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The Living of the Higher Life**

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THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India
email: ultmbai@mtnl.net.in ♦ Phone : 22039024
website: www.ultindia.org

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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“TRY”—A BATTLE-CRY

TO TRY is to make an attempt or to make an effort to do something. “Try” is a word with both positive and negative connotations. When a person says, “I am trying to be calm,” or “I am trying to be punctual,” it implies a lack of self-confidence, and that they are not committed to the goal and they may or may not succeed. “Trying” is not the same thing as “doing.” When one says that one is “trying” it is often a way of avoiding doing something. Those who are trying to do something are easily disheartened when they come across obstacles and consequently give up their efforts sooner than necessary. The word “try” carries an inbuilt sense of doubt and weakness. Therefore, the suggestion is to replace “I am trying to,” or “I will try to,” with “I will” do this or that. “If we change the manner in which we talk about something, then we change our belief system—the way we think about that thing—and, in changing our belief system, we can change our entire system of consciousness,” writes Michael J. Formica, a psychotherapist, teacher and a writer.

There are those who view the concept of “trying” in a positive light. It is by *trying* that we learn and also take a first and then second step which leads to completion. In its positive connotation, we realize the value of “trying one more time” or trying again. Every attempt brings improvement. The progress might not be visible at once but we are perfecting our skills. Failures are part of life and that makes it inevitable to try again and again. A student who is

weak in a certain subject tries again and again, and then succeeds in clearing it, in the second, third or even fourth attempt. “If a man knows he is bad at business, he should mortify himself by making himself learn, and thus get good discipline,” writes Mr. Judge (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 107). Hence, the saying, “Try, and ever keep trying.” “You never fail until you stop trying,” is Albert Einstein’s famous quotation.

In the “Myth of Sisyphus,” we read that Sisyphus betrayed divine secrets to mortals, and for this he was condemned by the gods to ceaselessly roll a rock to the top of a mountain, and the rock would roll down of its own weight. He had to once again push it up when it rolled down, thus again and again forever. Among other things, it is symbolic of man’s eternal struggle, his willingness to try one more time without giving up. In a sense, the whole existence depends upon “trying” again and again. A Lion has to keep trying to catch a prey and likewise, a prey has to try to escape every such attempt. In some cases, we are able to witness perseverance more markedly. Many poets and writers have described the effort made by a spider to weave its web. In the process he falls down several times when the thread breaks, but once again he tries to climb up taking the support of some unbroken thread. It is said that after being defeated several times by Prithvi Raj Chauhan, a Rajput warrior king, when Muhammed Ghori, a Muslim invader, was about to give up, he saw, while hiding in a cave after his defeat, a spider’s perseverance to weave a web, even after several unsuccessful attempts. He was inspired by what he saw. He took the support of an Indian ruler and succeeded in conquering Prithviraj.

“The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night,” writes Henry Longfellow. It refers to reaching a high level of success in any field, and that calls for a constant, unrelenting effort. This attitude of trying again and again, till one succeeds, is perseverance. It is steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delays in achieving success. At the base of

perseverance is an indomitable Will and behind such a Will is the strong desire or aspiration to achieve that goal. A person who aspires to acquire spiritual knowledge must have an ardent desire to obtain it. In fact, we are given the example of a boy who approached Socrates and expressed his desire to acquire knowledge. Socrates put him to the severe test by pushing him under the water for a few moments. When he surfaced, gasping for air, Socrates told him that when he desired knowledge as intensely as he needed air underwater he would gain it. It is an intense desire which makes one overcome all obstacles and sacrifice one's comforts.

When our aspiration to be good, truthful and honest, is not accompanied by efforts in the same direction, then often there is a reminder from our higher nature. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge mentions that those who are striving to live the higher life and to develop their inner faculties, often have a dream, in which one is apparently attacked and pursued. It is symbolic of the struggle between one's higher and lower natures. Sometimes the person may wake up terrified, because it is almost like a nightmare, when the lower tendencies seem to get the upper hand. This dream will be repeated, so long as the aspiration towards a higher life is kept up but a corresponding change in daily thoughts and acts does not take place. Such a dream is a reminder to the aspirant to act on his aspirations. This dream is repeated and ceases, only when the aspirant either gives up the fight against his lower nature and sinks back to living an ordinary life, or rises superior to, and determines to conquer his lower nature. (p. 149)

“The process of self-purification is not the work of a moment, nor of a few months but of years—nay extending over a series of lives,” writes a Master of Wisdom. The unrelenting efforts are absolutely necessary to overcome even a single habit or a fault because when we attempt to inculcate a good habit, there is opposition on the inner planes from our own tendencies. How do we form habits? Take for example the habit of going late to the office. We go late once, then twice, or thrice. On the next day, our

growing tendency will push us to become late again. But if we decide to start a new cycle, then we will look at the watch, finish our work quickly and since we are determined, we will do our best to reach on time. We may fail, but we try again the next day. Mr. Judge advises that to overcome the mood of depression we must start an opposite cycle of joy to counteract that mood, and keep up the effort, then ultimately, the cycle of depression will be replaced by a cycle of joy. This also applies to our tendencies. If we do nothing about them then we make them stronger. If we persistently try to overcome a tendency by starting a good cycle, then over a period of time it will go away.

All our thoughts and feelings get impressed on the “lives” or elementals that form the atoms and the cells of our body. All our habits leave a deep impression upon these elementals because we have been doing it for many years and many lives. Breaking a habit amounts to washing the concerned elementals clean of their earlier impressions and giving them a reverse kind of impression. The whole struggle could be physically and psychologically draining.

H.P.B. explains what exactly are fleshly appetites. A simple example is when we put icecream on our tongue, the tongue only reports that it is cold and sweet. It is the mind which says, “I like it, I want more of it.” This happens several times. The atoms of the body have been impressed by it and therefore they will repeat the impulse and bring back the temptation. Hence, it is not easy for a person who is deeply steeped in evil to undergo sudden transformation and become equally powerful for good. It is very difficult to reverse the *kamic* impulses given to the atoms of the body. If one tries to give the opposite impression *suddenly and violently* it may prove disastrous.

Though it is possible for a person to go through the required discipline and achieve perfection in seven years or in seven minutes, the strain involved would be enormous. The one aspiring to become a weight lifter would practise lifting light weights, for a number of days, and only gradually attempt to lift heavier weights. So it is

with the living of the spiritual life, which involves purification of the lower nature beginning with the mind. We are warned that it is a gradual process stretching over a series of lifetimes. Just as the smith removes impurities in the silver, little by little, vices and weaknesses must be overcome gradually. Hence, the caution that violent control is not so good as gentle control, which must be continuous and firmly unrelaxed. Gentleness is better because always an opposition reaction is aroused. We start with our ordinary desires and interests and are required to give up even some of our legitimate desires.

Hence the significant statement from H.P.B. “With each morning’s awakening try to live through the day in harmony with the Higher Self. ‘Try’ is the battle-cry taught by the Teachers to each pupil. Naught else is expected of you. One who does his best does all that can be asked.” A battle-cry is a yell or a chant taken up in battle, usually by the members of a combating group to raise the spirits of the warriors. It helps to keep the people of that army focussed and encourages them to continue to move forward. Often, it reminds the warriors what they are doing and why. A Master of Wisdom, writing to Professor Crookes, who had discovered the fourth state of matter, beyond solid, liquid and gaseous state, says that if he was willing to continue trying, he may succeed, one day, in discovering his true Self. Thus: “If Mr. Crookes would penetrate Arcana beyond the corridors the tools of modern science have already excavated, let him—Try.... You know our motto, and that its practical application has erased the word ‘impossible’ from the occultist’s vocabulary. If he wearies not of trying, he may discover that most noble of all facts, his true Self. But he will have to penetrate many strata before he comes to It.”

In the spiritual discipline, we have to be prepared to try again even if we fail, otherwise, advance cannot be made. “Mistakes will occur, perhaps many of them, but, as is said, ‘twenty failures are not irremediable if followed by as many undaunted struggles upwards,’” writes Mr. Crosbie. In *The Voice of the Silence*, we find a graphic description of a spiritual aspirant fighting the inner foes, till his last breath. Thus:

“The fearless warrior, his precious life-blood oozing from his wide and gaping wounds, will still attack the foe, drive him from out his stronghold, vanquish him, ere he himself expires. Act then, all ye who fail and suffer, act like him; and from the stronghold of your Soul chase all your foes away—ambition, anger, hatred, e’en to the shadow of desire—when even you have failed. Remember, thou that fightest for man’s liberation, each failure is success, and each sincere attempt wins its reward in time.” (p. 68)

“All of us have to persevere in perfecting the instrument by removing the barriers erected by the personality,” writes Mr. Crosbie. It is indeed difficult to conquer one’s lower nature and hence, the Buddha says, “Far hath he gone, whose foot treads down one fond offence.” In the above quotation, “even to the shadow of desire” implies that when we are able to overcome the *vasanas*, desires, and negative tendencies, in their gross form they lurk, unknown to the spiritual seeker, in their subtle form. One has to fight the tendencies till they are eradicated in their subtlest form. When a spiritual aspirant has progressed far on the path, and is confident that he has overcome desires, and obliterated his tendencies, he experiences a sudden coming to the surface of a latent tendency which was hiding in some corner of his being. He is taken by surprise. Such a person may experience a sudden outburst of anger, an attack of jealousy or sexual attraction. There are examples of Rishis who fell from their high position.

Energy is needed not only to *start* new things but also to *sustain* that which we have started. *Virya* is Divine Will. We do not have to manufacture this energy. Spiritual Courage is not really so much of a muscle power; rather, it is the surrender of personal will to the Divine Will. Mortal man can gain courage only from his Immortal Spirit. For the Divine Will to manifest, one needs to surrender the personal self. Only he can hope to possess Spiritual Courage who is willing to be guided and assisted by the Higher Self.

Carla Shuman, the director of Mindful Solutions, observes that “even the strongest, most resilient people go through phases where

they feel like throwing their hands in the air and saying ‘it is not worth it.’ Deciding to stop pursuing a goal, an activity...is an important decision. It is not best to make this kind of decision in haste because we are fatigued or discouraged.” While one should not give up too easily, or for trifling reasons; it is also important to recognize when it is time to move on from a particular goal or endeavour. Someone has said that there is no failure in unavoidable surrender. To know when to give up struggle is also a triumph.

Indeed, at times, it is necessary to take a temporary break, without entirely giving up the effort. When some student-aspirant was feeling despondent because he had lost all desire for progress, for service and for the inner life, Mr. Judge’s advice was that the student should give themselves a break for a year, and if even then there was an inclination to go on along the same lines he would try to help. The student was asked to realize that the world was in need of a helping hand and to recognize that he should try to work for it sooner or later. At the same time he must also realize that it was the lower part of his nature that did not care about the world or its future, but that such care and interest should be cultivated. The advice given was to assert constantly to oneself that one intended to work and will do so. “Begin by doing ten minutes’ work every day of any sort—study, or the addressing of envelopes, or anything, so long as it be done deliberately and with that object in view. If a day comes when this is too irksome, knock it off for that day. Give yourself three or four days’ rest, and do it deliberately. Then go back to your ten minutes’ work. At the end of six or seven weeks, you will know what to add to that practice.” He explains that there are only a few who can travel on the path of spiritual endeavour without wavering, keeping up the never-ceasing strain because only ages of service of humanity gives one that strength. However, for the others, there is the other path when one wavers, even sinks low, and then rises to a proportionately greater height. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, pp. 94-95)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE STORY OF MY LIFE—I

THE STORY OF MY LIFE is Helen Keller's autobiography detailing her early life, especially her experiences with her teacher, Anne Sullivan. It was first published in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1902, as a series of instalments, when Keller was still a student at Radcliffe College. The following year it was published in book form. The autobiography is divided into three parts. The first part covers all of her major life events as well as her thoughts and musings on the things that have happened to her. The second part of the book consists of letters written by Helen which show significant development in her ability to communicate over a period of time. It has letters from Anne Sullivan throwing more light on Helen's education. The third part is a commentary by the book's editor.

Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880, in Tuscumbia, a small town in Northern Alabama, to affluent parents who lived on a large estate. One of her ancestors was the first teacher of deaf children in Zurich. She expresses her fear in writing the history of her life by the words, "I have, as it were, a superstitious hesitation in lifting the veil that clings about my childhood like a golden mist." She seems to suggest that perhaps, she may not narrate her life story accurately because in emphasizing positive aspects of her life, of learning and experience, she may miss out on accurately describing the negative aspects of her childhood. The early part of her childhood was joyful. She imitated elders so that when she was only six months old, she could say, "Tea," "Water," and "How do you." She could walk when she was only one year old. However, when she was nearly two years old, she was struck with sickness. It was "acute congestion of the stomach and brain," which some believe to have been scarlet fever. She became unconscious. She did recover from the fever but was deprived of her sight and hearing. "Gradually I got used to the silence and darkness that surrounded me and forgot that it had ever been different."

She found herself unable to communicate or be understood by others. The frustration and depression manifested themselves in temper tantrums which steadily grew out of control. However, gradually, she and her mother developed a few crude signs by which Helen could communicate her wants and needs. She learned that a shaking head meant “no,” and a nod meant “yes,” a pull and push meant “come” and “go.” She learned to communicate in her own way, but the learning process was frustrating. She could play games with her dog and the daughter of the family cook. However, as she grew, she had a stronger desire to express herself, but without any language at all, it seemed impossible. Often, she broke into fits of rage as she was unable to express herself clearly. Once she locked her mother in a pantry for three hours without letting anyone know where the key was hidden. It is then that her parents felt the need to educate her.

When she was six years old, her parents took her to an oculist who was unable to restore her eyesight but expressed that a blind and deaf girl could be educated. They were asked to meet Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, the famed inventor of the telephone. Before inventing the telephone, he was a teacher of the deaf and hence was an advocate for deaf and blind children. Dr. Bell was receptive to Helen’s communication method and that sparked a bond between the two, which lasted a lifetime. On his advice, her father wrote to the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston, to send a suitable teacher for Helen. Within weeks the institute sent Miss Anne Mansfield Sullivan to Keller’s home as a tutor for Helen and her arrival marked a new chapter in her life.

In 1887, when Miss Sullivan met Helen, she presented a doll made by the little blind children of Perkins Institution. She writes: “When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word ‘d-o-l-l,’ with her finger.” Miss Sullivan used a method called *the mutual alphabet*, which is based on the idea of using one hand to spell out the words on the other person’s palm. Thus, Miss Sullivan instructed her to touch her doll, spell the word

with her hands and repeated the same movements until she perfected it. Once, Helen and Miss Sullivan walked to the well-house. Someone was drawing water, so her teacher placed her hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word 'w-a-t-e-r,' first slowly and then rapidly. "I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt the misty consciousness as of something forgotten....Somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that 'w-a-t-e-r' meant wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul." Helen soon learned that things she could not touch also had names. In one of her letters, Miss Sullivan writes: "One day I asked her a simple question in a combination of numbers, which I was sure she knew. She answered at random. I checked her, and she stood still, the expression of her face plainly showing that she was trying to think. I touched her forehead, and spelled 't-h-i-n-k.' The word, thus connected with the act, seemed to impress itself on her mind much as if I had placed her hand upon an object and then spelled its name. Since that time, she has always used the word *think*."

Then gradually, Helen learned to read Braille and speak. Braille is known as the embossed dots made on paper that can be "read" by touch. She was given cards with embossed words so that she could feel each alphabet and decipher the word. Next, she was given pieces of cardboard with words printed on them in raised lettering, and Helen arranged the objects to reflect the sentences she made. Thus, for instance, she would place her doll on the bed before grouping together the words "doll," "is," "on," and "bed." She explored different objects with her hands and learned their names and uses. This helped her to establish relationship with the rest of the world. Miss Sullivan instilled a love of the natural world in Helen.

In 1888, Helen began her education in Boston at the Perkins Institution for the Blind. She was able to meet and make friends with other blind children. She describes her experience of communicating with other blind children who can truly sympathize

with her, by saying, “What a joy to talk with other children in my own language! Until then I had been like a foreigner speaking through an interpreter.” In 1890 she heard the story of a deaf and blind girl who had been taught to speak out loud. A woman named Sarah Fuller taught Keller to speak. She taught her to use her hands to feel the position of the lips and tongue, to feel the shape of her mouth and tongue, whenever she spoke. She would then ask Helen to repeat the actions. Eventually, she uttered her first connected phrase, “It is warm.” The memory of this moment has remained ingrained in her mind throughout her life because, as she points out, a deaf child never forgets the first words she speaks. She experienced a different sort of freedom as she was now able to connect with other people and express herself.

After she learned to speak, in 1892, she wrote a story called “The Frost King,” which was published by the director of the Perkins Institution in one of the Institution reports. She was horrified to discover that it closely resembled a story called “The Frost Fairies” by Margret Canby, published long before Helen was born. Helen had read that story as a child, and the words had remained so ingrained in her mind that she had unwittingly or unconsciously plagiarised them when she wrote her story. This incident tainted her relationship with her Perkins Institute teacher and made her distrust her own mind and the originality of her thoughts for a long time. Later, she reflected that time is a great healer and felt grateful that it happened when she was still very young, otherwise it would have been extremely difficult for her to recover from such a disheartening experience. She wrote: “I think if this sorrow had come to me when I was older, it would have broken my spirit beyond repair. But the angel of forgetfulness has gathered up and carried away much of the misery and all the bitterness of those days.”

In March 1893, she visited Niagara Falls for the first time. One would wonder how she could appreciate scenic wonders such as Niagara Falls. “They are always asking: ‘What does this beauty or that music mean to you?’ ...In the most evident sense, they mean

everything. I cannot fathom or define their meaning any more than I can fathom or define love or religion or goodness,” she writes in her autobiography. In a letter to her mother, she wrote, “One feels helpless and overwhelmed in the presence of such a vast force.”

Miss Sullivan writes in one of her letters that people constantly asked the question: “How did you teach her the meaning of words expressive of intellectual and moral qualities?” “I believe it was more through association and repetition, than through any explanation of mine.... Soon after I became her teacher Helen broke her new doll, of which she was very fond. She began to cry. I said to her, ‘Teacher is *sorry*.’ After a few repetitions she came to associate the word with the feeling. The word *happy* she learned in the same way; also, *right, wrong, good, bad* and other adjectives. The word love she learned as other children do—by its association with caresses.” In the beginning of the book, we read that Miss Sullivan explained “love” to her by analogy. “You cannot touch the clouds, you know; but you feel the rain and know how glad the flowers and the thirsty earth are to have it after a hot day. You cannot touch love either; but you feel the sweetness that it pours into everything. Without love you would not be happy or want to play.”

She went to the World’s Fair with Alexander Bell and Miss Sullivan in the summer of 1893. She had special permission to touch the exhibits and was thrilled by the chance to experience many cultures about which she had only read before. In 1894, she attended the Wright-Humason School for the Deaf in New York City and began studying subjects like history, Latin, French, German and arithmetic. In 1896, she began her studies at the Cambridge School for Young Ladies in Massachusetts, which prepared her to attend Radcliffe College, the women’s college affiliated with Harvard University. This was the first time that she attended school with girls who could see and hear, instead of students who were deaf or blind. It was challenging but Helen persevered. However, when the principal of the Cambridge School proposed to lighten Helen’s course load, her mother withdrew her from that school and engaged

a private tutor to prepare her for Radcliffe college. She successfully qualified for the same and entered the college in 1900. She realized that college was not as romantic as she had imagined it. She did not have time to think because she was too busy studying. Of her learning material in college, she writes, “the overtaxed mind cannot enjoy the treasure it has secured at the greatest cost.”

She has dedicated one entire chapter to describe her love of books and to express her gratitude for the joy, comfort and companionship they have brought throughout her life. She had read and was influenced by books such as, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *Scarlet Letter*, *Robinson Crusoe*, Goethe’s *Faust*, and Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Besides reading, she enjoyed outdoor activities such as exploring gardens and trees, cycling and canoeing in the moonlight. There were several influential people in Helen’s life. Bishop Brooks offered spiritual guidance. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, whom she impressed with a recitation of Tennyson’s poem, *Break, Break, Break*. The other literary leaders she came in touch with included Mark Twain. Helen finishes her personal memoir with these words: “Thus, it is that my friends have made the story of my life. In a thousand ways they have turned my limitations into beautiful privileges, and enabled me to walk serene and happy in the shadow cast by my deprivation.”

It is useful to consider the final section of the book which is a supplementary account that was written at the time of its publishing, by the editor, John Albert Macy, who was a professor of English at Harvard and assisted Helen with her autobiography. The story is based entirely on Helen’s own recollection and her own personal letters. Therefore, this final section was added to give context to Helen’s account and Miss Sullivan’s letters, and thus add to it an entirely new dimension. He writes that Helen’s memory of people based on touch was remarkable. According to him, “her life has been a series of attempts to do whatever other people do, and do it well.” She enjoyed music even though she was deaf, partly in a sympathetic way because others around her enjoyed it, and partly

through the vibration of objects she touched when the music was playing.

Interestingly, he draws our attention to Miss Sullivan's life who had become totally blind early in life and had studied at the Perkins Institution. Later on, her sight was partially restored. She graduated in the year 1886 and then moved to Alabama in 1887 to teach Helen. According to some critics, this is an important piece of information which helps us understand Miss Sullivan's enthusiasm, passion and readiness to dedicate a large part of her life to teaching a deaf-blind child. She knew the value of education from her first-hand experience, and believed that it may empower Helen to achieve things that one would not expect a handicapped person to achieve.

Macy, the editor, observes that Miss Sullivan made her own decisions without any assistance or interference; and a large share of Helen's success may be attributed to Miss Sullivan's determination. Instead of having a fixed time for teaching, she chose to teach her at all the moments throughout the day, and hence Helen did not realize that she was learning. Macy was frequently asked: Is Helen's success due to her natural ability or to the way she was taught? He was of the opinion that the success was owing to Helen's eagerness, intelligence and her deep love of learning, as well as due to Miss Sullivan's painstaking efforts and excellence in teaching. Miss Sullivan had faith in the ability of the girl to learn. At one point, she expressed her secret, deep belief that she will succeed in teaching Helen beyond what anyone imagined she could because Helen was a remarkable child, with the power of perseverance to overcome great obstacles. Hellen Keller's personal accomplishment was developing skills never previously approached by any similarly disabled person. She was the first blind and deaf woman to graduate from college in the United States. She once said that "Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it."

(To be concluded)

NONVIOLENT FAITH

THE CONCEPT of nonviolent action has had in this century—thanks especially to Gandhiji—a fresh ethical impact upon the conduct of many thousands. It touches the very core of the problem of human relationships and shows how the power of love and truth can change our own life and the lives of others. The true practitioner of nonviolence relies upon the Law, that divine Law which governs not only his own being but the whole Cosmos. His faith is energized and constantly renewed through his belief, put to the test of experience, that the ultimate law of Life is Compassion Absolute.

It is the dynamism and the positive aspect of the nonviolent attitude which we should like to examine here. The vitality and dynamism which manifested in the life and work of Gandhiji had their roots in his unshakable faith that Love and power of Truth are stronger than hate and the forces of evil, and consequently he put his faith in the innate power all human beings have to see the truth and act upon it.

What is the nature of that faith, and how is it possible to make of it the prime mover of all our actions? Paradoxically it might be said that it is, at one and the same time, a gift from the God within and a hard-earned knowledge which has to be put to the test a thousand times. How can it be so?

Creation of any kind is an act of faith. Life is maintained and sustained throughout the cosmic spatial depths by an act of faith. Love and faith are the two opposite poles of the same thing and result in creation. Love without faith or trust is not true love, and faith without the feeling of love is not true faith. The higher nature of man is naturally endowed with the quality of faith, because it is the enduring part of our nature, that which is immortal. Doubt and fear pertain to man's lower nature, to that which is constantly undergoing changes and which dies. Therefore, the true quality of faith can only be gained by dwelling upon the idea of continuity or that which gives us, at all times, a sense of true immortality. In the

words of Krishna, the immortal in us, “is not a thing of which a man may say, ‘It hath been, it is about to be, or is to be hereafter’; for it is without birth and meeteth not death; it is ancient, constant and eternal, and is not slain when this its mortal frame is destroyed.” This is the way in which the gift can become potent in our life.

Furthermore, we could not act at all unless we had faith within us. The child stands up because he implicitly trusts the stability of the earth. We trust the immutability of the laws of nature. We also trust the moral order of the Universe. But man is the only being in the Cosmos who can make of faith a living force, a living power in his life. It is one of the greatest of all spiritual powers.

Thus, having its roots in immortality, it gives to the heart the quality of fearlessness, and to the mind the quality of pure humanity. It enables the nonviolent doer to combine within himself the quality of gentleness with courage and power, and thus helps him to transcend the fetters of his own fate. It is a faith which embraces universals, and which enables one to love all and hate none.

We must recognize that the true plane of action is the inner plane of thought and feeling. Conflicts in the outer world are but the reflection of inner maladjustments taking place within the hearts and minds of men. Only the perfectly integrated human being can act dispassionately and be true to friend and foe alike.

In other words, unless man has found satisfactory answers to the fundamental questions of what life, truth, and good and evil are, he will never be able to see his duty clearly or to act without adding his own quota to the great mass of evil and violence already existing in the world. But this point should be pursued a little further. It might be said that man naturally believes in the power of love and good, and willingly accepts the moral values put forward by all the great Teachers. Yet we all know that man continues age after age, day after day, to condemn himself by indulging in unfriendly and deceitful deed. Passive assent to the great moral values does not beget the positive spiritual attitude which characterises the truly nonviolent man.

NONVIOLENT FAITH

If man could only see that life on earth is for the purpose of affording him an opportunity again and again to mould, create and fashion his own personality to make of it a fit instrument for his inner being! All life is evolving; nothing that we do is ever final and perfect. We must fix the eye of the heart on the distant goal and must never rest content with anything less, for to stop looking forward is in fact to slip back, and who wants that? The status of the truly nonviolent actor is gained as the result of loving service, patiently rendered. It is a worthwhile task, the only one worthy of the human condition. But to understand this, one has to love, and to love intensely, humanity as a whole. To the heart of him who thus loves, and loves free from the bargaining spirit, life does speak, and that speech is a melody, sweet and holy, endowing him with the radiant smile which dispels all clouds.

THE song I came to sing
remains unsung to this day.
I have spent my days in stringing
and in unstringing my instrument.

The time has not come true,
the words have not been rightly set;
only there is the agony
of wishing in my heart.....

I have not seen his face,
nor have I listened to his voice;
only I have heard his gentle footsteps
from the road before my house.....

But the lamp has not been lit
and I cannot ask him into my house;
I live in the hope of meeting with him;
but this meeting is not yet.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

BODY AND HEALTH—II

I KNOW that you have not been well and are in pain. It is cold comfort to say, “You are paying off Karma,” but it is so. And I should like to explain how. You, having *proven* your ardency to be capable of immortality, must gain the privilege of a healthy body so necessary for Chelaship—see and note that to be the very first condition (“Chelas and Lay Chelas”). Unless in this body which has served you well you are helped to clear away ill-health elementals by pushing them down and out, how are you to be free of them? Karma and Skandhas are intimately linked. Tanhaic elementals are builders and destroyers and their status has to be improved, for they are the bearers of spiritual stamina. So, in a way, it is natural that you are having difficulties with an ailing and aging body. Remedy: A collected Centre of thought, will and feeling should be maintained, and the one and only force which is essential for that task is that of Altruism—*Paramartha*. The sustaining power of the Universe, called Vishnu, lives by Altruism, imparting it to all persons. Regeneration brings Truth, Knowledge, *Satya*. Brahma, the Creative Power, is Compassion. This may sound like metaphysics, which again is cold comfort.

So, with a collected centre in deliberate calmness you will be able to put up with pain and you will comprehend what is said in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 475), about suffering and sufferers. I wish I could be with you to comfort and to sustain you. Daily my thoughts go to you, and my best love.

During the last year you have gone through a great deal of bodily suffering, but you have cleansed yourself of many things. Allow me to quote from a less known letter of Mr. Judge and you will see that he lays down a principle which applies to people like you, who have been faithful student-servers of the Great Lodge:—

You may perhaps ask why Mme. Blavatsky does not cure herself if, as I believe, she has that power, and know that she possesses it.

You must remember that curing bodily diseases and restoring physical health is not the “be all and end all.” Philosophy as well as religion has always taught that the Soul is purified and strengthened by suffering, and it is sometimes well to suffer. If we could know the action and operation of Karma we would see that by suffering pain in sickness bad Karma is worked off which could not be got rid of if one be suddenly cured as in “mind cure.” Those who know and recognize that fact are cured thereby of the mental distress which is so large a part of the evil of bodily suffering, and this is for them a “mind cure” on a higher plane than the physical, for then they can bear their sufferings with calmness and resignation.

So much for the past. I must send you my heartfelt wishes for your peace and your enlightenment, the positive and negative aspects of the world of spirit. May the Good Law prove its beneficence to you in the visible world and in the brain! I hope that you have made considerable progress with your physical disability.

I am very much pleased at your remark that the enforced rest is doing you good in directions other than the physical. Therein you must see the mercy aspect of the Law of Karma. Bodily ill health also can be made psychical and spiritual use of from the spiritual unfoldment point of view. To see our aches and pains of the body as different and apart from our real Self leads us in the direction of the Ego. But you will find that out for yourself, and the experiences which follow. There is another aspect—bodily illness enables us to throw off the poisons and clear the system; no disease is wholly physical, and there are physical cleanliness and psychical purity; both aspects of one phenomenon. Rest up not only in your body, therefore, but also mentally and psychically. The lower quaternary so changed will be found to be better adapted to the Spiritual Triad.

I have been greatly distressed to learn of your ill health and the many difficulties through which you have passed. I hope you are a little better now, not only in your bodily health but also in your psychic and mind state. You have gone through many difficulties, but suffering “is the badge of all our tribe”; and if we try to absorb

and assimilate the experiences that suffering brings we purify ourselves at the same time as we pay off so much in Karmic debt. But you know all this, and if I write this it is only to remind you and appeal to you to keep close to our books and our great ideas, for they possess real comfort; and the memory of the Great Theosophists always energizes and inspires us to become whole.

Why does *The Bhagavad-Gita* give “honouring the gods, the brahmans, the teachers and the wise” as a mortification of the body? *Tapas* or the mortifying aspect thereof must be contrary to the object to be mortified. Now the separative and the lower materialistic tendencies are *the* factors of the gross body. Gods (human Egos or Deva-Monads), Holy Men in general, our teachers who have imparted knowledge of one type or another and the learned in right conduct—all these by precept and example weaken the gross tendencies of the body.

The “body agitated” [*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 32] means vitally alive—to what? To the mind-soul calmed and enveloped through and through by the spirit-influence. It is not passivity that is to be understood by the term but the body’s receptivity. A medium is passive; a disciple becomes more and more receptive.

Receptivity of the body is, or should be, an orderly process: (1) to Manas freed from Kama, *i.e.*, *Antahkarana*; (2) to Manas, *i.e.* No. 1 becomes receptive to No. 2; then (3) to Manas-Taijasi; and (4) to the Monad. That is one line. The second is: (1) the earthly or little guru; (2) the Great Guru as Manasa-Putra—he who lighted up our Manas; (3) the Dhyani-Buddha. The common link between the two lines is one’s own inner divine nature *directly* connected with the Logos, Ishwara, Krishna or Christos. Here is human evolution to be looked at from a different point of view.

(*To be concluded*)

MEN do not value a good deed unless it brings a reward.

—OVID

SAINT EKNATH—LIFE AND TEACHINGS

I

MANY and varied are the benefits of listening to or reading about the life and teachings of the saintly people. Among other things, the listener is endowed with joy and peace, such as no earthly thing can bestow. *Parasmani* or touchstone is one of the divine stones mentioned in Vedic scriptures, having the ability to turn iron into gold just by the touch. The stories and teachings of the saints act like that stone—transforming the pleasure-seeking worldly person—kindling in his heart an aspiration for a higher life.

Eknath was born in the sixteenth century, in Paithan, in Maharashtra, India. He was the great-grandson of the renowned Saint Bhanudas. Eknath's mother was a pious woman, named Rukmini. As he was the sole descendant of the family line, he was named Eknath. He lost his parents at a young age and was brought up by his grandparents. He observed fasts and learnt the Vedas. When he turned twelve, he had finished reading *Bhagavatam* and heard stories of the *Puranas*. He had heard that no spiritual progress is possible without the help of a self-realised Spiritual teacher, so he began to thirst for a true Guru. He did not know where to look for a Guru and what discipline he must follow.

One day, he visited a lonely Shiva temple and prayed for guidance in finding a Guru. He heard a voice from the interior of the temple, as if in answer to his prayer: "If you go to Devagad, you will find Janardan Pant, a wise-man, who will teach you." Janardan Swami had mastered the art of yoga and was a devoted follower of the cult of Dattatreya, who is considered to be the incarnation of the Divine Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. When Eknath met Janardan Swami, he fell at his feet. The Swami wished to know why Eknath had come to him, walking all the way from Paithan, and asked him if he had informed his parents before leaving. Eknath humbly replied that he was a *Rigvedi* Brahmin's son, lived with his grandparents and had not informed them before leaving home because then they

would not have allowed him to go. He was aware of his attachment to worldly things, of his pride and hypocrisy and hence had come to the Swami as a suppliant, with the hope that he will obtain his grace and see God.

Eknath served his guru with great devotion and dedication. He served the guru for six years and never remembered home. Swami assigned to Eknath the special work of keeping his accounts in the account book, which task he performed exceedingly well. One day, the boy discovered that the accounts would not balance since he had made an error of one *pice*. He did not eat or sleep and continued to work so as to find the mistake. At last, he could find the mistake. He ran with the accounts book to his guru, full of joy. The guru enquired, what made him so happy. When Eknath told him the cause of his jubilation, the guru said that just as he was able to concentrate his mind to find the error of one *pice*, if he did the same to identify the faults in worldly life, and realise the truth then he would experience greater joy.

One day Janardan Swami takes Eknath to a solitary spot in the mountains so that the boy could meet Shri Dattatreya. He warns the boy not to get frightened on seeing Him, as He appears in all sorts of forms. He would assume the form which the ignorant people revile. According to the account given in *Stories of Indian Saints*, translated by Justin Abbott and Narhar Godbole from Mahipati's Marathi *Bhaktivijaya*, as Eknath and his guru enter the forest, suddenly, a Mohammedan sitting upon a horse came there. He had a broad forehead and bloodshot eyes, carrying weapons. Eknath gets frightened. Janardan and the Mohammedan eat various kinds of food prepared by the latter. Eknath is invited to join them but he refuses because he wonders how he can eat the food of a Mohammedan. Later, he learns that it was Dattatreya who had appeared in that form. The guru tells him "You did not recognize Him by His characteristics. He was Dattatreya. Although many means are devised, still no one is able to have a manifestation of Him. You met Him here without effort, and wrong thoughts came

into your heart.... You had the opportunity of meeting Him without any effort and you needlessly had the doubt.” However, his guru tells him that in the future there may be another opportunity of seeing Him, so he must be on his guard.

Once more the guru takes Eknath into the forest saying, “I will cause Dattatreya to appear to you, though I do not know in what form He will appear.” This time Dattatreya appeared in the form of a Mohammedan Fakir, accompanied by a she-dog. He himself milked the she-dog, and produced bread. The two of them began to eat. Again, Eknath was invited to join them. Eknath hesitated, in spite of learning from his guru that the Fakir was none other than Shri Dattatreya, and that the she-dog was wish-fulfilling cow Kamdhenu. He took a morsel of food and sat at a distance. At last, when he touched the feet of the “Fakir,” he gave him blessings, saying, “This boy will explain clearly in Marathi [language] the deep, secret meaning of the *Shrimad Bhagavatam* which Vyasa has written as the substance of the *Vedas* and the *Shastras*. He will compose a delightful book as the *Bhavartha Ramayana*. In hearing it, all men will be saved.” (pp. 161-164)

We are reminded of the Eleventh Chapter of the *Gita* that it is only when Arjuna sees the Universal Form or *Vishwarupa* of Krishna, by the “divine eye” given him by Krishna, that he realizes the grandeur and majesty of Krishna. He then confesses that while Krishna was in the human form, he treated him as a human being like himself, although of vastly greater learning. Therefore, he addressed him as “O friend, O Yadu,” etc. and that he implores Krishna to forgive. Mr. Crosbie says that this is the fatal error that humanity has made, again and again. The error is of not recognizing the divine teacher, when he appears in human form among humanity. Buddha, and especially Jesus, was regarded as only an ordinary human being by those who lived with them and were around them all the time. Even some of their own disciples who had the good fortune to be with them and work with them showed doubt, suspicion, jealousy, resentment, etc. because they could not fathom the real nature of the Teacher.

Later, Eknath spent a long time doing penance (*tapasya*) on a lonely hill obeying the orders of his Guru, meditating on Shri Krishna. Every day a cow-herd boy used to offer him milk. One day when he visited Eknath, he found him deep in meditation. A cobra coiled round his neck, spreading his hood like an umbrella over his head. He screamed, disturbing Eknath's meditation. He was relieved to see the cobra slithering away without hurting anyone. The Guru sensed all this and recalled Eknath. The Guru felt that Eknath had learnt all that was to be learnt in Spiritual life. (*Saints of Maharashtra* by Savitribai Khanolkar, pp. 107-108)

The serpent symbolizes many things. The serpent is an emblem of eternity, infinitude, regeneration and rejuvenation, as well as, of divine wisdom and perfection. H.P.B. points out that "Serpent" and "Dragon" were the names given to the "Wise Ones," the initiated adepts of olden times. The *Nagas* of the Hindus were Adepts and Initiates, and not reptiles. When Queen Maya, Lord Buddha's mother, gave birth to baby Gautama, two Nagas, Nanda and Upananda, are said to have given the baby a ritual bath by pouring over his body streams of warm and cold water. Likewise, Mucalinda, the Serpent-King protected Gautama from the raging storm, as he sat meditating beneath the Bodhi tree by wrapping his coils seven times around Buddha's body, with his hood spread above his head, like an umbrella. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, explains that *nagas* or serpents are depicted as staying in the depths of the ocean. They may be taken to represent the forces in the depths of the unconscious, in their most positive and beneficent aspect. The King-Serpent coiling around Buddha's body, seven times, as he meditated, may well represent awakening of Kundalini power, writes Sangharakshita.

Kundalini is described as a serpentine, electro-spiritual force, a creative power, which can as easily kill as it can create. The seven coils may also represent the seven psychic centres (*chakras*) through which *Kundalini* passes in its course of ascent. It marks the activation of *Buddhi*, which is otherwise a passive principle, a passive vehicle

of *Atman*. When *Buddhi* is activated, “the Yogi beholds the things beyond the seas and stars; he hears the language of the Devas and comprehends it, and perceives what is passing in the mind of an ant.” (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 10 fn.)

In the book *Saints of Maharashtra*, we read that Swami Janardan and Eknath go on a pilgrimage. When the two of them arrive on the banks of river Godavari they meet Pandit Chandrabodh who recited the Fourth Chapter of the *Bhagavatam* in original Sanskrit in a way that brought tears to their eyes. The Guru asked Eknath to translate that chapter into Marathi language for the benefit of the many, which he did on the spot, in beautiful words. The Brahmin joined them in their pilgrimage. After some time Eknath was asked to carry on the pilgrimage alone. He visited all the sacred rivers and shrines in India and finally reached Paithan. He stayed in a small temple, quite determined to renounce the world, after seeking Guru’s permission. At around the same time a person from Paithan comes to meet Eknath’s Guru and tells him that old grandparents of Eknath are pining to see their grandson. The Guru sends a letter to the grandparents with the message assuring them that very soon Eknath would be back in their midst. The grandparents search for Eknath and find the place where he stayed. They show him the letter from his Guru. He understood his Guru’s wish and began to stay in a hut there. Next, the Guru asks him to settle down as a householder. He marries a lady named Girijabai who proved herself a fit spouse for a saint.

There are several incidents in his life which show that he had mastered humility, patience and anger. The Brahmins who were proud of their knowledge were jealous of Eknath’s fame as a saint and a sage. So, when they came across a poor Brahmin who was desperately in need of Rupees two hundred, they made a pact with him that if he could make Eknath angry, he would earn his two hundred rupees from them. They showed him where Eknath stayed and then disappeared. The Brahmin walked straight into Eknath’s home and entered his puja (worship) room, with his shoes on. Eknath

was in deep meditation and remained undisturbed. The Brahmin fell heavily on his lap. Eknath opened his eyes, smiling, he said, “Why, why, look at this great love! Though we have not met yet, you seem to come from far and show such great affection!” The Brahmin who was taken aback replied that he had come from far. Eknath invites him for lunch but before that both of them go to river Godavari to take bath. The Brahmin purposely kept Eknath waiting for a very long time but failed to make him angry. So as a last resort he decides to jump on the back of Eknath’s wife. Instead of getting annoyed, Eknath laughs and tells his wife, “Take care lest this big child falls down.” His wife, who was as patient as her husband, replies: “Please do not worry on his account, for carrying a child on my back while working is not new to me. He will not fall down.” The Brahmin felt very ashamed. He fell at Eknath’s feet and cried, telling him his sad story. Eknath gave the Brahmin two hundred rupees that he needed. (pp. 108-114)

Anger is a great obstacle to spiritual progress. It tends to destroy us—physically, emotionally and mentally, so that we lose what we had gained through years of discipline. “Anger is momentary madness, so control your passion or it will control you,” says Horace. “Let a man overcome anger by gentleness,” advises the Buddha. Aggression or opposition tends to increase similar tendencies in the opponent. But the moment one shows gentleness, the other is forced to likewise become gentle or at least tone down his aggressive stand. For those of us who find it difficult to practice such gentleness, Gandhiji has shown us another way—refusal to cooperate with the wrong in a peaceful manner. His “non-cooperation” and “Satyagraha” movements made a deep impact on the minds and hearts of people all over the world. He wrote: “It is not that I do not get angry. I do not give vent to anger.” The habit of restraining anger can be cultivated by constant practice.

(To be continued)

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

“I ACCEPT unreservedly the views of no man, living or dead,” said Horace Greeley, the well-known American journalist. In *The Friendly Philosopher*, Robert Crosbie writes: “The foolish look for a ‘Man,’ the wise look for Message.” The Buddhists hold that “Nothing that is contradicted by sound reason can be true.” In line with the above, Lavater is credited with saying, “The proportion of genius (in general) to the vulgar, is like one to a million; but genius without tyranny, without pretension, that judges the weak with equity, the superior with humanity, and equals with justice, is like one in ten millions.” This is a touchstone for us in evaluating the ideas offered to us.

If “the purpose of life is to learn and it is all made up of learning,” and if, as Carlyle said, “The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest,” then we need to exercise caution, calmness and discrimination, for the plane of practical action begins with the controlled mind.

Caution and calmness, when exercised, check the curiosity and impulsiveness of the feeling-nature. Discrimination is a mental discipline and implies study, analysis and diligent search for Truth.

A search for help, for the guides and criteria that the wise in the past have willed to us as their heirs, is revealing. The Code of Manu records: “Of all duties, the principal one is to acquire the knowledge of the Supreme Soul (SPIRIT); it is the first of all sciences, for it alone confers on man immortality.”

But who is the “man” who makes this claim to continuous existence, who is birthless and deathless? In the *Mahabharata* we find this verse:

O man, thou thinkest that thou art alone, and actest as thou likest. Thou dost not perceive the eternal Soul that dwells within thy Breast. Whatever is done by thee, IT sees and notes it all. This Soul is its own witness and is its own refuge. It is the supreme, Eternal witness of man. Do not offend It.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

Shankaracharya in *The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom* further develops this theme, enjoining us to note that “He who is single-minded, fixed on the word divine, his steadfast fulfilment of duty will make the knowing soul within him pure; to him whose soul is pure, a knowing of the Self supreme shall come; and through this knowledge of the Self supreme he shall destroy this circle, of birth and death and its root together.”

The usage of these great ideas reveals that a Messenger or Great Teacher works in the world for the future of humanity, attracts companions who, in helping his work, resolve to know and to purify themselves, to become better companions, so as to “live to benefit mankind”.

This innate urging, or aspiration, or sublimated feeling of compassion, needs the fire of the mind, the light of the Manasaputra, to reduce it to a method, to a path of self-discipline.

A man who faces facts squarely learns to settle for less than he dreams. He realizes that he faces a lifetime of self-discipline, of self-training, to pull himself out of his past errors and mistakes. The Buddha said that he who conquers himself is greater than the conqueror of worlds.

The true Guru knows the disciple’s need to set up an ideal, a goal, and shows him that “knowledge dwells in heads replete with thoughts of other men, Wisdom in minds attentive to their own” (Cowper). In other words, he enjoins: “Man, know thyself!” The teacher does not and cannot do the thinking and learning for the disciple. He offers the further idea that “Self-dependence is happiness; other-dependence is misery.” He sets the inquirer back on his own feet to work under the direction of his own enlightenment-seeking mind. In a practical vein, he shows that:

If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world. (Confucius)

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

Many, feeling the large-hearted urge to work for others, but not being sure how or where to start, investigate many systems, turn to those who make high claims or mysterious promises. Such false claimants and self-styled “gurus” use words such as “secret” and “sacred” to blunt honest inquiry. The French have an adage: “*Qui s’excuse, s’accuse*.” (He who makes excuses, stands self-accused). It takes all the wisdom of the “wise” to correct the follies of the “good.” The wise do not speak in confusing riddles, but offer divine ideas and practical ethics to the common man. They advise us to look for those small plain duties which are our own and are so frequently overpassed while we seek the glories and responsibilities which are the lot of “proven Souls.”

If philanthropy is the reason why the teachings of Theosophy are in the world, the reason for the expenditure of enormous energy by the Masters and H.P.B., then the least we can do is to train ourselves to live for others. Our brother, our neighbour, is the one who needs help. Our Karma leads us to him. Our effort now is to fit ourselves to know how to help.

All men are our brothers if we take reincarnation into account as a fact of evolution. The “stranger” or “chance acquaintance” of this life may have been a close relation or friend of our past life, and our treatment of him today realigns this relationship for the future.

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Relationships are necessary for our survival. We may seek loving relationships. However, when our love and care fail to be reciprocated as expected, we begin to realize that toxic relationships also have their place in our life. “Often the one you have deeply trusted will help you badly, and the one you have mostly ignored will stand up for you in your hour of need,” writes Shivi Verma. Such experiences drive people to shun human relationships and to seek peace in aloneness. However, it is futile to look for a perfectly harmonious relationship, as in every relationship there is bound to be an element of annoyance, irritation or something that creates a void in one’s heart with regard to that person. “However, the same relationships also become the barometer by which you can mark your spiritual growth.”

When we are affectionately attached to a person, it is natural to expect to be treated equally lovingly and respectfully by the other person. Though our expectations are valid we should realize that these relationships are the means to make us independent instead of getting caught in the web of *maya* where others have the remote control of our happiness. We see that whenever one feels let down in a relationship, they seek help from therapists and gurus. “It makes them aware of their karmic debts, stored anger, negative self-talk and world-view, weak boundaries, and the need for external validation.” During the process of healing, they are able to resolve some of these issues and that in turn leads to purification of energies that attract toxic people in their lives. Even though they are able to attract to themselves, now and then, reliable and best people, the negative people still find a place in their lives. These negative people are there to test how much one has learnt from one’s experiences so far. If one is able to love and accept people without expecting return, one is able to enjoy the bliss of detachment and also have a positive influence on the negative people. As we grow spiritually, we can also aid spiritual growth of others who come in contact with us. In

this entire process of growing up it is very important to remain in close contact with our Higher Self, because only then nothing can have the power to disturb our happiness. We can appreciate fulfilling relationships when they are there, but in their absence, are equally capable of enjoying our own company, writes Shivi Verma (*Life Positive*, April 2023)

Good human relations have the power to alter the world. Some people are unable to establish a satisfying relationship with another human being. Today, we increasingly suffer from strained relationships. A perfect relationship is based on deep love and understanding, and in it there is a blending of opposing and complementary characteristics of two people involved. No man becomes our friend in the present life by reason of our behaviour in the present life alone. If he was our enemy in the previous life he will be now, even if we do him service and be good to him, because these tendencies always last for more than three lives. So, towards those who are hostile to us, if we practise charity, kindness, and love, then this tendency of enmity will be one-third lessened in each subsequent life. On the other hand, if we continue to be hostile, we put off the day of reconciliation by three more lives. In any human relationship, when we overcome aversion or attachment for a person, but if that person in turn does not overcome his aversion or attachment for us, then an irrational and one-sided likes or dislikes develop. When we decide to accept people as we find them, we get an opportunity to cultivate the virtue of *Adaptability*. Adaptability is a very rare virtue. In a subtle way our likes and dislikes work havoc, reminding us that we must learn to adjust with those *we like*, as also, with those *we do not like*.

To cultivate a healthy human relationship, we need to cultivate the virtue of *Viraga* which helps us to learn to avoid the extremes of emotional dependence on another or that of indifference. *Viraga* means without *raga* or attachments: no attraction to things and people, and also no aversion. It is a higher indifference or the capacity to *evaluate* every person, every object, every event at its true value, its

correct worth. *Viraga*, or dispassionate awareness allows us to look at everything and evaluate everything, without losing an inner equipoise, and ascribing no false values to anything because of our likes and dislikes. We are able to perceive things and people for what they are, uninfluenced by *maya* or illusion, *i.e.*, we are able to perceive the Truth. True *Vairagya* enables a person to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world.

Recently, on March 21, 10.17 p.m., Delhi and its surrounding areas, which included Noida, Ghaziabad and Gurgaon, experienced tremors. The earthquake was of the magnitude 6.6 with epicentre at Afghanistan's Hindukush. In this connection, DNA Web Team in its report mentions the name of a researcher, Frank Hoogerbeets, who had correctly predicted the earthquake in Turkey. "Later through a Twitter video, he also predicted earthquakes in the Indian sub-continent....He had said that the next earthquake would originate from Afghanistan and end at the Indian ocean after crossing India and Pakistan....His organisation, named Solar System Geometry Survey, had conducted a survey of old earthquakes....This group of researchers predicts earthquakes on the basis of planetary motion. He claimed that earthquakes can be predicted on the basis of the alignment of planets....He believes planetary alignments impact tectonic activities."

He explained that his predictions are based on the analysis of planetary geometry and pointing lunar (red) peaks in the SSGI graph. The convergence of Sun-Mercury-Jupiter with the New Moon on March 21 helped him to anticipate the 6 magnitude of the above-mentioned earthquake of March 22.

In a tweet he stated that it is easy to say that prediction of earthquakes based on planetary alignment has been disproven. That is because, "scientists have not studied the relationship between specific planetary alignments and larger earthquakes. SSGEOS has done this study and developed #SSGI to prove this relationship." (Source: DNA Web Desk, March 22, 2023)

Talking to “India Today” about his predictions he observed that the convergence of the new moon or full moon with critical planetary position causes large seismic activity, which he does not attribute to the gravitational pull but to the electro-magnetic force between planets.

In spite of scientific explanations for such calamities we are always left wondering: “Who is responsible for natural calamities—earthquakes, volcanoes, cataclysms, etc.—man or God?” While the scientists attribute them to physical causes, those physical causes in turn are rooted in “the dynamic power of human thought.” Behind the physical forces are spiritual Forces, unknown to science, because left unexamined. Karma operates to produce cataclysms of nature by concatenation through mental and astral planes of being.

We can look upon earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes and tsunamis to be like a sickness of the earth. Mr. Judge describes physical illness as discharge of the inner sickness of the inner being on the physical plane. Similarly, “the lives of the earth that have been impressed by the harmful thoughts—the selfish thoughts—of millions of men [and women] have reached a point of explosion, which comes about just as naturally in its own order and cycle, as day follows night.” (*“Because—” For the Children Who Ask Why*)

As for the prediction of the natural calamities, a Master of Wisdom says that it is the inner, spiritual changes which bring about physical changes through appropriate means, which refers to the movement of the great heavenly bodies. An astrologer can arrive at perfect calculation and prediction only if he takes into account both the spiritual and physical aspects.

“Astrology is to exact astronomy what psychology is to exact physiology. In astrology and psychology, one has to step beyond the visible world of matter, and enter into the domain of transcendent spirit.” (*Isis*, I. 259)

H.P.B. speaks about the sceptics who observe the heavens and are limited to physical aspects; they observe and study meteors and comets. When astronomers note the appearance of comets, they are

able to predict earthquakes, meteoric showers and apparition of certain stars and comets. Just as astronomers are able to predict certain things concerning heavenly bodies and happening of events related to them, so also they should be willing to believe that astrologers are able to predict cyclic events. Thus for instance, in earlier times, astrologers had observed the heavenly bodies and made calculations, and have been able to make predictions of events depending upon positioning of planets with respect to each other, such as conjunction of planets, etc. They have repeatedly recorded happening of such events during certain positioning of the planets for many million years. Then, why should not similar conjunction or positioning of planets produce same or similar effects in our days? (*S.D.*, I, 646)

The predictions made concerning the life of an individual are based on the position of the planets at the time of his birth, which in turn is the result of the causes generated in the past by the entity seeking birth. Likewise, it should be possible to predict certain events concerning a nation, a civilization or our earth based on the position of the planets, which in turn is the result of the collective Karma of the individuals involved. H.P.B. points out that we are inextricably linked and that there is ONE LIFE that is connecting human beings, the stars, the planets and the heavenly bodies. Our thoughts and actions produce vibrations and they are impinged upon *Akasa*. Astrology is a science which, having determined the nature of the laws that govern these vibrations, is able to tell precisely a particular or a series of results, the causes of which have already been produced by the individual or individuals in this or previous life.

H.P.B. points out that to have two planets in conjunction is a rare thing and to have three planets in conjunction is rarer still, while conjunction of five planets is the rarest event. It was only in 2449 B.C. that five planets were in conjunction and that was the time when Chinese astrologers predicted a great disaster for China. And 500 years later it was found that there were lots of social upheavals and internal wars and the golden period of China almost came to an

end. In 1563 A.D., there were three planets in conjunction—Mars, Saturn and Jupiter—and that had no good forebodings, as entire Europe was covered in a massive plague in which thousands of people died.

Is overthinking harmful? We all tend to indulge in overthinking at some point in life and for some topic or issue. The process takes the mind in a million different directions, exploding with possibilities. Some people consider it as leading to self-destruction. However, if it is used properly it can open up a world of possibilities. “We have only heard about overthinking and anxiety in negative contexts. But funnily enough it can also be the best thing that has happened to you,” says Bhakti Joshi, a South Mumbai-based counselling psychologist. Studies show that the habit of thinking a lot so as to take into account the long and short term implications is conducive to happiness. It also prepares one to face good or bad circumstances. Such people make better decisions and are more productive.

Some people are temperamentally fitted to do overthinking so that in every situation, whether it concerns their personal or professional life, they end up thinking too much. Such a person is likely to get overwhelmed with the details of circumstances. However, when one learns to use it judiciously and with control, it can prove advantageous. One recommendation is to learn to establish a set time and location where you can allow your mind to think freely. Secondly, you must ask: “Are you thinking from a place of anxiety or are you thinking from a place of abundance and power?” We are compelled to go on thinking out of anxiety or fear, which leads us nowhere. When that happens, the mind should be redirected to productive thinking. When one begins to drift needlessly to the past or future, then breathe, affirm, relax and come back to the thought process with power. Overthinking can help develop introspection and learn from past experiences. When handled rightly it can help to bring about some positive change in a person, writes

Neha Singh. (*Sunday Free Press Journal*, March 19, 2023)

The power of thinking, like any other power, is a double-edged weapon. Overthinking in its negative aspect takes the form of “brooding,” when the mind, like a squirrel on a wheel, goes round and round, thinking about the problem without arriving at any solution. Likewise, repentance could take the form of self-reproach or constant brooding over the wrong done, leading to despair. “‘Never regret anything.’ Regret is a thought, hence an energy. If we turn its tide upon the past, it plays upon the seeds of that past and vivifies them; it causes them to sprout and grow in the ground of the mind: from thence to expression in action is but a step,” writes Mr. Judge. “We can’t get rid of the evil in us by thinking of it, nor can we get rid of any unpleasant thing by thinking about it; for it is truly said that we are attached to anything by thinking about it. The harder we don’t think about the evil things in us, the better; think about their opposites, and the evil will not have the chance to return. Attachment is by thought, first of all. We have to have a firm basis for our thinking if we are ever going to express ourselves as we should, as spiritual beings,” writes Mr. Crosbie.

The first need of the student-aspirant is to learn how to think. In its positive sense, “overthinking” may be compared to “dwelling upon” an idea or a situation or a problem. “Realization comes from dwelling upon the thing to be realized.” When the mind is allowed to dwell on an idea or a subject it acquires breadth or larger scope of awareness. Depth of mind comes from enthusiasm and commitment to go deeper into the subject, when we learn to relate a multiplicity of things to Universals. Mr. Judge writes: “Thought has a self-reproductive power, and when the mind is held steadily to one idea it becomes coloured by it, and, as we may say, all the correlates of that thought arise within the mind. Hence the mystic obtains knowledge about any object of which he thinks constantly in fixed contemplation. Here is the rationale of Krishna’s words: ‘Think constantly of me; depend on me alone; and thou shalt surely come unto me.’”