our own constitution. *Kshetra*, explains Krishna, is the body. In fact, all the lower principles of man are known as the field, the *Kshetra*, and the Soul that is incarnated in that body is *Kshetrajna*, the knower of that field, the knower of the body. *Kshetrajna* is the principle of man which incarnates in the body, and tries to work through that body, as the man in the field works, tills and prepares his own field. Krishna adds immediately that there must be a principle which is higher than the body and the soul, for it knows both the body, and

the knower of the body.

Comparing the body to a field, and the man who works in the field to the soul, we can see that the higher principle, necessarily and logically, represents the *owner* of the field. The word for “owner of the field,” in Sanskrit, is *Kshetri*, and is mentioned in this discourse, in verse 33. We have then three things: the field, or *Kshetra*; the Knower of the field who is the incarnating soul, or *Kshetrajna*; and the owner of the field, he who is also the Master and the Lord of the man who tills the field, and he is the *Kshetri*. The *Kshetri* is the Divine source, the “Father in Heaven,” who has sent this incarnated soul into the body, and who is the owner of both body and soul.

If we consider this same classification and compare man to the knower of the field, and his body to the field, and the Divine Source who sends the incarnated man, to the Owner of the field, then we find that the knower of the field is not only the knower of his own body, but there is another knowledge which is within his grasp. The man who is working in the field knows naturally all about that particular field, but he may turn from the field to the Owner, to his own Master, who has sent him to work in that field, and begin to inquire about the nature of that Owner. Then he becomes one with the Owner, he understands the purpose and object of his being in that field, and he knows his own nature. Likewise, the incarnated soul knows about its own body, but it must turn its attention from the body, and place it on the Divine Source, to discover its innermost essence and nature. Then the incarnated soul acquires a higher knowledge, knowledge of “the Father in Heaven,” of its Sovereign and immortal Spirit, who illumines the man in the body, and shines upon that man in terms of knowledge.

(To be continued)

SAKTI—SOME REFLECTIONS

III

ITCHASAKTI is the *power of the Will*. It is also described as “force of desire.” On the spiritual plane desire is indistinguishable from Will. But on our plane, distinction is made between the two, and the desire is regarded as the mover of the Will. Both Will and desire are creative forces, but whereas desire creates blindly, Will creates intelligently. “Mind is the name given to the sum of the states of consciousness grouped under Thought, Will and Feeling” (*S.D.*, I, 38). In the preface to *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, Mr. Judge points out that the Soul is superior to the mind, and that with the help of the Will the Soul can control the mind. Thus, the Will is not wholly dependent on the mind, but is separable from it. The Will and mind are only servants for the soul’s use.

Will is the colourless force—force of spirit in action. Will is a spiritual power present in every portion of the Universe. The mysterious effects of attraction and repulsion are unconscious agents of the Will. We see the action of the Will in automatic activities of the body, such as, digestion, blood circulation, in the movement of our limbs, etc. That is why we are told that the most ordinary manifestation of the Will “is the generation of certain nerve currents which set in motion such muscles as are required for the accomplishment of the desired object” (*S.D.*, I, 293). In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 144) H.P.B. writes, “I *will*, and my limbs obey.” We find that atoms and cells in certain portions of our body are not only sensitive but are extremely sensitive, and immediately respond to our Will. We *will* to speak, and the atoms forming our vocal cords adjust and we are able to throw out sound. This is possible, because every time we use our Will we make an impression on the atoms of various parts of our body. After repeated impressions, these atoms acquire a Will of their own for action. We know that the baby takes some time in training the atoms of his brain and body to respond to its Will, and hence takes time in learning to speak, walk, talk, etc. But

at our level, we only have to think of going to a library and all the atoms of the body and brain adjust themselves and respond, and enable us to go to the library.

In *human beings*, the Will is the most developed and powerful force. Man alone can give conscious impulse to the force of Will. H.P.B. points out that the Indian Fakirs and jungle ascetics, who cut, burn and inflict all sorts of injuries on their bodies, do so for the development of Will-power. On the other hand, commenting on the rite of fasting, H.P.B. writes, “If there is one thing more than another which paralyses the will power in man and thereby paves the way to physical and moral degradation it is intemperance in eating: ‘Gluttony, of seven deadly sins is the worst.’” (*The Theosophist*, January 1883)

We say, “Behind Will stands Desire.” Desire is the mover of the Will. We experience Will at two levels. There is the *personal will*, displayed markedly by a strong-willed or stubborn person. What we consider a strong-willed person is the one with strong and intense desires, which move the Will into action for bringing about the wished for ends. Will is the divine power of the Spirit within—illimitable and exhaustless. We have limited that power by entertaining small, mean and selfish desires. Moreover, the ideas give the direction to the power of Will, but what we lack are universal ideas.

Some people develop Will power through various Yoga practices. But development of *Spiritual Will* or *perfected human Will* requires cultivation of unselfishness and readiness to be assisted, guided and instructed by our divine nature. In other words, Spiritual Will could be developed only when we have learnt to drink, to the last bitter dregs, what the cup of life holds for us, without a murmur, and realize that the adverse and painful circumstances are for our experience and discipline. When we are ready to sacrifice the personal nature, so that the lower nature loosens its hold on the higher, then all the power and force of the divine nature becomes available. The more we pay heed to the “Voice of Conscience” within, the greater will be the development of our Will. When the

attitude is, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,” and when the lower, personal nature is purified so that it is brought closer to the divine nature, then our prayer becomes *Will prayer*. It seems that for a brief space of time the mind is unfettered and becomes one with the divine, and we find our thoughts and desires being translated into action. Hence, it is then no longer a prayer but a command. Our task in allowing the manifestation of Spiritual Will is dual: We must purify desire and at the same time strengthen the Will and make it the absolute ruler.

In the article, “The Elixir of Life,” Dr. George Beard is quoted as saying, “The force of Will is a potent element in determining longevity.” If there are two people, alike in every other way, surrounded by similar circumstances, the one with greater courage and grit will be longer-lived. He says that once a person resolves to live, he can, so to speak, defy death. “Those... whose bodily organs are nearly all diseased, to whom each day is a day of pain, who are beset by life-shortening influences, yet do live by Will alone,” says Dr. Beard. The same article goes on to point out that we only die when our Will ceases to be strong enough to make us live. So, for most of us, death comes when for some reason, for one single instant, our “clutch on life” or the tenacity of the Will to exist, is weakened.

Some believe that God orders our life, putting some of his creatures in a favourable situation, while others are in misery. Some others believe that destiny is determined by the stars, so that each individual is born under the influence of certain stars, and no one and nothing can change the course of what is predestined and pre-ordained. Man has free-will, or power to choose, and it is by making good or bad choices that we weave our destiny. H.P.B. points out that man is a free agent during his stay on earth, but “there are *external and internal conditions* which affect the determination of our will upon our actions.” In other words, the exercise of free will is conditioned or limited by the *external* circumstance, as well as, the *inner* capacities and conditions—both being the result of past Karma. We can change our destiny by our will-power, by giving the right

response to what fate brings to us; by accepting and learning the necessary lesson, when we are unable to change it in spite of our efforts.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa illustrates this by the example of a cow tethered to a pole with a long rope. The cow feels she is free to roam anywhere but the perimeter of the area in which she can move is fixed. Similarly, he explains, every human being has a free will but the length of rope is governed by God (or Law, based upon our previous actions).

The phenomenon of hypnotism can be largely explained on the basis of will-power. In hypnotism a person of strong will-power puts another person of weaker will-power in a trance state and controls him. Once in such a state, the hypnotised person will do anything suggested to him by the hypnotiser. “Hypnotism is a modern name for a power known for ages. By means of this power, one who has it and uses it on his fellowmen, paralyzes that channel in the brain of his subject through which the subject, as Ego, operates and controls his brain. This action prevents the subject from receiving any other impressions than those suggested by the operator, in ordinary cases....Crimes have been committed under such suggestions, the subject being ignorant of the fact that the suggestion of the operator led to and impelled the act,” explains Mr. Crosbie.

Today, hypnotism is being increasingly used, especially, in the field of medicine, to help patients overcome a variety of mental illnesses. Medical journals and other magazines narrate cases where hypnotism has been used with seeming success, and tend to persuade readers that no harm can come to anyone who allows himself to be hypnotized. Like most other psychological phenomena, hypnotism is very little understood, even by those who use it for a good purpose. Even when the outcome of submitting oneself to hypnosis may appear to be good, there always remains the possibility that some suggestion or psychic infection that was introduced during the passive state of the subject, can manifest after many years. As against few and dubious advantages, there are immeasurable dangers in this practice.

During the performance of magical phenomena, if there is present in the audience a person who is a skeptic, an unbeliever in these phenomena, then he can unconsciously exercise his will-power in opposition and hinder or even completely stop the magical operations. H.P.B. mentions that even Jesus, with his powerful Will, could not counteract the opposing power of skepticism. “Yet even Jesus met with cases where the unconscious force of resistance overpowered even his so well directed current of will,” so that he could not perform “many mighty works there, because of their unbelief,” writes H.P.B. (*Isis*, I, 57). Faith establishes the Will, and Faith without Will is like a windmill without wind, barren of results.

Each one of us gives out magnetic emanations, *unconsciously*. But a mesmerizer projects the same fluid from himself, *consciously* and under the guidance of his Will, which can put another person into mesmeric trance or bring about cure. Magnetic emanations of one object can affect another, quite unconsciously. However, since man is endowed with Will, he can impart his magnetism to any inanimate object, and endow it with a protective or destructive power; because the magnetic influence imparted by a human being could be good or evil, depending upon his motive and magnetic purity or impurity. A piece of iron gets magnetized when applied to a piece of magnet, so also, a talisman is often a worthless bit of metal, a scrap of paper or a shred of fabric, imbued by that greatest of all magnets, called human Will, with a potency for good or ill. The power of the “evil eye,” is the sending of the invisible fluid charged with malicious Will and hatred, from one person to another, with the intention of harming him.

Besides healing, there are several examples of almost miraculous happenings through the magnetic fluid directed by Will. H.P.B. mentions a certain Fakir called Chib-Chondor, who by making passes, *i.e.*, directing the magnetic fluid with his Will, could paralyze most deadly snakes and even far away objects. He could, by the power of Will, move furniture, open and close doors and windows, from a distance. (*Isis*, I, 470-71)

Probably, the same explanation holds good for blessing with a hand, in which the person directs the fluid from the palms of his hands, with good intention and powerful Will. While sending out New Year Greetings and good wishes, H.P.B. says that let us try to feel especially kindly and forgiving towards our enemies, else we might end up sending “evil eye” greetings instead of good wishes. Thus:

Every man or woman is endowed, more or less, with a magnetic potentiality, which when helped by a sincere, and especially by an intense and indomitable *will*—is the most effective of magic levers placed by Nature in human hands. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 28*)

In the early part of her life, H.P.B. kept her family and neighbourhood in a constant state of excitement by performing many miraculous phenomena. Many thought it was magic, while others thought that she was a fraud. In one case, her brother, who doubted her powers, challenged her. A small chess table stood on the floor, and it was so light that even a child could lift it, and a man could break it. She was asked to fasten it by Will to the floor. She asked people to examine the table, and they found that they could easily lift it and move it. After a while, she asked them to try again. They then found that no power of theirs could stir it. Her brother, who thought he was very strong, and therefore could easily expose the “trick,” embraced the little table and shook and pulled it without effect, except to make it groan and creak. “A Yogi generally performs his wonders by means of *Itchasakti* and *Kriyasakti*.” (*S.D.*, I, 293)
(*To be concluded*)

DESIRE ardently to do, and even when you shall not have succeeded in carrying out anything but some small duties, some words of warning, your strong desire will strike like Vulcan upon other hearts in the world, and suddenly you will find that done which you had longed to be the doer of.

—W. Q. JUDGE

LEARNING AND WISDOM

THE NOUN, *learning*, refers to knowledge acquired through systematic study and application pertaining to any of the wide range of subjects denominated, generally, under the head “humanities.” Men of learning extend the horizon of knowledge and enrich the intellectual culture of the civilization. Learning is much valued, and promoted through a system of education, sponsored and promoted by the state and private initiative.

It is of vital importance, however, to understand the difference between learning and wisdom. Learning is not the same as wisdom. Learning, as is well known, pertains chiefly to intellectual development. Wisdom, on the other hand, refers to spiritual knowledge, which is superior to learning. Wisdom by its all-seeing universal perspective justly evaluates learning for its moral worth and spiritual value. Any learning, that does not promote moral improvement in men and society, and fails to instill in the hearts of people a love of truth and devotion to the principle of justice, is really worthless. Learning without wisdom—in other words, intellectual development without corresponding evolution of the guiding spirit of Soul-wisdom—does more harm than good. Illustration of this truism is not far to seek. The very character of our civilization shows it. “Our age, we say, is inferior in Wisdom to any other, because it professes, more visibly every day, *contempt for truth and justice, without which there can be no wisdom*” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 32*, p. 2). Truth of this insightful observation is evident from an impartial survey of the effects of the idea of progress pursued by our civilization. The fact that while modern dictionaries give a clear definition of the noun, *learning*, but not a satisfactory one for *wisdom*, is in itself a sign that our civilization is devoid of wisdom.

Generally, the term *wisdom* is held to be synonymous with sagacity, prudence, commonsense, farsightedness, etc. In one place it is equated with possession of occult power and knowledge of mysterious things. In the middle ages fortune-tellers and those who

practiced witchcraft were called *wizards* or *wise-women*. Thus we do not have a clear definition of wisdom in modern lexicon. We have to turn to ancient civilizations and their sacred books for an understanding of the true meaning of the word Wisdom.

In ancient cultures wisdom always referred to the innate faculty in man of discriminating between the true and the false, the real and the unreal, of discerning the eternal principle behind the veil of the visible, transitory phenomena—as the proverbial mythical swan, when offered milk mixed with water, partakes of the milk, leaving the water behind.

Service rendered to the edification of the world by the great Western scholars, in 19th century, in translating, for the first time in history, the hitherto unknown treasures of ancient religions and philosophies of the Orient is immense indeed. The world is richer for it. Yet the scholasticism of the learned Orientalists did not go beyond dead-letter sense of the scriptures, often arriving at erroneous conclusions, for lack of wisdom on their part to apprehend the hidden meaning of myths and symbols. It was one of the objects of the Theosophical Movement to correct the mistaken notions of the scholars by throwing the light of wisdom to unravel the hidden meaning of the sacred texts to the extent permissible.

Modern civilization has made impressive progress in science, technology, transport, communication, trade and commerce, and transformed the world into a global market economy. But Masters of Wisdom do not regard mere consumption of material goods and luxuries, and accumulation of wealth as true progress. H.P.B. sums up the enormous injustice and discord resulting from such a lopsided progress and points out its moral worthlessness, when she says:

Rapid civilization, adapted to the needs of the higher and the middle classes, has doomed by contrast to only greater wretchedness the starving masses. Having levelled the two former it has made them the more to disregard the substance in favour of form and appearance, thus forcing modern man into duress vile, a slavish dependence on things

inanimate, to use and serve which is the first bounden duty of every *cultured* man. Where then is the Wisdom of our modern age? (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 32*, pp. 2-3)

This is a just evaluation of the character of the contemporary world in the light of timeless wisdom. It is claimed that modern progress has emancipated man from the drudgery of physical labour and slavery to capricious rulers of the bygone era. An impartial observation, however, shows that the slavery of the past has only metamorphosed and reappeared in another form to enslave man, more pernicious in its effects than the former—dehumanizing slavery to machines and mechanical life, and to unlimited gratification of passions of lower self. Alienation of man from nature and from his own self is the result, with all its catastrophic consequences. The much lauded scientific progress is in service of this kind of progress. When asked whether Masters of Wisdom aid scientists in their researches and discoveries in view of enormous contribution science has been making towards the world's progress, They said that inasmuch as science has no concern with morality, virtue and philanthropy it can make no claim upon Their help, unless it blends itself with metaphysics (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 279). In fact, it is said that the Adept Fraternity constantly watches over the world's progress and prevents discovery of some of the hidden laws of nature, as much as the karma of the race permits, and diverts the mind of the investigator into channels leading to discoveries less harmful to mankind. Knowledge is a double-edged sword. It does more harm than good if it is not governed by Spiritual Wisdom, which is Compassion. Only then is there a hope of emancipation of man in the truest sense, when the Light of the Heart, illuminates, rules and guides the emotions and the intellect.

Undertaking good works without wisdom often produce most harmful results. This truism is well illustrated in the experience of many a noble minded philanthropists who are engaged in social work. Many of them have found to their dismay that not a few of the beneficiaries of their charity were beyond help. In some cases

charity brought out the worst qualities in them to their own detriment and harm to society, as if the very misery in which they were, was their best friend and benefactor, which kept them down from harming themselves and others the more. Enormous social iniquity, injustice and misery which follows in the wake of large sums of money poured into public charities is another illustration of the truism that good works without wisdom are productive of more evil than the one which is sought to be remedied. It is the poorer, weaker and helpless sections of public who are hit the hardest by the effects of socio-economic imbalance it causes, while the corrupt officials, the influential and the well-to-do sections are the major beneficiaries.

The Wise know that the evils of society, and miseries and misfortunes which befall individuals and nations are the result of thought and action of the people based on wrong ideas and beliefs held by people; and that addressing the outer effects merely by providing physical relief through social and political action—important though these are—only gives temporary relief, leaving the rife source of evil emanating from their minds and hearts wholly untouched. It is like cutting off poisonous weeds from the surface of the ground, leaving the prolific roots untouched below the soil, to sprout again to cover the ground. The Wise address the Inner Man who feeds on ideas. We must strive to obtain Wisdom in order that we may help the world and our suffering fellowmen in the right way—with that insight into the Karma of individuals, and the needs of the Souls, which shows whom to help, in what measure, and how, and whom to leave in their own misery which is their best teacher. Man reaps what he has sown in ignorance. What is needed is to dispel the ignorance with the light of true knowledge of the Self, to be the Self of all, of Universal Brotherhood, and of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation. True service of humanity consists in working for dissemination of true knowledge which alone, and nothing else, is the panacea for the ills of the world. Action proceeding from good intentions and pure motive often produces undesirable results. Good motive alone is not enough. Pure motive,

untainted with desire for self-benefit, must go hand in hand with Wisdom. Only then are the benefactor and the beneficiary alike raised to a higher plane of thought and reap all-round benefit that redounds to the good of the world. Wisdom in action is illustrated by the Teacher thus:

A better knowledge of the nature of man and the purpose of life is needed; as this is acquired, the causes of misery are gradually eliminated. No greater charity can be bestowed upon suffering humanity than the right knowledge that leads to right action. The possessor of this knowledge will be filled with divine sympathy for all sufferers; he will relieve only such distresses as should be relieved in each and every case, while at the same time he will impart as much of his greater knowledge as the sufferer can receive and apply. But he will not let his left hand know what his right hand does; he will have no thought of reward nor even of gratitude; he will simply do all that he can and the best he knows how to do to raise the sufferer to a higher plane of thought and action, while he affords sufficient physical relief to give a foothold. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 221-22)

ONCE a salt doll went to measure the depth of the ocean. It wanted to tell others how deep the water was. But this it could never do, for no sooner did it get into the water than it melted. Now, who was there to report the ocean's depth?

What Brahman is cannot be described. In Samadhi one attains the knowledge of Brahman—one realizes Brahman.

MEN often think they have understood Brahman fully. Once an ant went to a sugar hill. One grain filled its stomach. Taking another grain in its mouth it started homeward. On its way it thought, "Next time I shall carry home the whole hill." That is the way shallow minds think. They do not know that Brahman is beyond words and thought.

—*Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna*

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: Is it right understanding that Charity or the "spirit of giving" cannot be *cultivated*? We see that either an individual possesses it, or he does not.

Answer: *Light on the Path* says, "At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope and love (or charity)." Thus, the feeling of charity is innate or inherent in man, but it can get obscured. In Buddhist philosophy *Dana* or Charity is the transcendental virtue, or the perfection of the art of giving. Charity does not include merely giving or sharing of the material wealth. It includes love, forgiveness, sympathy and giving of right ideas or knowledge. Like every other virtue, such as, calmness, patience, honesty or truthfulness, charity is a virtue which needs cultivation. In her *Five Messages* H.P.B. writes, "The function of Theosophists is to open men's hearts and understandings to charity, justice, and generosity, attributes which belong specifically to the human kingdom and are natural to man when he has developed the qualities of a human being."

It appears that all of us possess the "spirit of giving" to a greater or lesser extent, as we rarely come across a totally self-centred individual. There are those who may be "stingy," reluctant to share their money or any material things. But they might be perfectly willing to help the needy by guiding them to people and organizations from which help may be received. Such people might be sympathetic and patient listeners, helping people to unburden their feelings of anxiety, anger, pain, guilt, etc. Then there are those who are willing to give their time and energy by reading to blind people, giving company to the lonely and depressed, or by visiting the old-age homes and talking to the elderly. There are also those rare few who

help at mental level, by sending out their good thoughts to all those who are afflicted.

Yet, we do find people who prefer to remain in their own shell, being reluctant to participate in life. In most cases, the “spirit of giving” is obscured by some experiences in life. Someone who has experienced abject poverty for the good part of his life often develops a feeling of insecurity and is found to be extremely possessive of his material wealth. Greed is another obstacle in the way of giving. Desire grows on what it feeds. “Lusts are never satisfied, not even by a shower of gold,” teaches Lord Buddha. The same applies to mental and psychological charity. Some experiences of life, such as, too much pain, ill-treatment by parents and elders, and being deprived of love, can temporarily incapacitate a person from giving love and sympathy. Whatever may be the cause for the lack of charity in a person, if no effort is made to overcome it, then like many other tendencies, lack of love, sympathy and generous feelings may not only get ingrained in one’s character, but are carried over from one life to another.

But fortunately, even the most self-centred person can turn the corner, once he decides. The inspiration and impulse for which can come through experiences of life. A man whose son had died of pneumonia, as a result of getting wet in the rain, could not get over the trauma of the loss, till he decided to help all those without shelter, by reaching them to dry places. Another man having lost all his family members in an accident went into deep depression. Then at one stroke he got over the trauma by undertaking to educate slum children. A timely help of money, right guidance or sympathy can kindle the “spirit of giving” in a person. Often reading about instances of deeds of charity can induce one to give. The quality of giving can be cultivated right from childhood, by teaching children to share their toys and food with other children. Children could be induced to give toys and clothes, from the surplus, to other needy children. Such training and values given in childhood is generally not lost in adult age.

Love between a man and woman is one of the most potent forms

of love, which has the power to lift a person out of apathy and help him burst the hard shell of pride and egoism. Consider an egoist, “with stream of life half-congealed within him, waiting for some angel to stir the waters into life. By and by the miracle happens, the great teacher [life] brings him face to face with another soul, qualified in all things to supplement his deficiencies. At once he feels the infusion of supernal power....At last the poor egoist can burst his bonds, he tastes the divine sweetness of sympathy with another soul....And he learns one sublime lesson—the divinity of renunciation. Through giving he receives; through self-sacrifice he inherits his kingdom,” writes Charles Johnston (*The Path*, February 1888). And his sympathy is not restricted to a single soul, but extends in an ever-widening circle, till at last he embraces all humanity in holy bonds of love, points out Johnston.

“Giving” is an art, and like all other arts, it must be practised. One learns to dance by dancing; to sing, by singing; and so also, one learns to give by giving. One begins by being an apprentice (trainee) in the art, till finally, after years of giving, one becomes a master of the art of giving, and is perhaps enabled to say with Walt Whitman, “I do not give lectures or a little charity, when I give, I give myself.”

Question: “Good Karma is that kind which the Ego desires and requires; bad, that which the Ego neither desires nor requires,” is the definition of good and bad Karma given by Mr. Judge in *Vernal Blooms*. But are we not told that the Ego has to pass through all experiences, good as well as bad? Then how to reconcile the two?

Answer: The above definition of “good” and “bad” Karma occurs in the article, “Advantages and Disadvantages in Life.” In the article, Mr. Judge seems to suggest that we can judge “good” and “bad” karma from the point of view of personality, or from that of the Ego. The general human tendency is to regard favourable conditions of life as “good” Karma and the person so surrounded is considered “fortunate” or “lucky.” At a personal level, each one of us seeks pleasures of life, comfort, love, sympathy, and when these are absent

we feel that fate is unkind, or god is unjust. Our Ego applies quite the opposite criterion of judging “good” and “bad” Karma. The so-called “fortunate” person has money, ability, and means to travel, and to fill his surroundings with works of art, with comfort and luxury. When a person constantly lives in such an environment, his body and his senses become slaves to comforts and luxuries of life. Moreover, they do not contribute to character-building, but rather lead to weakening of character. On the other hand, a personality envired by poverty and adversities of life is likely to change for the better, as these experiences “carve into the character, more energy, more power and more fortitude.”

Thus, from the point of view of the Ego, good karma is that which makes for growth and building of strong character, and that depends upon the response given to, what are generally considered to be good and bad environments. For instance, from the Ego’s point of view, it is not bad karma to be born poor, but it is certainly “bad” karma if as a result the person becomes a robber or earns money by unfair means. What is the formula to determine whether Karma is good or bad? In the case of the good man surrounded by adversity it may well be good Karma, if that environment strengthens him and broadens his sympathies. But for another person the same may well be regarded as bad karma (from the Ego’s point of view) because instead of fighting the adverse circumstances, he sinks further into wickedness and vice.

Likewise, when a person of good character is placed in pleasant and comfortable surroundings, and if he uses it to help others, it becomes good Karma. Here and there, an advanced soul can use the advantages of life to benefit others—not allowing them to weaken the character. The same karma becomes “bad” for a vicious person who wallows in mud of sensuality, deepening his evil tendencies, when placed in pleasant circumstances. Ultimately, it is necessary for the soul to pass through *all* experiences of life and learn the necessary lessons.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Of all the classical languages, only Latin and Sanskrit are almost non-functional. Sanskrit, especially, is dead as a colloquial language, writes Sumit Paul, who learnt spoken Sanskrit at the School of Oriental and African Studies, at London, and believes that Sanskrit has deeply impacted sub-continental languages, with the exception of the Tamil language. Tamil literature predates Sanskrit literature by a millennium. Poet-linguist A. K. Ramanujan observed that most of the sub-continental languages originated either from Sanskrit or from Tamil. The world renowned philologists like Glasse, Fletcher and Congdon opined in their book, *Sanskrit: Repertoire Of Wisdom*, that “Sanskrit is the only immaculate language from semantic and orthographic perspectives.” Based on his Ph.D. thesis, Fletcher has come to conclude that 67 languages in our world originated from Sanskrit.

Discrete languages like Persian, German, Pahalavi are also believed to have originated from Sanskrit. Persian borrowed 19000 words from Sanskrit. Thus, for instance, *Ashwa* (or horse) in Sanskrit became *asp* in Persian, *abhra* (cloud) in Sanskrit became *abra* in Persian, *tishnagi* (thirst) in Persian came from *trishna* in Sanskrit, and so also, *hast* (eight) in Persian came from *asht* in Sanskrit. The list is endless.

The grammar of Sanskrit, called *ganitiya vyakarnam*, or “mathematical grammar,” is so systematic that once you learn it, you can easily pick up other languages. “It is a proven fact that a German-knowing person can learn Sanskrit within a month and *vice versa*, because Sanskrit and German are extremely close. . . . The great German literary figure Goethe called German, ‘an offshoot of Sanskrit.’ Russian raconteur Gogol was of the opinion that Russian was the daughter of Sanskrit,” writes Sumit Paul.

It has been observed that pronouncing certain words in Sanskrit language can cure stammering. Somerset Maugham, an English Novelist, could overcome his lifelong stammering, by pronouncing

certain Sanskrit hymns, as advised by psychologist Carl Jung. Harvard University in the United States of America has a 300-year-old Sanskrit department that teaches therapeutic Sanskrit to cure speech-related problems. The legendary English scholar of Sanskrit, Sir Monier Williams, called Sanskrit, “the language of languages.” Shahjahan’s eldest son Dara Shikoh was a scholar of both Sanskrit and Persian, and he has translated *Upanishads* and *Puranas* into exquisite Persian. Youngsters should “learn this great language and augment their horizons,” writes Sumit Paul. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, April 16, 2017)

Sanskrit, called *Devabhasa* or “the language of the gods,” is considered to be a very old language. Mr. Judge records a prophecy concerning the Sanskrit language, by saying that Sanskrit language will one day be again the language used by man upon this earth, first in science and in metaphysics, and later, in common life. “The new language cannot be English, but will be one which is scientific in all that makes a language, and has been enriched by ages of study of metaphysics and the true science.” There are scientific *mantrams* which are not to be found in modern western languages but in ancient Sanskrit and other languages which preceded it. The laws governing their use are also to be found in those languages. H.P.B. describes the potency of Sanskrit language thus: “In the Sanskrit, as also in the Hebrew and all other alphabets, every letter has its occult meaning and its rationale; it is a cause and effect of a preceding cause and a combination of these very often produces the most magical effect. The vowels, especially, contain the most occult and formidable potencies.” (*S.D.*, I, 194)

In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 198-200) we are told that with the fourth or Atlantean race developed speech, which was at first, monosyllabic, vowels mixed with consonants, and then came agglutinative speech of loosely connected words, and lastly, inflectional speech—the mystery tongue of the Initiates of the Fifth Race which was the root of the Sanskrit language. In the article “Was Writing Known Before Panini” (*Five Years Of Theosophy*),

H.P.B. points out that the direct progenitor of Vedic Sanskrit was the sacerdotal language, which has its distinct name but cannot be given. Vedic Sanskrit is described as comparatively rough and unpolished when compared with the classical Sanskrit. Classical Sanskrit is attributed to Panini. She comments that Sanskrit alone, of all the languages has survived and has had its cycles of perfection and cycles of degeneration. It has survived even as “dead” language. Sanskrit was nearly lost, but is now spreading in Europe and America. Classical Sanskrit has been only restored and in parts perfected by Panini. But neither he nor Patanjali created it. The Sanskrit language has had its rise and fall several times.

How can we stop thinking repeatedly about a negative incident and move on in life? It has been observed that in people facing psychological problems there is a tendency to keep thinking of the problem, again and again. Such “brooding” becomes the cause rather than the result of the problem. “The repetitive thinking of happy thoughts does not trouble us. In fact, we become happier. And we get a prolonged satisfaction out of it. But, painful thoughts, played again and again in the mind, can become a source of prolonged and intensified misery,” writes Dr. Shrirang Bakhle.

He gives an analogy. Repetitive thinking of any subject is like inflating a balloon, which is really small in size, to begin with. But every time we blow into it, it becomes bigger and bigger, and gradually becomes too huge and out of proportion to its actual size. For example, a sincere young man who was persistently ridiculed in the office, about finishing the work late, felt hurt, started brooding over it and thinking anxiously as to how that will affect his promotion or the possibility of his being sacked, etc. These were emotional thoughts and he kept thinking about it frequently. The main effect of such repetitive thinking is that the emotion becomes more and more intense. “We keep reading or hearing about people who commit suicide apparently for small problems such as not-so-good marks or break-up or some such reasons. In such situations, emotional

brooding is the culprit,” writes Dr. Bakhle.

What makes some people more prone to such brooding? People, who are unable to share their problems, for some reason, with their friends or family, are more likely to set up a brooding cycle. In order to break the brooding cycle, it is necessary, either to share the problem, or to get involved in some kind of activity. For example, a woman who was given to brooding, on account of failing in an interview, was asked to play a vigorous game of badminton, as she was a badminton enthusiast. At the end of a game she was a more cheerful and hopeful person. But this technique does not work with some and they drift into clutches of depression or some other mental disorder. It is important to first, recognize, and then try to divert the mind, from useless, unproductive brooding, writes Dr. Bakhle. (*Weekend, The Free Press Journal*, April 23, 2017)

In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, “No man resteth a moment inactive,” *i.e.*, even when inactive on the bodily plane, we are all the time acting on the thought-plane. What is the nature of our thoughts? Mostly self-regarding—what shall I cook? What shall I wear tomorrow? Or we find ourselves brooding over settling scores with some colleague in the office, or enviously brooding over another’s success, or getting anxious about things which are clearly beyond our control. There are sensuous thoughts and wicked thoughts of harming another. How often do we find ourselves thinking about another’s sorrow or reflecting upon some verses from the scriptures?

We can observe our thoughts, which are our own “creations” or entities. Hence, when unwholesome thoughts enter our mind, we can observe them as an outside invasion and not be identified with them or brood over them. By brooding over them, we give them a power that they do not ordinarily have. Two thoughts cannot occupy the same plane [or mind] at the same time. We must cultivate the power of positive thinking by learning to displace negative thoughts by positive thoughts. Reading good books and pondering over them is also a good way of breaking the brooding cycle. “There is no help like...the reading of good books,” writes Mr. Judge, and advises

each one to read holy books, or turn to the books which one has found by experience to elevate one’s consciousness.

Positive thoughts and feelings call forth, best efforts; so that the thing that seemed impossible moves into the area of the possible. When we make a positive formulation, *it is a direct affirmation of the will*. Once we take the positive mental position saying, “I can do it,” or “it can happen,” the whole of our emotional nature must be brought in perfect harmony with this. *When the desire is intense, the will comes into action*.

How do we become carbon copies of our parents? It is partly genetics, but largely their influence from the nursery years. During the rebel years of our lives, probably we hated everything about our parents, and yet when we reach that stage when we are raising our young ones, we discover with surprise that we are preaching a sermon to the little ones in the tone and style of our parents. We wonder, when did they manage to rig us, and how? “The older we get, the more we notice ourselves acting like our parents. But is that how it has to be?” asks journalist Chris Bourn in the *Met Magazine*. “Or is it possible to be your own person without a hint of that parent DNA or psyche?”

Science has shown that we develop through interactions with others, and since infants interact most with parents and siblings, they have the strongest influence. The psychoanalyst Selma Fraiberg wrote about what she called, “ghost in the nursery,” in which mothers treated their children the way *they* had been treated as children. We bring these patterns into many of our relationships.

By the end of the movie “Godfather,” Michael Corleone matures into a spitting image of his father, Vito Corleone. So too, in a survey of 2000 British men, most felt that they were turning into their fathers at the age of 38. “It is important to remember that we are a different combination of traits from our parents which make us unique individuals. As a result we can shift our patterns so that we do not repeat their behaviours,” says Diane Barth, a psychotherapist and

psychoanalyst based in New York City.

To break out of the mould one must be aware, and selectively try to pick up positive habits from parents and others, and build new behaviour patterns through interactions with important people, including spouse, teacher, mentor or therapist. (*Sunday Times of India*, April 16, 2017)

Are we hard-wired to be the people we become *or* are we entirely the result of our upbringing? The Nature versus Nurture debate has been going on for centuries. We need to take into account the intellectual and spiritual evolution, as also, the existence of the pilgrim soul. Till then neither genes and heredity nor environment or both put together can satisfactorily explain human traits and behaviour. The Ego may be attracted to a family because most of its predominant tendencies and character are similar to and in harmony with those of the family. Thus, following the avenue of entrance into life that offers least resistance, the Ego is born in such a family.

We might say both Heredity and Atavism are handmaidens of Karma and Reincarnation. Transmission of traits and tendency by means of parent and body is exactly the mode selected by nature for providing the incarnating Ego with the proper tenement in which to carry on its work. Heredity counts for nothing if the Ego does not bring those traits, which is shown by idiots or vicious children born to parents who are good, pure, or highly intellectual, and *vice versa*. The same is applicable to other character-traits, such as, generosity, anger, calmness, as also, likes and dislikes for food, clothes, games, books, etc.

We might say that we are a blend of heredity and environment or upbringing. Man has a free-will. It is true that we are greatly influenced by the way we were treated as children, and tend to look upon parents and elders as role models in our formative years, imbibing their values, behaviour, etc. But as we grow up we can, and we ought to, use our free-will and carve out our own paths, making a conscious effort to drop the negative traits and absorb positive values and traits of our parents.