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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: ultmumbai7@gmail.com ♦Phone : 22039024
website: www.ultindia.org

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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ON MAKING BUDDHA OUR DAILY COMPANION

II

THE NEXT problem is the problem of ignorance: in spite of all we have learnt at school and college, we are unable to solve problems. This is spiritual poverty, which is the immediate cause of economic poverty. Due to material education, the so-called progress has been achieved, and we have seen the result of growing unemployment and an increase in the numbers of the poverty-stricken, while great wealth is being gathered by a few. So, in solving the problem of ignorance, we have to take into account real happiness and real progress. In Buddhist Philosophy, two ideas recur—first, new sources of happiness, sources not of money but of mental and spiritual wealth. Second, cultivation of a state of consciousness within ourselves, which would enable us to enjoy objects of the mind and of the soul. However, we must guard against being glamoured by the Bhikkhu or the Sannyasin ideal, because it is not difficult to give up the world or possessions, but it is much more difficult to cultivate insight and spiritual perception. In the Householder stage, this insight of soul perception can be developed by using and enjoying whatever we may possess, much or a little. It is in their use that we find out their value. Often it is those who are empty within, those who have not found the great friends within, who choose to renounce the world.

One is not allowed to *desert* family duty in order to go on a spiritual quest. Those who try to imitate Buddha and desert their families in

“search of happiness or truth” should honestly ask themselves whether they are “running away,” overwhelmed by some difficulty or responsibility, *or* if it is the result of temporary detachment caused by some incident in life. In the Buddha’s case, seeing a sick person, an old person and a dead body culminated in renouncing the world. The outer renunciation was but a reflection of *true inward renouncing*, which resulted from inner detachment. The message that he brought was that it is necessary to “renounce” the world in order to be the better able to serve it. He showed this by his greatest sacrifice—instead of choosing the path of liberation or *moksha*, which is but exalted and glorious selfishness, he chose the path of renunciation so as to help suffering humanity.

Our present source of happiness is in our desires and senses. These exploit our minds. There is a strong warning given in verse 344 of *The Dhammapada*: “He who having come out of the forest of desires, goes back to it, he who freed from the forest of desires, runs back to it—look at him, though free he re-enters bondage.”

This shows how desires are capable of exercising an overpowering “pull” even when a man appears to have overcome them. Why does this happen? It is because one has still not reached a stage where one becomes constitutionally incapable of doing wrong—the *Samadana* state. Until that state is reached, there is always a possibility of a fall. First, “no man or woman knows his or her moral strength until it is tried.” Indra managed to tempt the great *Rishis* with the help of the beautiful *Apsaras*. Sometimes they fell prey to the subtle pride and vanity of their powers and attainments. *Light on the Path* says that “vices of the ordinary man pass through a subtle transformation and reappear with changed aspect in the heart of the disciple.” A person desiring authority may find himself trying to control the lives of others in the name of “benevolent interest.” He may be willing to lay down his life for a cause, provided others would toe his line and follow what he says. If things are not done in the way suggested by him, he loses all interest in the matter. “Self-watchfulness is never more necessary than when a personal wish to lead, and wounded vanity, dress themselves in

the peacock's feathers of devotion and altruistic work," says H.P.B. in the *Five Messages*.

"Whosoever is overcome by the fierce and poisonous craving finds his sorrow increase like the abounding Birana grass" (*The Dhammapada*, verse 335). People cannot possibly give up sense-desires unless they are substituted by higher spiritual and intellectual forms of pure enjoyment. If anyone forcefully gives up outer objects, wealth, household, etc. in the name of soul-life, and if he has no higher objects of understanding and appreciation, he will not improve; nay, more, he will deteriorate. This brings us to the second point—cultivation of higher mental enjoyments. At this point, we must make sure that the superior mental objects of "soul-enjoyment" are not subtle forms of "sense-enjoyment." Take an example: Music. There is spiritual music that gives the soul happiness and bliss, but there is music that stirs up warmer feelings and emotions. So, in selecting new avenues of soul enjoyment, we need guidance.

All the great teachers have sought to teach that the strength and beauty of life is within each one of us, if we would but draw it forth. In our struggle with the drought and desert of our inner life, we do not have to depend upon a distant supply of water. We can be our own irrigators. If only we would dig deep enough, we may find unfailing springs of courage and purpose, which can turn the allotted strip of desert into a green and pleasant land. To find the sweet and refreshing water of inner life, definite training must be gone through. *The Voice of the Silence* tells us: "Seek in the Impersonal for the 'Eternal Man'; and having sought him out, look inward: thou art Buddha." Seeking the impersonal part of our consciousness is possible for all of us. Just as we are able to remain impersonal while solving a mathematical problem or while responding to a piece of classical music, it is also possible to have impersonal *feelings*. We must try to increase impersonal moments in our lives such as when we are lost in appreciating the sunrise or sunset or in helping the needy.

"Our finest hours are not in the hustle-bustle of our family, nor in the noise and excitement of friends, but in solitude. When we are alone, we

enter into an intimate union with wisdom, peace and happiness. At times, during the ‘doing nothing’ meditation, we touch divinity, so that we function later, with a heightened sense of perception. If, by daily practice, we ‘learn’ to be meditative while being alone, we can have peace and joy and wisdom within ourselves,” writes Ruby Lilaowala.

One of the important steps in making Buddha our daily companion consists in our taking refuge in the Buddha. Buddha means “unconditioned mind” or “enlightened mind.” Knowing the Buddha therefore means knowing the mind in its unconditioned state, which in turn means recognizing that we ourselves are the Buddha—potentially. We can really and truly come to know the Buddha only in the process of actualizing our own potential Buddhahood through spiritual living. It is only then we can say, from knowledge, from experience, who the Buddha is. To achieve this end, we have to take Buddhahood or Enlightenment as a living spiritual ideal as our ultimate objective and try our utmost to realize it.

Buddhism mentions ten fetters which bind a person to the wheel of life and death. One of these fetters is to consider the ethical rules and religious observances as ends in themselves. Thus, “you must not take life” is an ethical rule, and a non-vegetarian breaks the rule of “not taking life.” So, some vegetarians think that the meat eaters are sinners and cannot be spiritual. It is an old and true saying that the kingdom of God cometh not from taking or refraining from meat nor from refraining from anything whatever, but that it is *within us*. In other words, one cannot claim to be spiritual just because one is a strict vegetarian. Wicked and gross thoughts are more harmful than eating flesh. Not eating meat is only a means to an end, because animal food necessarily imparts to the eater qualities of the animal. “Inner improvements create the outer ones,” says Robin Sharma.

The worth or worthlessness of a man is determined by his inner life and inner motive and not just by an outer show. Buddha showed disregard for mere outer observance. In the chapter on “The Brahmana” we read, “What avails thy matted hair, O fool? What avails thy deer skin? Outwardly you clean yourself; within there is ravaging.” It shows

that a true Brahmin is a self-realized being. He is truthful and righteous. Therefore, we must not go by outward appearance alone. It is not the matted locks or the lineage or one's caste or wearing of the deer skin that makes man a Brahmin. Similarly, one does not become pure merely by outward cleaning as long as one has not removed the impurities of the mind and desires. Krishna calls such a person "a false pietist of the bewildered soul."

Altruism is an integral part of self-development. But here again, the "inner" is more important than the "outer." H.P.B. writes: "Theosophists are of necessity the friends of all those movements in the world, whether intellectual or simply practical, for the amelioration of the condition of mankind" (*Five Messages*, p. 8). But we must not lose sight of the fact that man is not just his body nor just his mind but something more. Instead of laying emphasis on mere material charity—providing food, clothing, shelter, or amenities to the poor—more importance must be given to alleviating mental and moral suffering. Mr. Judge observes that the physical woes of the race are only skin-deep; the real cause of these woes is mental and moral. The inner man is a thinking being who feeds upon a right or wrong philosophy, and therefore students of Theosophy should expound theosophical ideas of the brotherhood of humanity, Karma and Rebirth, to change the mind and Buddhi of the race, aim to bring inner conversion, and make those charitable who are not already so by inspiring them to listen to the "still small voice within." As Marianne Williamson puts it, "The loud and frantic voices of the outer world, easily drown out the small, still loving voice within."

We would hear our "voice of conscience" less and less as we get used to ignoring it. Nobody can afford to ignore that warning voice. It is the voice of all that we have learned, stored up in our consciousness, warning us not to do wrong and get into trouble and make trouble for others. If we do not listen to it, more and more things that seem to us wrong now will look less and less wrong, and we will slip into doing worse and worse things. We must listen to that inner voice when it says "Don't!" and then we will hear it more and more clearly. There is a very strong and helpful warning about disobeying it that was given by Gautama

the Buddha 2,500 years ago. He said: “Think not lightly of evil, saying ‘it will not come unto me.’ Even a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops of water. A fool becomes full of evil if he gathers it little by little.” And the opposite is also true: “A wise man becomes full of goodness even if he gathers it little by little.”

Man needs the bread of wisdom, the food for the mind. If our philosophy of life is universal, impersonal and open then our thoughts and motives will be pure and selfless. And selfless service finally leads one to Moksha or Liberation. It is a lofty goal which cannot be attained by intermittent and lukewarm efforts. It requires “strenuous endeavour,” constant vigilance and reflection, from moment to moment, life after life, until everything is totally aligned to the Spirit within to partake of Eternal Life.

(Concluded)

MEN read books on this topic, and attend lectures on that; decide that their children shall be instructed in these branches of knowledge, and shall not be instructed in those; and all under the guidance of mere custom, or liking, or prejudice; without ever considering the enormous importance of determining in some rational way what things are really most worth learning. It is true that in all circles we hear occasional remarks on the importance of this or the other order of information. But whether the degree of its importance justifies the expenditure of the time needed to acquire it; and whether there are not things of more importance to which such time might be better devoted; are queries which, if raised at all, are disposed of quite summarily, according to personal predilections....To prepare us for complete living is the function which education has to discharge; and the only rational mode of judging of an educational course is, to judge in what degree it discharges such function.

—HERBERT SPENCER

FOOD FOR THOUGHT LORD OF THE FLIES—II

LORD OF THE FLIES is an allegorical novel in which each character reflects elements inherent in human nature and society. According to some critics, the author once wrote that through this novel he wanted to trace society's flaws back to their source in human nature. He tries to show that when the constraints of civilization vanish and people are free from the constraints of society, they are drawn away from reason toward savagery, *i.e.*, drawn towards selfishness, brutality and dominance over others. The "beast," mentioned in the novel, represents savage impulses lying deep within man. According to the author, civilization, through its rules and laws, is only able to *hide* the beast but not able to *destroy* it. In the book, the author tries to show that instead of being dominated by the power of the "beast" or suppressing it by living a civilized life, humanity can embrace the life of religion and spiritual truth-seeking, wherein one learns to look within and acknowledge the presence of the beast within and face the same. Of all the boys it is only Simon who recognizes that there is no "beast" outside, and the only beast is within man. Likewise, there are only a few elect among men—Sages, Rishis, Buddhas and Christs—who have recognized and faced the "beast" within and are also helping humanity to achieve the same. The secondary theme of the novel is that within man there are forces of both good and evil, and in today's world "evil" is rampant and is reflected in man's inhumanity to man as well as in cruelty to animals.

"All family feuds, all class struggles, all national wars, and all religious crusades are but reflected ramifications of the eternal strife between the higher and the lower selves of man. For the student of Occultism, one of the earliest lessons acquired is a realization that battles in the outside world are but shadowy replicas of those fought within us....Not only is there a constant struggle going on within us, but we are recommended to maintain it until victory is won," writes Shri B. P. Wadia. (*Living the Life*, p. 17)

Theosophy says that man is dual in nature. It refers to two aspects of our nature—higher and lower, personal and impersonal, divine and diabolical, good and bad—one of which predominates over the other most of the time. We can have the best proof of the existence of the dual nature of man by examining our own nature. At the end of every day, if we examine all our thoughts, feelings and actions of the day impersonally and impartially, we realize that we are a mixture of good and bad. Man’s dual nature can be explained on the basis of the dual nature of his mind. Theosophy says that it is the prerogative of man to exercise the power of choice because man has a mind. It was eighteen million years ago that man was given the light of mind by Divine Beings—*Manasaputras*—in a manner comparable to one lighted candle lighting many. As a result, man was endowed with self-consciousness and the power to think and choose. There are three aspects of the mind: (1) When involved in desires and emotions, the mind is *reactive*, making man an animal-man. (2) When the mind functions on its own plane—thinking and reasoning—it is the mind *per se*. (3) When the mind works in conjunction with spiritual nature, it is *creative*—making man divine.

Man can introspect, deliberate and make conscious choices for good or bad and can accelerate his progress and become divine or degrade himself and become worse than an animal through right or wrong use of the powers of the mind. At every step, we are faced with choices. Most of the time, we choose that which satisfies our desires and brings happiness to us. But when we are faced with moral choices, something within us tries to stop us from choosing that which is selfish, which might harm another. What makes man more dangerous than even the most ferocious animal is that his personal desires and worldly ambitions are made much more powerful by *his superior intellect*, making him worse than an animal. We need to remind ourselves that “All good and evil things in humanity have their roots in human character, and this character is, and has been, conditioned by the endless chain of cause and effect. . . . Selfishness, indifference, and brutality can never be the normal state of the race. . . . Progress can be attained, and only attained, by the development of the nobler qualities.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, 232-33, *Indian Ed.*)

Our progress depends upon making choices. Theosophy says that in the lower kingdoms, the evolution proceeds by natural impulse. But once the human stage is reached, evolution takes place by “self-induced and self-devised efforts,” checked by Karma. Why does it appear that man has no free will or that man is predisposed to choose evil? The fact is that we are conditioned, to an extent, by our previous right or wrong actions, so that our present choices are, as it were, determined or influenced by the past. Hence, 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* circumstances, as well as the *inner* capacities and conditions—both being the result of past Karma. Every time the mind disconnects itself from the influence of personal desires, it becomes an organ of free will in man and the channel for manifesting noble qualities.

So far, we have been ruled by man-made laws, and we must realize that these laws are made only to “restrain” evil or to hold evil in check. We feel that we are born in sin, and therefore we can never eradicate evil. We decide for others what is right and wrong, based on our own understanding and also our own personal nature, and we try to impose that on others, considering it our right. We have only the right to do right. There are no laws that can make man good. There must be internal recognition of values and then follow them in practice.

Our civilization has brought about great technological advancement, but it is not a true progress because human beings are still ignorant and selfish. *We* alone can make our civilization better by acting on the right basis. The origin of evil is to be found in the ignorance of our true nature. Good and Evil must be considered together. “Goodness would cease to be, were it not for the operation of its contrary.”

In Ancient Philosophy, the birth of the Kosmos is attributed to ONE becoming the many, or homogeneity becoming heterogeneity, creating the contrasts. The creation of contrasts or “pairs of opposites” has given rise to evil, *i.e.*, free will through choice created evil. Moreover,

one-third of evil is inherent in manifestation. Evil is not immanent in matter, which is eternal, but in the illusions created by it, which include the illusion of separateness. To be free from evil one must recognize that matter and material things are continually changing and are ephemeral. Yet, it is only when the spirit (or soul) passes through envelopes of matter and learns to discern between good and evil or light and darkness that it can reach experience and knowledge.

How should we fight evil? We might begin by fighting the evil within, which may be practised right from childhood. When another person finds fault with us, then we might reflect upon the accusation or criticism. If found to be correct, let us learn not to repeat it, and that would be a victory of good over evil in a minor way. When we find something bad in us, we must not justify it, nor make excuses, nor be lenient, saying, "Only this once; next time I will be careful." We need to be firm and take measures. Lord Buddha says, "A man should hasten towards good; he should restrain his evil thoughts; if he is slack in doing good his mind inclines to delight in evil." This verse might lead us to think that man is naturally *more* inclined to evil than to good. However, its real implication could be understood when taken in the context of the evolutionary progress of the innumerable incarnations. As explained in *Theosophy* for August 1956, it is easy to see that a person who makes no positive effort towards self-improvement will lose touch with the meaning of the forward march of progress. While other fellow beings are at least making intermittent efforts to be good and are striving towards a wider perspective, this person makes no such effort, and hence gradually, he is separated from them. His will is set in opposition to the very idea of progress. He tends to become vindictive and revengeful. Even a man of the most evil ways can hope to become righteous through right choices, like a water-pot is filled by the constant falling of drops of water.

Good and Evil are relative terms, and we all have in us the germs of all the evil and wickedness we find in the world. It would be a folly to categorize action as good or bad on appearances without taking into account the motive, the inner state of the person and the degree of his

development and knowledge. Under the Law of Karma, wrongs done in ignorance attract physical consequences but not moral responsibility. The severity of karmic backlash is greater when the action is performed with knowledge. We need to dig deep and go to the base of apparent good and evil actions. Mr. Judge points out in *Letters That Have Helped Me* that what seems evil and “painful” may be necessary for the soul’s progress. Murder is evil, we may say, but as a result, the soul is incarnated into adverse and miserable circumstances, and that person is chastened and softened. Was the deed wholly evil? Not really.

To check evil in the society, the nation and the world at large, we might arouse a public opinion by spreading the right ideas. Let human laws be reformative and not punitive. Though punishment works as a temporary deterrent and is inevitable at times, punishment is not a permanent solution to eradicate evil. We may aim at bringing about the inner conversion or transformation in the evildoer. The article, “The Inner Conversion of Tojo” (*Thus Have I Heard*, p. 35), mentions the story of the Japanese General Tojo, described as the Dictator of modern Japan, who was tried, found guilty, and executed in 1948. It is the story of his (and also of his fellow-prisoners’) remarkable conversion to a higher perception through the efforts of a Buddhist monk, who preached and discussed with them spiritual matters so that Tojo and his fellow prisoners went to their execution in serene submission. The monk, the follower of Buddha Way of Compassion, illustrated that the true helper of the heart must himself possess the light of peace to overcome the darkness of might in warriors like General Tojo. Individually, we may not encounter criminals, robbers or terrorists, but we do experience the “meanness” of human nature at every step of life. Shall we condemn it? Shall we isolate ourselves? Shall we despair and become bitter? Mr. Judge advises us to cultivate a lot of compassion in our hearts for our own benefit and for that of the evildoer. Thus: “In order to off-set the terribly cold effect of perceiving the littleness of human affairs, one must inculcate in oneself a great compassion, which will include oneself, also. If this is not done, contempt comes on, and the result is dry, cold, hard, repellent, and obstructive to all good work.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 130)

Two-thirds of the world's evil is due to man's inhumanity to man. Our behaviour should always be such that ultimately, it inspires the other to turn the corner and reciprocate our goodness. A boy playing along the hillside shouted something, and he felt that another boy from behind the hill was repeating the very same thing that he spoke. He then shouted, "Go away, you bad boy," and back came the answer, "Away, you bad boy." The boy started crying and went to his mother. And the mother told him to go and shout, "Come, play with me, you good boy," and the same answer came back from the boy who was behind the hills. As we begin to be watchful of evil in us, at the level of thought, word and action, we begin to make a difference to the sum total of evil in the world.

"The difference between good and bad is one of kind; the gulf between goodness and spirituality is not one of mere degree," writes Shri B. P. Wadia. In the journey of overcoming evil there is a series of progressive awakenings, involving the conquering of evil in its gross and subtle forms. Thus, says *Light on the Path*, "Remember, O disciple, that great though the gulf may be between the good man and the sinner, it is greater between the good man and the man who has attained knowledge; it is immeasurable between the good man and the one on the threshold of divinity....If you allow the idea of separateness from any evil thing or person to grow up within you, by so doing, you create Karma, which will bind you to that thing or person till your soul recognizes that it cannot be isolated. Remember that the sin and shame of the world are your sin and shame....And before you can attain knowledge you must have passed through all places, foul and clean alike."

TREAT those who are good with goodness, and also treat those who are not good with goodness. Thus, goodness is attained. Be honest to those who are honest, and be also honest to those who are not honest. Thus, honesty is attained.

—Lao Tzu

THE SYMBOLOGY OF SERPENT AND DRAGON

I

A SYMBOL is a visible representation of an idea. “To be a just and correct symbol, it should be such that the moment it is seen by one versed in symbolism, its meaning and application become easily apparent,” writes Mr. Judge. “A symbol is an embodied idea, combining the conception of the Divine Invisible with the earthly visible,” writes H.P.B. Every object can be a symbol. A tree is a symbol. But it means different things to different minds. The word “tree” brings up one kind of idea in the mind of a child and a very different kind of idea in the mind of a botanist, a poet, a painter, a philosopher or a mystic. Every symbol must have a deeper meaning besides the obvious one. In fact, H.P.B. observes that each symbol has at least seven keys to its interpretation.

From the Druids to the Incas, from the Hindus to the Mexicans, the Serpent symbol seems to have been used primarily to represent Supreme Wisdom and also the great beings who embodied Wisdom. The great wisdom and prudence of the serpent is acknowledged by Jesus himself, who said: “Be ye *wise* as serpents and harmless as doves.” To explain things which are of an abstract nature, animals are sometimes used as symbols, and sometimes also because they have pure magnetism. The dove, for example, which has pure magnetism, is used as a symbol of the “Spirit of God” that descended on Jesus, as explained in the *Bible*.

Likewise, at times, the qualities of the animal made it unique, leading to its deification and protection. Some animals are regarded as abodes of the souls of the dead. All the animals and birds now held as “unclean” in the Bible had been the symbols of the Deity in days of old. “It was because they were too sacred that a mask of uncleanness was placed over them, in order to preserve them from destruction,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, I, 355). The word “unclean” is a blind, which actually may mean “holy.” For instance, Moses forbids eating the pelican and swan, and classifies them as unclean fowls. (*S.D.*, I, 80 fn.)

Serpent is an emblem of eternity, infinitude, regeneration and rejuvenation, as well as, divine wisdom and perfection. Hermes called the “Serpent” the most spiritual of all beings. H.P.B. points out that in the order of evolution reptiles preceded birds, and birds preceded the mammals, and hence the symbol of the serpent is the most ancient symbol. There are legends regarding various things that the serpent represents, which are mostly allegorical. Since people do not understand the symbology, these legends are considered fables based on ignorance and superstition. For instance, in the Scandinavian legend, Sigurd roasted the heart of Fafnir, the Dragon, whom he had slain, becoming thereby the wisest of men. H.P.B. points out that “Serpent” and “Dragon” were the names given to the “Wise Ones,” the initiated adepts of olden times. It was their wisdom and their learning that were devoured and assimilated by their followers.

Dragon, *Naga* and Serpent all symbolize wisdom. In every ancient language the word “Dragon” signified what it now does in Chinese language, viz., “*the being who excels in intelligence,*” and in Greek, “he who sees and watches.”

In the article “The Gnostics” that appeared in *Theosophy* magazine for September 1936, we read that of the three Gnostic schools, the third one was a Gnostic sect called Ophites, or the “Brotherhood of the Serpents,” who exerted powerful influence upon early Christianity. The meaning of the Serpent symbol was threefold: first, it represented Supreme Wisdom; second, it represented Perfected Beings who embodied Wisdom; third, the Christos-principle, or *Manas* conjoined with *Buddhi*, within each man. There are many statements in the *New Testament* which show the influence of the Ophite system. For instance, we read that “As Moses lifted up the Serpent in the wilderness, so shall the ‘Son of Man’ be lifted up.” When the words are translated symbolically, it implies that, as Moses lifted the Supreme Wisdom in the wilderness of false beliefs, so must the Christos principle be lifted up and given the position of the “Supreme Ruler” in man, because only then can he fulfil his divine destiny.

A serpent is a symbol of wisdom. We are told that serpents are wise. The serpent is an emblem of regeneration and rejuvenation because it sloughs off its skin and rejuvenates itself. The serpent casts off its skin periodically, just as the soul leaves the body to assume another. In this aspect, it represents renewal of life or rebirth. Serpent also symbolizes spiritually regenerated man or an Initiate, and then discarding the old skin and taking on a new one implies “second birth” or Spiritual regeneration. Also, the scales on the body of the serpent are supposed to represent various facets of truth, as each being is able to appreciate only some aspects of truth depending on their level of development. By passing again and again through the human stage, one learns to appreciate other aspects of truth and at last reaches perfection in knowledge and power and feels union with all, explains Mr. Judge.

The serpent symbolizes spiritual rebirth also because the serpent is oviparous like birds. In Sanskrit, *Dwija* means “twice-born,” and it is also the name given to all oviparous animals and birds, and one of them is the serpent. The “laying of the egg” marks the *first* birth, and when the chick comes out by breaking open the shell, it marks the *second* birth. Man, who is born through a mother has to transcend the limitations of matter to be reborn in spirit.

When it is said that these serpents are all healers, givers of health, spiritual and physical, and of enlightenment, it appears to refer to initiated Adepts. Moses led the Jews out of Egypt from slavery to the Promised Land or Palestine. It is allegorical. On p. 410 (*S.D.*, I) we read: “As for the figure of the *serpent*... it may well stand for that ‘True and perfect Serpent,’ who leads forth the souls of all that put their trust in him out of the Egypt of the body and through the Red Sea of Death into the Land of Promise, saving them on their way from the Serpents of the Wilderness, that is, from the Rulers of the Stars” (King’s “Gnostics,” p. 366). “True and perfect Serpent” may well represent a full initiate like Moses, who is allegorically supposed to lead those people or “souls” who have faith in his knowledge and wisdom, out of Egypt, which represents the body, through the Red Sea of death, *i.e.*, to the state of

freedom from birth, death and re-birth, into the Promised Land, which is Nirvana. On the way, he saves them from serpents of the wilderness that are “Rulers of the Stars,” which might represent those beings who rule over the destiny of man, the agents of Karmic dispensation. But in the case of a man who has risen above Karma, they have no power over him. H.P.B. says that the “True and Perfect Serpent” is the seven-lettered God, which is not Jehovah.

In *St. John’s Revelation* we read about the Serpent of Seven Thunders uttering Seven Vowels, and these vowels are represented as the Swastika sign on the crowns of the seven heads of the Serpent of Eternity. These seven Vowels represent Seven Zones through which the soul ascends after death, and in Hermetic writings, we read that in each of these zones, the soul leaves one of its principles till it comes to a plane that is above the seven zones and remains there as the Formless Serpent of Absolute Wisdom or Deity itself. The Seven-headed serpent has several meanings. “It is the seven-headed *Draco*, each of whose heads is a star of the Lesser Bear, but it was also, and pre-eminently, the Serpent of Darkness (*i.e.*, inconceivable and incomprehensible) whose seven heads were the seven *Logoi*, the reflections of the one and first manifested Light—the universal LOGOS,” which perhaps means the Manifested Logos with its seven hierarchies. (*S.D.*, I, 411)

The constellation of Draco is connected with the demon (Rahu) who was caught stealing *Amrita*, or the elixir of divine life. In the allegory of the “Churning of the Ocean,” the churning was done by both the *Devas* and the *Asuras* for obtaining *Amrita* or the nectar of immortality. In the process of churning, Mount Mandara was used as the churning tool and Vasuki, the king of serpents, as the churning rope. As a result of churning, fourteen precious things along with poison and Amrita, the nectar of immortality came out of the ocean.

Rahu, mythologically, is a *Daitya*—a giant, a demi-god, the lower part of whose body ended in a Dragon or Serpent’s tail, who became immortal by stealing and drinking *amrita*—the water of Immortality—during the churning of the ocean. “The Sun and Moon, who had detected

him in his theft, denounced him to Vishnu, who placed him in the stellar spheres, the upper portion of his body representing the Dragon's head and the lower (Ketu) the Dragon's tail; the two being the ascending and descending nodes. Since then, Rahu wreaks his vengeance on the Sun and Moon by occasionally swallowing them." (S.D., II, 381)

However, H.P.B. observes that this fable has another mystic meaning, since "Rahu," the Dragon's head, "played a prominent part in the mysteries of the Sun's (*Vikârttana's*) initiation, when the candidate and the Dragon had a supreme fight." In the Puranic allegory, Viswakarman's daughter Sanjana (spiritual consciousness), who was the wife of Surya the sun, complained to her father of the too great effulgence of her husband. Viswakarman, the divine carpenter, crucified the sun on his lathe and cut away an eighth part of his rays—creating round him a dark aureole. After that, Surya looked as though he had been crowned with dark thorns, and he became "Vikarttana," one who was shorn of his effulgence. Vikarttana is the type of initiated neophyte. All these names were given to candidates who were going through trials of initiation. The candidate for initiation personifies the sun, who has to kill all his fiery passions and wear a crown of thorns before he can rise into new life and be reborn.

Thus, "Dragon" seems to refer to personified human passions. H.P.B. writes that the candidate for Adeptship has to fight "his personified human passions" when "the *inner* enlightened man had to either slay them or fail. In the former case, he became the 'Dragon-Slayer,' as having happily overcome all the temptations; and a 'Son of the Serpent' and a Serpent himself, having cast off his old skin and being born in a *new* body, becoming a Son of Wisdom and Immortality in Eternity." (S.D., II, 380)

The Seven-headed serpent has several meanings. During *Pralaya*, Vishnu is depicted as sleeping over *Ananta* "the infinite" (Space), symbolized by the serpent *Sesha*, and during the *Manvantaras*, he has Garuda, the symbol of the great cycle, as his vehicle. There are seven-headed serpents and Dragons of antiquity, where each head has seven hairs on it, and they represent seven races and their sub-races. In India, we have *Ananta-Sesha* as the Serpent of Eternity and it

represents the seven principles throughout nature and man.

The serpent biting its own tail symbolizes Eternity or an all-devouring Time—the great spiral of evolution or *Manvantara*. It means a circle of necessity, which compels the souls to progress through a series of reincarnations. It also means the periodical appearance and disappearance of the manifested world. Vishnu, the Preserver, is usually portrayed as sitting or reclining on the enormous coiled body of *Adi Sesha* or *Ananta*, with multiple cobra heads. Garga, the oldest astronomer in India, is supposed to have obtained astronomical knowledge from *Sesha*—the thousand-headed serpent, who bears seven *Patalas* and the entire world upon his head—who is also *Ananta*, the infinite, and also the “Cycle of Eternity” in esotericism. Narada is one of the few to have visited the nether or infernal regions—*Patala*. It is not certain if he got his knowledge of astronomy from *Sesha*, but he is supposed to surpass *Sesha* in knowledge of cyclic intricacies. “It is he who has charge of our progress and national weal or woe. It is he who brings on wars and puts an end to them.” (*S.D.*, II, 49 and fn.)

In *Isis Unveiled* (II, 489-90) we read that expressions such as *Sarpa Rajni* or “Queen of Serpents,” etc. are used for our earth (globe D) because before our globe had become egg-shaped or round, it was a long trail of cosmic dust or fire-mist, moving and writhing like a serpent. It is the Spirit of God moving on Chaos, until its breath incubated cosmic matter and made it assume the annular or round shape of a serpent with its tail in its mouth, an emblem of eternity in a spiritual as well in a physical sense when applied to our world. After every minor pralaya, or an end of a Round, our earth casts off her skin and appears in a rejuvenated state. Likewise, after great pralaya, the earth resurrects from its subjective into an objective state. As a result, the earth, like a serpent, is able to “put off its old age” and also “increase in size and strength.” That is the reason why snakes are kept in mosques, temples, even homes, or near the cradle of children, as they are thought to bring a magnetic aura of wisdom, health and good luck, writes H.P.B.

(*To be continued*)

THE FABLE OF THE FISH

LONG ago at the beginning of Time, a small, sparkling and joyful stream gushed forth from the highest and only enduring Mountain.

Down, down over the rocks dashed the little stream and on into the lush meadows below. Quietly now it meandered, and one day in its sweet waters appeared two fish. Happily, they fed and mated, often sleeping and drifting with the current. Soon the stream, now become a river, was teeming with fish. As their numbers increased the supply of food became a problem, and a struggle between the strong and the weak, the hungry and the greedy, began and gradually their former serenity and joy were replaced by fear and aggressiveness.

Thus, frittering away their energies, the fish made little or no effort to resist the current, and both waking and sleeping were swept continuously downstream. So, the river widened and its population multiplied and the waters became polluted. Some fish, weary with the ceaseless struggle for existence, glided exhausted into quiet backwaters, and there to their amazement found food and a stagnant kind of peace. As they recovered their strength a desire to rejoin the river arose within some of them. But now they headed upstream, towards the quiet meadows and the great Mountain which was dimly visible at the Source of Everything.

Of course, they could not swim day and night, so when sleep overcame them, they tended to drift downstream once more, unless good fortune swept them into some small salient until consciousness returned. Thus, they struggled, ignoring the admonitions of the down-coming fish, back towards the serenity and bliss of their beginning.

But the great multitude of fish swam and drifted ever onwards, now no longer between the trees and flowers, but between steel ships and cranes, power stations and chemical works, and the waters became more and more foul. Then, quite suddenly they tasted the salt and felt, beyond the current, that swift drag of the tide; and at once with the river were swept away into the vast waste of the sea.

THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE
FRAGMENT ONE—XVI

“LET NOT thy ‘Heaven-Born,’ merged in the sea of Maya, break from the Universal Parent (SOUL), but let the fiery power retire into the inmost chamber; the chamber of the Heart, and the abode of the World’s Mother.”

“Heaven-Born” refers to the reincarnating ego, and at the present time of evolution, it is involved in *Maya* or illusion. It can get further entangled in its webs and break its connection with its Universal Parent (Soul) or may learn to unite with it. “Universal parent soul” refers to Maha-Buddhi or Mahat. *Buddhi* as a vehicle of *Atma* is a passive principle. However, when *Buddhi* is activated, it gives rise to one of the mystic yogic powers, an electro-spiritual force called *Kundalini*, a creative power which when aroused into action, can *as easily kill as it can create*.

On p. 293, (*S.D.*, I) *Kundalini Sakti* has been described as the Force which moves in a curved path. This force includes the two great forces of attraction and repulsion. Electricity and magnetism are but manifestations of it. It is this power which brings about *continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations*, which is the essence of life and *continuous adjustment of external relations to internal relations*, which is the basis of re-birth. It is only when the Yogi has thoroughly brought this power under control that he can attain Moksha.

This can be achieved by the mind freeing itself from feelings and desires and uniting with *Buddhi*. How? “(1) At present our consciousness is Kama-Manasic; (2) it must become Manasic, *i.e.*, *Antahkaranic*; (3) *Antahkarana* must move towards and become Higher Manasic; (4) finally, the awakening of *Buddhi* should be completed. The awakening of *Buddhi* is in two stages: (a) The good man, to become spiritual now and here. . . must impersonalize himself. Impersonalize your feelings; do not kill them. We are hot in feelings; do not extinguish the fire. Let it go down to the ember stage and then fan

the flame to adequate warmth. Love and compassion and all the children that spring from the higher mind and *Buddhi* should be cultivated now and here. (b) *Buddhi* must be *activated*; see the footnote in *The Voice of the Silence* (p. 10). Study and meditation provide the motor-power; the daily routine of life provides the method. . . . Book study will not activate *Buddhi*, but it helps the aspirant to learn how to do it. Altruism in thought depends on our understanding of Brotherhood,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

Buddhi is a passive vehicle, but *Manas*, as it were, prods it into action, and then activated *Buddhi* becomes active vehicle of the pure energy of *Atma*. The whole process is called the activation of *Kundalini*.

The Churning of the ocean or *Samudra Manthan* is a very important mythical story in Hindu mythology. According to one version, when sage *Durvasa* cursed *Indra* and all the *Devas* (gods) to be bereft of all strength, the *Devas* were defeated by *Asuras* or demons in all the battles. Lord *Vishnu* suggested that the *Devas* and *Asuras* should jointly churn the ocean for obtaining *Amrita* or the nectar of immortality. Mount *Mandara* was used as the churning tool and *Vasuki*, the king of serpents, as the churning rope. One of the interpretations of this story is connected with the activation of *Kundalini*. In the article “Mount Meru,” first printed by Mr. Judge in *The Path* magazine for January and February 1891, an anthropological (physiological) key is applied to the myth of the “churning of the ocean.” The article mentions that the churning of the ocean takes place round about Mount Meru, in order that the Gods may obtain *Amrita* or waters of immortality. “Where and What is Mount Meru in man? What process in him corresponds to the churning of the ocean? Is it not electro-spiritual process by which he produces the brain fluid; the moon or soma juice or ‘World-Mother’ [*Kundalini*]?” Our attention is drawn to the footnote on p. 10 of *The Voice of the Silence*, which mentions that *Buddhi* as a vehicle of *Atma* is a passive principle. However, when *Buddhi* is activated, it gives rise to an electro-spiritual force called *Kundalini*. It is the Power, which rises into the sixth, the middle region, the place between the eyes. Could it be between

the optic thalami? “We are given reason to believe, through the *Secret Doctrine*, that the seat of this process is the pineal gland, or pine-formed heart—secret heart of occultism—and that this gland corresponds to Mount Meru.” Further, the article points out that Mountain Mandara, which was a great obstacle to the process of churning, was put to use for the same purpose. A Teacher writes: “There is good and evil in every point of the universe.” So, Mount Mandara, inhabited by both good and evil forces, which could not be removed, was used in the process of churning. It appears that Mandara represents the solar plexus, around which the great serpentine force (*Kundalini*), represented by serpent Vasuki (used as a rope for churning), is deployed. The mountain Mandara is placed on the back of the tortoise. The article points out that symbolically, this creature is androgynous and the bi-sexual force. The solar plexus, symbolized by Mandara, is in the pelvic region, and the shape of pelvic bones resembles that of a tortoise.

In *The Voice of the Silence*, we read: let the fiery power (*Kundalini*) retire into the chamber of the Heart, and the abode of the World’s Mother. The footnote explains: the “*inner* chamber of the Heart” refers to *Brahma-pura*. The “World-Mother” refers to *Kundalini*. *Brahma-pura* (City of *Brahman*) is a profound concept in the Upanishads, particularly the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, referring to the innermost, subtlest space within the heart where the *Atman* resides. The heart is said to be the seat of Spiritual consciousness. The brain is supposed to be the seat of psycho-intellectual consciousness. (*Raja Yoga or Occultism*)

The body is compared to a city, and just as a palace is the most important part within the city, so also within the body is the “lotus of the heart,” corresponding to *Buddhi-Manas*, where there is pure perception of Truth without reference to our likes and dislikes. There are varieties of lotus, which bloom under the rays of the moon or the sun. However, if a knot is tied around the bud of the lotus, it can never bloom. Similarly, if the heart is not obstructed with too much involvement with the personality, it can reflect Akasic vibrations and

ideations. The true heart of man, represented by the muscular heart, is the focal point for spirit, knowledge and power. However, an “iron bar” holds down the heart, which the Hindus call “the knot of the heart.” The knot and the bar represent the astringent power of self—of egotism—of the idea of separateness. To free the heart and its powers, one has to conquer this egotism at all levels—gross to subtle—and it is most difficult to surmount near “the kernel of the heart.”

When we are able to impersonalize the feelings, we can awaken the Spiritual Heart, and then succeed in acquiring Wisdom, Compassion and the power of Intuition or Direct Perception that surpasses the slow process of reasoning from premises to conclusion. At present, the human heart is misguided, as it is under the dominance of the animal heart. By bringing to birth unselfish emotions, we can awaken the Human Heart. Shri B. P. Wadia suggests that we have to learn to love or be devoted, even to a few or a single individual. When you give yourself to even one person, unconditionally, so as to be ready to do everything in your power for that person, you break the shell of your heart in which you lived in a world of your own so far. Till then one often does not know the real outside world without any veils of delusion and illusion. The real breaker of the heart’s shell is the accumulation of knowledge and aspiration to use that knowledge out of love for mankind. What breaks that shell is the devotion or love for another. Then you can expand the circle and take in others.

“Then, from the heart that Power shall rise into the sixth, the middle region, the place between thine eyes, when it becomes the breath of the ONE-SOUL, the voice which filleth all, thy Master’s voice.”

Once the Kundalini power has been activated, we are asked to let it retire in the inmost chambers of the heart. Then this power will rise into the sixth, the middle region, described as “between the two eyes.” *Kundalini Sakti* is the power of life. It is a power known only to those who practice concentration and Yoga. *Kundalini* is the power or energy which is said to lie at the base of the spine in the *Muladhar chakra*. Once awakened, this energy goes on breaking through the *chakras*,

causing various levels of realization and obtaining of occult powers. In *Hatha Yoga* there are various preparatory practices of *asanas* and *pranayamas* before the awakening of *Kundalini*.

As explained in the exoteric literature, *Kundalini* is the dormant, latent energy situated at the base of the spine, while the *chakras* are wheels of energy centres along the spine. The awakening of *Kundalini* involves this energy rising through the *Sushumna nadi*, activating, purifying, and balancing each of the seven *chakras*. Exoterically, the *Muladhar chakra* is related to the physical body, followed by the *Swadhisthan chakra* related to emotions and feelings. The solar plexus or the *Manipur chakra* is related to mental health. The Heart chakra or *Anahat chakra* is concerned with love. The *Visuddhi chakra* or throat chakra is concerned with higher consciousness and creativity. The *Ajna chakra* (located between the two eyes) is the sixth *chakra* and is concerned with spiritual awareness. The seventh *chakra* is the *Sahasrara chakra* and is connected with divine awareness.

We might say *chakras* actually refer to certain nerve centres in the body. Nervous system is actually a connecting link between the physical and astral. Probably, these *chakras* are the external representation of various nervous centres which have a connection with their astral counterparts.

Traditionally, the “region between two eyes” is described as the source of inspiration with cosmic power. This power is to be used for the realization of what is called the “line of life’s meditation,” or that spiritual aim on which the heart is set. The Sixth or the middle region, in a way, refers to the *Buddhi* principle, which is the sixth principle. When the *Buddhi* is activated, all the lower principles are purified and raised to a higher level. Then the “World-Soul” speaks through the person, *i.e.*, all the Cosmic ideations which are there in *Maha-Buddhi* or *Mahat* will be available to him. When one reaches this stage, one rises beyond the “individuality” or “I am I” consciousness.

It is very easy to get tempted to awaken *Kundalini sakti* through various practices even before attaining inward purification. When one attempts it prematurely, without a proper guide, without inner purification, it is bound to result in the ruin of psychic health, and the loss of psychic

balance, besides the danger of falling into mediumship. Since the astral, inner man is inextricably connected with the physical man; any disturbance in the astral body and *pranic* currents are bound to produce deleterious effects on the physical. There is no short-cut to self-realization. Theosophy puts emphasis on the living of the altruistic life. As the *Voice of the Silence* says, “To live to benefit mankind is the first step. To practise the six glorious [transcendental, divine] virtues is the second.”

“’Tis only then thou canst become a ‘Walker of the Sky’ who treads the winds above the waves, whose step touches not the waters.”

In the Sixth *Adhyaya* of *Jnaneshwari*, we are given the description of the powers acquired by the Yogi in whom *Kundalini Sakti* has been awakened. According to the footnote on p. 10 of the *Voice of the Silence*, the Yogi becomes *Kechara* or the “Walker of the Sky,” and his body becomes as one formed of the wind. This refers to “astral” travel. Astral travel denotes the astral body or *double* leaving the physical body to travel in the astral plane. People who strive towards perfection in concentration and follow rigorous discipline of a mental and moral nature can *consciously and voluntarily* withdraw the astral (inner) man from the outer man (physical body). The Yogi acquires the power of clairvoyance. True clairvoyance is also called “seership,” and a true clairvoyant is called a “seer,” who can “see things visible and invisible...at any distance and time with his spiritual or inner sight or perceptions” (*The Theosophical Glossary*). Thus, “He (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.” For most of us, mind becomes that to which it is devoted, as water assumes the shape of the vessel. In order to know what is going on in the mind of an ant, one has to consciously and intelligently allow one’s mind to act and think like an ant but, at the same time, remain, to a large extent, an observer. This is what Yogis are able to attain.

(To be continued)

THE POWER OF REASON—HELP OR HINDRANCE

REASON is a faculty of the human mind, which in turn is a principle of the human soul. It is a line of thought which seeks to find the how and why of a thing or of an occurrence or of an experience. The one given to independent thought cannot accept any statement or explanation of a phenomenon or exposition of a principle unless it is demonstrated to one's reason, which means an explanation of the why and the how of it, supported by verifiable evidence and testimony of universal experience. Right reasoning is the foundation of correct understanding.

Another important mark of right reasoning is that it must satisfy the criterion of natural justice—which is an innate quality of the human soul. It is the mental capacity to think and form fair and unbiased judgments. While logic is a form of deductive reasoning employed to arrive at a valid conclusion from the basis of two or more general and specific premises, irrespective of whether the latter are factual or not; reasoning, on the other hand, is more of a general cognitive process of arriving at right conclusions and drawing inferences based on direct cognition, evidence and valid testimony. The foundation of right reasoning stems from true premises—meaning factual knowledge—and correct logical methods to ensure that conclusions follow from evidence and trustworthy testimony.

There are two kinds of reasoning: one is the ordinary reasoning pertaining to our personal material life based on facts, truisms and experiences of that life; and the other is what may be called *higher* reason, based on an intuitive perception and understanding of eternal verities and divine wisdom. We use ordinary reasoning in the affairs of everyday personal life in making decisions, though we sometimes go by what is called a hunch, an intuitive feeling beyond reason.

Modern science also employs ordinary reasoning based on empirical data but subjects it to more rigorous tests than we use in ordinary life. They call it logical empiricism. It consists of four steps: First, observation; second, theory statement, or hypothesis, which seems to best explain the mystery of the phenomenon observed; third, further refining of the

hypothesis by which to predict new observations; and, the fourth, test the prediction by experimentation and more observations. These observations and hypotheses are cast into terms of mathematical models—logic machines—to maintain the rigour of unbiased reasoning. Thus, the logic of propositions, in this way, is the core of the scientific method (“Gentle Bridges,” Shambala Publications, 1992). This is a reasoning process in which one proceeds from observations of many particulars to arrive at general principles. Wonderful discoveries of laws of physical nature have been made, leading to practical applications through technological innovations, which is a testimony to the merit of the process of rigorous reasoning called the scientific method. This, however, is not to deny that flashes of intuition, apprehension of truths in dreams and visions experienced by scientists, which science is unable to explain, have also played a significant role in great scientific discoveries, and not by inductive logic alone.

This discussion leads us to a consideration of the fact, borne out by the general experience of mankind, that, in both the ordinary life of individuals and of nations and in the field of science, reason and logic, however well formulated and executed, often lead to error. This is sometimes seen—on a social scale—in the fields of fiscal policy and management, stratagem in war, diagnostics and treatment in the system of health care, and so on, and in many decisions we make in our individual and personal lives. Errors of judgment occur because of two factors: one is human error in not taking into account all relevant facts in observation and in formulating basic assumptions or premises; and the other basis of error is the play of imponderable causal factors pertaining to the teleology of larger life and the law of Karma, which influence our thinking and judgment. So much so is this the case that very often the instinct of the animal is found to be truer and closer to nature than our reasoning, which often leads us to falsity.

The same is true of modern science also. Conclusions arrived at by the scientific method as regards the physical laws resting on a set of observed facts and theory formulated thereon are subject to revision or reformulation as observation of new facts and fresh discoveries

emerge. As this process goes on endlessly, the philosophers of the scientific method say that the discoveries made and theories formulated by the scientific method do not actually represent the reality or the truth of what the world is but give us only an idea of what it probably is. Moreover, cognitive psychology has demonstrated that the dichotomy of subjective and objective—or the observer and the observed—is not so distinctly compartmentalised as to be the two mutually uninfluencing factors as thought earlier but becomes more blurred as investigations go deep into the quantum field underlying the phenomenon of sub-atomic particle; and that the ideation of the observer—such as the hypothesis or theory already formulated in mind—influences the phenomenon observed and conclusions arrived at. Scientists say that this is the limitation of the scientific method based on Inductive reasoning, which barrier it cannot transcend. “Like the Universe itself, Science is ever *becoming*, and can never say, ‘I am that am.’” (*S.D.*, I, 516)

“One error leads into another. A false premise will naturally lead to a false conclusion, although an inadmissible inference does not *necessarily* affect the validity of the major proposition of the syllogism” (*S.D.*, I, 589). For example, inasmuch as the source, or the cause of human emotions, feelings, thoughts, mind and consciousness is traceable by empirical observation to various parts of the brain, which have been accurately identified and mapped by science, it is concluded thereby that the mind and consciousness are products of the brain and have no independent existence apart from it. By the standard of syllogistic logic, the conclusion is valid. But in the view of Occult Science the conclusion is inadmissible because it demonstrates, based on *higher reason* proceeding from universal principles and by experimental demonstration, that they are independent factors and that the brain is the instrument of the mind, the source of which mind is traced to Universal Mind.

The Occult Science begins with Universal One Life, the periodical manifesting aspect of the Absolute, the Causeless Cause of all that was, is, and shall be. Differentiating on a septenary scale, the One Spirit-Substance becomes the many, each a mirror of, and in essence one with, the

One, each with a septenary constitution. It traces every phenomenon to its eternal one essence and follows the descending course of its differentiating involution from spirit to matter and the ascending course of its evolution from matter to spirit under the immutable cosmic and Karmic Law. Having investigated the essential unity and interconnectedness and interdependence of all the myriads of beings evincing a progressive evolution on the spiritual, intellectual and physical lines to higher life, it comprehends the alpha and omega of the mystery of the Universe and Man, and sees no mystery unsolved or unsolvable anywhere.

It is the age-old wisdom that the bondage of man is due to his thoughts and that his liberation is due to nothing else but to thought alone. So long as thought and action of man are centered in the lower personal self, the very acme of selfishness arising from the illusion that he is separate from others, from all life, the course of his life will invariably be violative of the fact of Universal Brotherhood, and obstructive to the harmonious progressive order of universal life; the retributive Karma thus generated binds man to the miseries of endless cycles of rebirth. We need to come out of ignorance and learn the fundamental truths of Universal Brotherhood, that we are in reality spiritual beings involved in material life under the necessity of universal evolution through laws of Karma and Reincarnation. The false idea that we are mere biological creatures is the wrong premise; the logical outcome of which is materialism in thought and action that tends to animalism in the struggle for animal existence. The anthropomorphic god idea of sectarian religions which pervert the true teachings of ancient universal Wisdom-Religion into such illogical beliefs as salvation by proxy, original sin, illogical notions of heaven and hell, and so on, darken the mind and prevent proper and right mental action on the lines of right reasoning based on perception of eternal verities.

For true human happiness and harmonious progress of all to human perfection, it is necessary to grasp the self-evident truths of essential unity and interdependence of all life, all evincing a progressive march to higher life through cycles of metempsychosis and reincarnation; that we, individually and collectively, reap the consequences of our own

acts; that Karma of each one is indissolubly bound with the collective Karma of the world such that each is bound to labour for the good of all and all for the good of each; and that salvation is possible only through self-induced, self-devised effort. Perceptive knowledge of these verities alone is calculated to afford a soul satisfying philosophy and logical explanation of the riddle of good and evil, the cause of the problem of apparent injustice in society, and reveal the perfect scientific basis of ethics.

WHEN you laugh much, it goes against your power... This does not mean you are to be disagreeable or strained. Too much laughter is as bad as intense sorrow, jealousy or anger. When you are spoken to, smile if the occasion demands it, but try to curb laughter which tends to emotion only.

Never tell people what you intend to do, but do it. When you speak of your intentions the power to do it is decreased.

Never debase your idea of yourself to others; it is a form of vanity and lessens your power just that much, weakens your ability to help those you wish to help. Keep up to what people think of you or you'll drop flat. Never think, "I cannot do it." You can do it if you will; you can be what you desire to be. If you think you cannot learn to do any certain small or difficult thing, you will never do it. This does not mean that it is necessary to get "big head"; that is an extreme which lessens your power. But stop regarding your personal self, neither debase nor regard yourself in the matter at all, and do not go to extremes either way. A week of this plan if followed will show you the power gained by following what I say.

When you speak give things of value or people will say it is rubbish. When you get up to speak try to feel what is needed by those who hear you, of value to them in practice. When you have said the words cut yourself off from them. Your audience will thus get what is needed, and forgetting you will carry home the ideas. Your power will lie in this.

From *The Irish Theosophist*, June 1896

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Atlantis is a legendary civilization that the Greek philosopher Plato described as a utopia, which provoked the wrath of the gods due to their excessive pride and extreme arrogance, who erased Atlantis from the face of the earth in one day and one night. The story of Atlantis has fascinated many, who wish to know whether Atlantis existed, where it was, and how it was destroyed. Atlantis was an enormous island, larger than Libya and Asia combined, and supposed to be populated by the race of demigods, ruled by powerful kings, and traced their origin to Poseidon, the mighty god of seas and oceans. The Atlantean civilization was mighty with enormous cities. They had insatiable greed for power and wealth, and hence, they waged wars and enslaved most of their technologically inferior neighbours. As a result, Atlanteans invited the wrath of the gods, so that Atlantis was destroyed by an earthquake and flood. The fabled island was submerged under the sea along with all its inhabitants.

The approximate location of Atlantis is west of the Strait of Gibraltar, in the Atlantic Ocean. Attempts have been made by generations of explorers to find Atlantis, which is considered to be a myth invented by the Greek philosopher Plato, who lived from the 420s to the 340s BCE. The written account about Atlantis is to be found in two of the dialogues, *Timaeus* and *Critias*, written by Plato. Some consider the story of Atlantis to be a morality tale intended to educate young Athenians on the dangers of power and greed, as during Plato's lifetime Athens tried to become an empire by engaging in a bloody war with Sparta.

Plato's pupil, Aristotle, dismissed the Atlantis legend as pure fantasy. To give credibility to his account of Atlantis, Plato attributed the narrative to Solon—one of the most renowned Athenian politicians and lawmakers, who had heard the story of Atlantis from an old Egyptian priest in Sais. We must note that Egypt is considered to be the ancient world's most advanced civilization, and its priests are known to be keepers of this sacred knowledge. After this, in the second century

CE, Plutarch, the Roman historian, mentioned the story in his work, *Life of Solon*. The geographer Strabo believed that the part of the story of Atlantis might be genuine, inspired by a real natural disaster.

During fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, there were expeditions to find traces of this lost civilization among the Mayan, Aztec, or Incan cultures. Some others searched for it in the Middle East, Tibet, or Antarctica. “While we might identify previously unknown ancient civilizations that were more technologically advanced than previously imagined and were destroyed by disaster, we may never be able to definitively identify one of them as Atlantis,” writes Vedran Bileta, a doctoral researcher, based in Budapest. (*Thecollector.com*)

According to Theosophy, there were three other continents that preceded the Atlantean continent, which was the fourth continent on which the fourth race humanity evolved. The Fourth Continent is the Atlantean Continent, also known as Atlantis, and the Third Continent was the Lemurian continent. The answer is that Atlantis (or the Atlantean continent) did exist and was in fact in the phase of glory and civilization when the last remnants of the Lemurian continent sank. This continent might have extended from India to Tasmania and might have been situated to the south of Asia, writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 221)

On pp. 323-24 (*S.D.*, II) we are told that the Lemurian Continent was a gigantic land. It covered the whole area from the foot of the Himalayas to what is now Tibet, Mongolia, the Gobi Desert, and portions of India, Ceylon, Australia and Tasmania. We read on pp. 333-334 (*S.D.*, II) that just as in the case of Race-evolution, wherein there is overlapping of the races, there being no hard and fast line of demarcation showing where the old race ends and the new race begins, so also it is true of continents. “The *Atlantic portion of Lemuria* was the geological basis of what is generally known as Atlantis. The latter, indeed, must be regarded rather as a development of the Atlantic prolongation of Lemuria, than as an entirely new mass of land upheaved to meet the special requirements of the Fourth Root-Race. Atlanteans were developed from a nucleus of Northern Lemurian Third Race Men, centred, roughly speaking, toward a point of land in what is now the mid-Atlantic Ocean.

Their continent was formed by the coalescence of many islands and peninsulas which were upheaved in the ordinary course of time *and became ultimately the true home of the great Race known as the Atlanteans.*”

In the article “Sources of Early American Civilization,” which appeared in *Theosophy* magazine, we are told that scientists accept the existence of the continents of Lemuria and Atlantis and that there was a connection between these continents and America. This connection is further indicated by the fact that Plato named the last remnant of the Atlantean continent as Atlantis because the root of this word is found in the Mexican language (Nahuatl), and *atl* means water. It was not coined by Plato or the Greeks.

In *Timaeus*, Plato writes about Atlantis as a third party who has heard about it from others. He is not claiming that it is he who is saying these things, but what he says is handed down traditionally, and yet he is charged of falsehood. Plato also mentions that he has heard about Atlantis and Atlanteans from Solon, who in turn was told the same by the Egyptian priests. That is because Plato was an Initiate, and at the time of initiation the candidates are told not to divulge, using spoken words, any such facts concerning moral disasters faced by humanity, because, as mentioned on p. 307 (*S.D.*, I), the spoken word has a potency that is unknown to the modern man and the scientists. Sound is related to four elements. Therefore, a student was never allowed to speak of any historical, religious or real event in so many unmistakable words to avoid attracting the powers connected with that event, which can lead to disastrous results.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 273), we read that the early Atlanteans were the first worshippers of form and matter. That worship soon degenerated into self-worship, which led ultimately to phallicism. This phallicism is to be seen today in the symbolisms of every exoteric religious dogma and ritual. The first Atlantean races separated into righteous and unrighteous, *i.e.*, those who worshipped the one unseen Spirit of Nature and those others who offered fanatical worship to the Spirits of the Earth, the dark Cosmic powers with whom they made alliance.

They were the *Gibborim* mentioned in *Genesis*, who became with the Fifth Race, the *Kabirim* of the Egyptians; Titans with the Greeks; and Rakshasas and Daityas with the Indian Races. The seeds of White and Black Magic were sown during the Fourth or Atlantean Race.

H.P.B. points out that no one can fail to recognize the Atlanteans of *The Secret Doctrine* in Ravana and the *Rakshasas* of Lanka. It is from the Fourth Race that the early Aryans got their knowledge of wonderful things. One of them is the Mayasabha mentioned in the *Mahabharata*, which was built by Mayasur, an Atlantean, for the Pandavas. The chronology and computations of Brahmin Initiates are based on the works of that great astronomer and magician, Asurmaya, who was also an Atlantean. The Aryans learnt from the Atlanteans the aeronautics or *Viman Vidya*, and so also their great arts of meteorography and meteorology and many other things.

Temptation is usually vilified, *i.e.*, it is spoken of or written about in an extremely harsh or defamatory manner. “Civilisations have issued warnings about it with impressive consistency.” Temptation reveals a truth we would rather not confront. A stone or a mountain is never tempted, because always, only the living are tempted. Only those beings are tempted who can imagine another possibility. Temptation is related to moral tests. When temptation appears, it awakens desire and discipline is put, as it were, on its guard. Normally, sages regard temptation as a weakness, but it is perhaps just the opposite. “Perhaps temptation is simply the mind discovering that the road has more than one direction. Which is why our mythologies circle around temptation with almost ritual fascination.” For instance, in one story, a glittering deer distracts the attention of a warrior, and in another story, a game of dice brings into play pride, greed and destiny.

Societies have always been cautious of temptations. Normally order is preferred because order implies predictability while temptation involves rapid and unpredictable change. “A person wrestling with

temptation is thinking, weighing, questioning. Institutions prefer obedience. Temptation breeds reflection.”

Virtue depends upon temptation, as, for instance, it is only when one overcomes the temptation to be impatient that he can cultivate the quality of patience. Hence, temptation makes us weaker and stronger at the same time. We discover our fragility when we succumb to temptation, but when we are able to resist the same, we become aware of our strength. In the process, we learn something about the architecture of our own mind. There is an element of hypocrisy in the way the societies condemn temptation. On the one hand, they preach restraint, but on the other hand, there are industries, markets and advertisements that tempt us daily and hourly, and ironically, it is personal morality that gets blamed. “Temptation is not merely a moral trap. It is a mirror. It reveals what we long for, what we fear, and what we can refuse. Character does not grow in the absence of temptation. It grows in its shadow,” writes Partha Sinha. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, April 7, 2026)

What is temptation? When there is a conscious or unconscious desire or aversion in us, we tend to get carried away to fulfill that desire or avoid the unwelcome situation—almost against our better judgment. When the temptation presents itself, we are standing on the bridge (*antahskarana*) and can choose to go either way. This is a better state than being simply carried away by the force of our desire. When we resist the temptation, it becomes weaker and weaker until at last it stops bothering us altogether. However, it takes a long time to reach that stage.

Unless there is a desire in us, even if it is in a germ form, nothing and no one from outside can really tempt us. However, it is possible for another to know about our weakness and then exploit or manipulate it into making us do exactly what they want. It is like a chink in the armour through which a weapon can pierce us. The Buddha says: “He whose hand has no wound may touch poison. Poison harms not one who has no wound.” As children, we could be tempted by toys, and as we grew up, we had outgrown our desire

for toys. In the future, as we grow, these may be replaced by something else.

When our fair and just approach fails to bring us desired results, we are tempted to use unfair means. It is the desire in us for recognition, for progress, which tempts us to do the same. It is a matter of adherence to principles and ethics, which have been found to be of value and must not be allowed to be shaken. We need to discriminate. We need to be vigilant and exercise control. The path of righteousness is not easy, and we have to be prepared to make sacrifices at a personal level. Temptations are the trials that come in our path, and when overcome, we are initiated from one level to the next. But once conquered and subdued, they cannot torment us anymore.

In *Isis* (II, 280) we read, “Personal virtue could claim no merit, unless it had passed through the furnace of temptation.” The Path of the aspirant has traps to ensnare the ego in numerous ways. One can never come to the height of devotion unless one remains true to the Divine within. To be able to fight the temptation, one needs to gather within oneself spiritual stamina, *i.e.*, knowledge and love. We grow only through tests, trials and temptations. Unselfishness is the protector against temptation, to which we must add the resolve never to be overthrown by doubt and despair. When we are unable to resist any temptation, it means defeat, but if we learn the lesson that is hidden within that setback, then that defeat turns into victory. If we can dispassionately meditate or ponder over this defeat, then greater humility results, and “Humility” is grand *Shakti*, writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

THE SILENCE I would usher you into is that interminable
expanse wherein nonbeing passes into being and being into
nonbeing. It is that awesome void where every sound is
born and hushed, and every form is shaped and crushed;
where every self is writ and unwrit; where nothing is but IT.

—MIKHAIL NAIMY