

**A Magazine Devoted to
The Living of the Higher Life**

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THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 76, No. 1

November 17, 2005

LET US KEEP THE FIRE BURNING

Knowledge is man's greatest inheritance; why, then, should he not attempt to reach it by every possible road?

—*Light on the Path*

The essence of Theosophy is the perfect harmonizing of the divine with the human in man, the adjustment of his god-like qualities and aspirations, and their sway over the terrestrial or animal passions in him. Kindness, absence of every ill feeling or selfishness, charity, good-will to all beings, and perfect justice to others as to one's self, are its chief features. He who teaches Theosophy preaches the gospel of good-will; and the converse of this is true also—he who preaches the gospel of good-will, teaches Theosophy.

—*Five Messages*

THE Theosophical Movement is the movement of ideas—ideas that have the potentiality of changing the “mind and the *Buddhi* of the race.” Those who launched the Movement for our era and generation and those who are behind the Movement have entrusted to posterity the solemn responsibility of keeping these lofty ideas alive and floating. In “A Curious Tale,” Mr. Judge mentions that once the great Masters had settled themselves in Ireland and were tending and keeping alive the fire in various towers. When the time came for them to go away, they left behind strict injunctions to watch the fires, in every tower, and take care so that no fires on these towers should go out. The tale goes on that when the one

who was entrusted with the task of watching the last burning fire became inattentive for a few moments—as he glanced at the fires on the other towers that had died—to his horror his own fire expired. Obviously, it refers to the fire of spiritual knowledge, which needs to be kept burning, and the task is especially daunting when the cycle is descending. Without getting distracted or despaired by other dying fires, one needs to pay attention to the “fire” entrusted to one’s care. Our magazine, THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT, has been contributing its mite, and the dedication of a few earnest students has kept the fire burning, incessantly, for the last 75 years.

As it enters its 76th Volume, it is good to remind ourselves that it is “a magazine devoted to the Living of the Higher Life.” But to fulfil this purpose it is essential to lead the life necessary. “The Lamp burns bright, when wick and oil are clean,” says *The Voice of the Silence*. The “pure flame” of the life-giving philosophy can result if “wick and oil” are clean. As the departing Masters in the Curious Tale—referred to above—warned, the ability to keep the fires burning depends upon inward purity. Thus:

When the great Masters had to go away...the warning was also given that, if the duties of life were neglected, if charity, duty, and virtue were forgotten, the power to keep these fires alive would gradually disappear. The decadence of the virtues would coincide with the failure of the fires. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

As we work to keep alive the pure flame of the life-giving philosophy, we are being continually helped by the Great Beings who work from behind the scenes. Mr. Judge writes:

There are among us every day many disciples (“Chelas”) who are engaged in fanning the flame of spiritual illumination wherever they find it among the members. Their influence is...exerted...upon any one of any class who has tried to understand theosophy for the sake of others and in order that he may communicate to others in his turn. Not only has this been asserted by the leaders in the movement, but in the experience of many of us we have seen help extended to those

who are in earnest for their fellow-man. (*The Heart Doctrine*, pp. 74-75)

Nothing new or “original” is given in these pages, but at the same time there is the great responsibility of giving out the teachings without dilution or distortion and using quotations whenever necessary, thereby inducing the readers to turn to the original works.

As Mr. Judge points out:

No writer can express his thoughts in a way that will be exactly and wholly comprehended by every reader, and authors in theosophic literature are only, in fact, trying to present their own particular understanding of old doctrines which the readers would do much better with if they devoted more time to thinking them out for themselves. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 73)

Living in this age, with its obsession for the “new and exciting,” we need to remind ourselves that there is nothing new under the sun. Many thinkers have asserted that nothing is said, written or imagined, that has not been anticipated by men in the past. Goethe had the humility and insight to admit his indebtedness to many:

Every one of my writings has been furnished to me by a thousand different persons; a thousand things, wise and foolish, have brought me, without suspecting it, the offering of their thoughts, faculties, and experience. My work is an aggregation of beings taken from the whole of nature; it bears the name of Goethe. (“*Thus Have I Heard*,” p. 148)

And yet, when we are able to catch both the spirit and the letter of the teachings and are able to convey the same, we are, in a sense, being original. Because it is said: “Perfect understanding is tantamount to originality.” There are three kinds of debts that each individual has to pay: *Deva runa* (debt to gods), *Pitri runa* (debt to Pitris or forefathers) and *Rishi runa* (debt to Teachers). By keeping pure and alive the teachings and passing them on to the best of our ability, we fulfil the debt to our Teachers.

“It is life and its sorrows that destroy our peace, and every human heart wants to know the reason for it,” says Mr. Judge. We must

therefore give out doctrines that will furnish the answer. H.P.B. says that “it is that philosophy that tends to diminish, instead of adding to, the sum of human misery, which is the best.” Hence, the magazine, to deserve its name, must repeatedly expound the teachings of Karma, Rebirth, God, nature of man and his fate after death, and so on—even at the risk of appearing dull and boring. For, as Mr. Judge writes:

A B C of Theosophy should be taught all the time, and this, not only for the sake of outsiders, but also for the sake of the members who are, I very well know, not so far along as to need the elaborate work all the time. And it is just because the members are not well grounded that they are not able themselves to get in more inquirers....If the simple truths practically applied as found in Theosophy are presented, you will catch at last some of the best people—real workers and valuable members....It is just this floating in the clouds which sometimes prevents a Branch from getting on. (*Letters That Have Helped Me*)

It is necessary to continually keep before the public the same ideas. As Mr. Crosbie suggests, “In the swirl of engrossing events, man needs reminding.” Repetition is necessary also for the teachings to sink in, and bring about change in one’s mental and moral nature—which is gradual.

We cannot at once alter the constitutional tendencies of the atoms of our brains, nor in a flash change ourselves....We require to have patience, not with the system of theosophy, but with ourselves, and be willing to wait for the gradual effect of the new ideas upon us....The taking up of these ideas is, in effect, a new mental incarnation, and we just as is the case of a new manvantara, have to evolve from the old estate and with care gradually eradicate the former bias. (*The Heart Doctrine*, pp. 81-82)

Every earnest worker recognizes that for effective exposition of the philosophy he must study. “It is not the mere reading of books, but rather long, earnest, careful thought upon that which

we have taken up....A few books well read, well analyzed, and thoroughly digested are better than many books read over once” (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 66 and 74). The words of the Teachers are instinct with a power of their own. Mr. Crosbie cautions:

Students have missed much by careless reading. If this is a Movement inspired by Masters, and if H.P.B. and Judge were Their mouthpieces, there is the necessity for looking into the meaning behind the words They used....I do not think that They used words purposelessly. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 389)

Let us all learn to be good readers and good listeners. As Mr. Judge observes, some people live to drink while others drink to live. Similarly, there are many who live to read while others read so that they may learn how to live. Often, we learn the most when we disagree with the author. H.P.B.’s advice to the readers of *Lucifer*; applies equally to the readers of the present magazine. She wrote:

Justice demands that when the reader comes across an article in this magazine which does not immediately approve itself to his mind by chiming in with his own peculiar ideas, he should regard it as a problem to solve rather than as a mere subject of criticism. Let him endeavour to learn the lesson which only opinions differing from his own can teach him. *Let him be tolerant...*and postpone his judgement till he extracts from the article the truth it must contain, adding this new acquisition to his store. (*Lucifer*; January 1888)

Let us invoke the blessings of the Great Ones to give us strength and wisdom to carry on the work and reach all those—through the medium of the magazine—“who sit starving for the bread of wisdom,” and who would be otherwise inaccessible.

OUR scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING

CAN THERE BE MIRACLES?

WHAT is a miracle? According to Chamber's Dictionary, miracle is "an event or act which breaks a law of nature, especially one attributed to deity or supernatural force; a marvel, a wonder." Magic is defined as "the art of producing marvellous results by compelling the aid of spirits, or by using the secret forces of nature such as the power supposed to reside in certain objects as 'givers of life'; enchantment; sorcery; the art of producing illusions by sleight of hand; a secret of mysterious power over the imagination or will."

The Old and the New Testaments mention the miraculous phenomena performed by Moses and Jesus. Similar astonishing and most wonderful events are invariably reported as an occurrence in the lives of great beings like the Buddha, Zarathushtra and the apostles of Christ. A modern man or a man of science may class these as superstition or attribute them to human credulity. But the fact is that such miraculous events have been reported, century after century, among men of the east as well as the west, and are often well attested by men of keen intellect, high caliber and unimpeachable repute. Western travellers in the east have given vivid accounts of miraculous phenomena performed by fakirs and yogis. In the face of such vast testimony, one cannot continue to take an obstinate stand that seemingly miraculous events are all imaginary, sleight of hand, trickery, superstition, mere human credulity or hallucination.

If miracle is defined as an event or act which breaks a law of nature, we may inquire: Do any of the "miraculous" performances—such as, walking on water or rising in the air, defying the law of gravitation, appearing simultaneously at two places, healing the sick, raising the dead—involve breaking any laws of nature?

But what laws are we referring to? Are these the laws so far discovered by men of science—laws which have been established in the laboratories through repeated scientific experiments, giving consistent, measurable results in a given environment? Even if we

refer to the laws established by science, are all so-called scientific laws infallible? Has science fully explored all the realms, discovered and established a firm framework of laws to which no more can be added, subtracted or changed? We know very well that this is not true. Scientific history is full of hypotheses, contradictions, revisions and improvement of what was once considered to be finalities.

Laws work all the time, whether we know about them or not. Moreover, it is not the sole prerogative of scientific men to discover and know these laws. Their methods and their instruments may be more or less adequate to investigate the *physical* realm, but the same are ineffective to fathom deeper, invisible realms.

Behind the visible, tangible world, there exists an invisible but real world that has not yet been explored by our science. Man as well as nature possesses an invisible "astral" nature. It has its own laws. Science does not believe in the existence of "astral" nature and hence excludes a major influencing factor in the performance of all phenomena. Even the most thorough examination of an event by science is often like an attempt to describe an elephant by holding his trunk alone, or his tail, or his leg—without a synthetic view. What happens then is that the phenomenon is explained away as a superstition, or gullibility of ignorant men. Many others are bewildered, astonished and lured into believing it to be an act of some superhuman being or a miraculous intervention of God.

Theosophy does not deny nor ignore the physical laws discovered by science. It admits all such as are proven, but it asserts the existence of others which modify the action of those we ordinarily know. Behind all the visible phenomena is the occult cosmos with its ideal machinery; that occult cosmos can only be fully understood by means of the inner senses which pertain to it; those senses will not be easily developed if their existence is denied. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 153)

The performance of miraculous phenomena requires extensive knowledge of the various now forgotten branches of natural science, thorough acquaintance with all the properties of the vegetable,

animal and mineral kingdoms, expertise in occult chemistry and physics, psychology as well as physiology. It requires an intimate practical knowledge of the laws of electricity and magnetism and their effect on human and lower kingdoms of nature. And above all, it requires a perfected human will, combined with powerful imagination. This is the reason why Theosophy emphatically states:

We believe in no Magic which transcends the scope and capacity of the human mind, nor in “miracle,” whether divine or diabolical, if such imply a transgression of the laws of nature instituted from all eternity. Nevertheless, we accept the saying of the gifted author of *Festus*, that the human heart has not yet fully uttered itself, and that we have never attained or even understood the extent of its powers. (*Isis Unveiled*, p. v)

Further, in the article “The Science of Magic,” she writes:

The exercise of *magical* power is the exercise of *natural* powers, but *SUPERIOR* to the ordinary functions of Nature. A miracle is not a violation of the laws of Nature, except for ignorant people. Magic is but a *science*, a profound knowledge of the Occult forces in Nature, and of the laws governing the visible or the invisible world.

Those who possess such powers are called by many names—Mahatmas, Masters, Elder Brothers, Magi, Sages, Seers, Adepts. They desire no recognition and toil for the good of humanity. Silence and secrecy are their watchwords, not because they want to keep the knowledge away from us, but so that they can work unobserved, unobstructed from the prying eyes of those who would grab the powers to plunder nature and harm fellow beings. Greater danger is from the masses who would be completely overwhelmed by the display of superhuman powers. They would worship or persecute the possessor of these powers, as Gods or Devils.

Men possessed of such knowledge and exercising such powers patiently toiled for something better than the vainglory of a passing fame. Seeking it not, they became immortal, as do all who labour for the good of the race, forgetful of mean self. Illuminated with the light of eternal truth, these rich-poor

alchemists fixed their attention upon the things that lie beyond the common ken, recognizing nothing inscrutable but the First Cause, and finding no question unsolvable. To dare, to know, to will, and REMAIN SILENT, was their constant rule; to be beneficent, unselfish, and unpretending, were, with them, spontaneous impulses. Disdaining the rewards of petty traffic, spurning wealth, luxury, pomp, and worldly power, they aspired to knowledge as the most satisfying of all acquisitions. They esteemed poverty, hunger, toil, and the evil report of men, as none too great a price to pay for its achievement. They, who might have lain on downy, velvet-covered beds, suffered themselves to die in hospitals and by the wayside, rather than debase their souls and allow the profane cupidity of those who tempted them to triumph over their sacred vows. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 66-67)

The injunction of Gautama, contained in his answer to King Prasenagit, his protector, who called on him to perform miracles, must have been ever present to the mind of HiouenThsang. “Great king,” said Gautama, “I do not teach the law to my pupils, telling them ‘go, ye saints, and before the eyes of the Brahmins and householders perform, by means of your supernatural powers, miracles greater than any man can perform.’ I tell them, when I teach them the law, ‘Live, ye saints, *hiding your good works, and showing your sins.*’” (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 599-600)

Everything invisible is not necessarily spiritual. Possession of the powers must not be confused with the inner spirituality of the man possessing them. There are lower psychic powers and there are also higher spiritual powers. It requires great purity, strict discipline and devotion of many lifetimes to acquire the *spiritual* powers. It is the *motive* which determines the nature of the power. When a power is used for selfish purpose, it becomes Black Magic or sorcery and when beneficently applied, it is called White Magic.

Those great personages who possess the powers of psychic and spiritual realms are not violators of the law, but work strictly in accordance with the laws. Jesus did not perform miracles before King Herod to save himself. He, who had fed five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fish; he, who had cured sick

persons, raised the dead daughter of Jairus and dead Lazarus, refused to perform miracles to save himself. The Buddha did not perform a miracle to bring to life the dead son of a sorrowful mother. Both of them knew the nature of “real death” in contrast to “apparent death.”

The man is not dead when he is cold, stiff, pulseless, breathless, and even showing signs of decomposition; he is not dead when buried, nor afterward, until a certain point is reached. That point is, *when the vital organs have become so decomposed, that if reanimated, they could not perform their customary functions*; when the mainspring and cogs of the machine, so to speak, are so eaten away by rust, that they would snap upon the turning of the key. Until that point is reached, the astral body may be caused, without miracle, to re-enter its former tabernacle, either by an effort of its own will, or under the resistless impulse of the will of one who knows the potencies of nature and how to direct them. The spark is not extinguished, but only latent—latent as the fire in the flint, or the heat in the cold iron. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 483-84)

H.P.B. observes that we may be perfectly willing to accept the fact that vegetation and fruitage of vines can be stimulated to an incredible activity by the artificial violet light—as per the well-known experiments of General Pleasanton, of Philadelphia. However, we cannot help but class as “miraculous” the ability of influencing the growth of the just-planted seed in a flower pot so as to develop it in less than two hours’ time to a size and height which, perhaps under ordinary circumstances, would require several days or weeks. But for those who discern the working of the perfected human will directing the life currents in the invisible world, such a feat would not appear miraculous. Thus:

The fakir, coming to the help of nature with his powerful will and spirit purified from the contact with matter, condenses, so to speak, the essence of plant-life into its germ, and forces it to maturity ahead of its time. This blind force being totally submissive to his will, obeys it with servility....The will of the fakir-conjurer forms an invisible but yet, to it, perfectly objective

matrix, in which the vegetable matter is caused to deposit itself and assume the fixed shape. The will creates; for the will in motion is *force*, and force produces *matter*. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 140)

Man is a little copy of the universe, and he has in him a centre or focus corresponding to every force or power in nature. Once we accept the existence of the astral body and the astral light, many miraculous phenomena such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathic communication, mind reading, levitation, etc., can be easily explained. These are minor powers, which a Yogi acquires for his use, if required, but spiritual powers far exceed in their capability and effect. We are warned against trying to cultivate these powers before time. When a person reaches a particular stage in his development, through inward purity and right motive, these powers come to him naturally. These powers are entrusted only to the “friend” of nature and to the Elder Brothers of humanity.

THE Occult Science is *not* one in which secrets can be communicated of a sudden, by a written or even verbal communication. It is the common mistake of people that we willingly wrap ourselves and our powers in mystery—that we wish to keep our knowledge to ourselves, and of our own will refuse—“wantonly and deliberately” to communicate it. The truth is that till the neophyte attains to the condition necessary for the degree of Illumination to which, and for which, he is entitled and fitted, most *if not all* of the Secrets are *incommunicable*. The receptivity must be equal to the desire to instruct. The *illumination must come from within*.

—MASTER K.H.

FATE AND FREE WILL

I made man just and right,
Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall,
Such I created all th' ethereal powers
And Spirits, both them who stood and them who fail'd,
Truly, they stood who stood, and fell who fell.

—MILTON

THIS controversial subject has been debated and argued for ages. It has occupied the minds of thinkers, philosophers and scientists and its main opponents have been theologians and materialistic scientists. We are free to choose our own premises, *i.e.*, exercise Free Will, based on our concept of Deity, Nature and Man—and make our own assumptions. If the premises are faulty, the conclusion and reasoning, however logical, are wrong, which becomes the inevitable fate. We then struggle against this fate. This struggling, inherent in each, is Free Will. H.P.B. writes:

The great majority of our learned “Didymi” reject the idea of free will. Now this question is a problem that has occupied the minds of thinkers for ages; every school of thought having taken it up in turn and left it as far from solution as ever. And yet, placed as it is in the foremost ranks of philosophical quandaries, the modern “psycho-physiologists” claim in the coolest and most bumptious way to have cut the Gordian knot forever. For them the feeling of personal free agency is an error, an illusion, “the collective hallucination of mankind.” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

In order to understand this subject one has to have the knowledge of the Three Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine*. The Three Fundamentals are: God, Law and Being, or Spirit, Matter, Mind.

Theosophy posits One, Eternal, Immutable, Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient principle, pervading the entire universe. It is the Causeless Cause, the Rootless Root of all that was, is or shall be. It has two polarities—*Purusha, Prakriti*; Spirit,

Matter. This one Reality manifests in the universe as Law—Law of periodicity, Law of cycles, Law of Karma. The whole universe exists for the evolution and emancipation of the soul. All souls are emanations from the Universal Over-Soul—itself an aspect of the Unknown Root. We have been through all forms of matter and acquired experience through the elemental, mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms up to the stage of man. Evolution proceeds by natural impulse up to the human stage. When man arrives on the scene, evolution is no more propelled by natural impulse as man's free will overrides his natural instinct.

Man, endowed with the light of mind by the Solar Angels, has the power to think and choose. Hence, for humanity, evolution proceeds only by one's own individual efforts. There are no special gifts or favours bestowed on anyone, except what one acquires through one's self-choice and effort. Man is dual—permanent in his higher aspect and evanescent in his lower aspect, *i.e.*, immortal in his higher nature and perishable in his lower, *or*, individuality and personality.

Now by “psychic” individuality we mean that self-determining power which enables man to override circumstances. Place half a dozen animals of the same species under the same circumstances, and their actions while not identical, will be closely similar; place half a dozen men under the same circumstances and their actions will be as different as their characters, *i.e.*, their *psychic individuality*. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

H.P.B. points out that everything in nature is sentient, conscious, and intelligent. There is nothing inorganic.

Occultism regards every atom as an “independent entity” and every cell as a “conscious unit.” It explains that no sooner do such atoms group to form cells, than the latter become endowed with consciousness, each of its own kind, and with *free will to act* within the limits of law. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

Now some informed scientists are able to recognize an implicate order in the universe and intelligence behind everything in nature.

H.P.B. writes:

There would be no *life* possible (in the *Mayavic* sense) without *Death*, nor regeneration and reconstruction without destruction. Plants would perish in eternal sunlight, and so would man, who would become an automaton without the exercise of his free will and aspirations after that sunlight which would lose its being and value for him had he nothing but light. (*S.D.*, I, 413-14)

The philosophy of that law in Nature, which implants in man as well as in every beast a passionate, inherent, and instinctive desire for freedom and self-guidance, pertains to psychology. (*S.D.*, II, 484)

Our past arising from the choices already made, is fate. Our present is in our hands, *i.e.*, in the realm of free will. As we exercise our free will, so will our future be determined.

We debase our intellectual principle by selfishness that is the cause of sin and sorrow. Intellect is the instrument, the power, the function or faculty which man uses to determine the relation between cause and effect. We use it to investigate, to analyze, to compare and to determine whether our action is good or bad. On the basis of our decision we can find out the cause that led to the good or bad effect. If the effect is good, then we can repeat the effort; if bad, we can eliminate it.

What is instinct? It is the acquired knowledge and experience of a whole hierarchy of beings acting in the individual being, of which that being is unconscious. Does a woodpecker know why it does what it does? No. Each woodpecker has the whole knowledge of its tribe; likewise all animals have the knowledge of their families, and so on through all the kingdoms of Nature below man. Instinct in the animal is the unconscious expression by the individual of the accumulated knowledge of the race to which it belongs.

What is intuition? It is the cautious use by the individual man of the stored experience of the whole human family in all places, all worlds, at all times, in every direction. Each man being an

embodiment of the whole race, Nature seeks for expression in the individual man in precisely the same way a tank full of water will seek expression through every outlet small or large.

Why then with the tremendous power of mind and with immense accumulated knowledge and experience through preceding generations, does man now lack knowledge or understanding of happiness? Why do we not have peace, brotherhood, prosperity, contentment, etc.? It is not that we lack power, but we are lazy and obtuse, and above all selfish.

Many are the discoveries made by science with the power of the mind that can be used for the general progress, for the betterment of the race. Unfortunately, they have not been put to moral use. Discoveries such as dynamite, atom/hydrogen bombs which could be used for the benefit of mankind, have been put to destructive purposes.

Each one of us can also achieve perfection through our own efforts as the Great Ones did. Everyone is guided in his actions by intellect or by impulse, but the governing power should be intellect coupled with intuition. We must free the mind from lower desires and control the three avenues of action, *viz.*, body, speech and mind, by conscious acts using our free will. As the process of refinement of our sheaths goes on in us by constant practice and *vairagya* (detachment), by study, by work, by philosophy and above all by ethical living, we can release our mind from *Kama* (desire), and make it a guide of the highest mental faculties and an organ of free will. Then we will be able to use that accumulated knowledge and experience of the human race that is dormant in us.

Mind is *manas*, or rather its lower reflection, which whenever it disconnects itself, for the time being, with *kama*, becomes the guide of the highest mental faculties, and is the organ of the free will in physical man. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*)

We must attune our will to the great Will of Nature. Will is the force of spirit in action. When a person is able to purify his mind, the Higher Self, the Spirit, is able to act through *Buddhi-Manas*. Then, as the biblical saying goes, His "Will" would be done on

earth as it is in heaven.

The 18th chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* describes what happens when a person functions from the plane of unity, instead of duality: “Wherever Krishna, the supreme Master of devotion, and wherever the son of Pritha, the mighty archer, may be, there with certainty are fortune, victory, wealth, and wise action; this is my belief.” In other words, one has “an intuitional perception of one’s being the vehicle of the manifested Avalokiteshwara or Divine Atman (Spirit)” (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*). To achieve this man has to master his

(1) *Sarira*—body; (2) *Indriya*—senses; (3) *Dosha*—faults; (4) *Dukkha*—pain; and is ready to become one with his *Manas*—mind; *Buddhi*—intellection, or spiritual intelligence; and *Atma*—highest soul, *i.e.*, spirit. When he is ready for this, and, further, to recognize in *Atma* the highest ruler in the world of perceptions, and in the will, the highest executive energy (power), then may he, under the time-honoured rules, be taken in hand by one of the Initiates. (*Ibid.*)

As a person lives a clean life with a pure heart and an eager intellect, he will have unveiled spiritual perception. Then, as his inner nature changes, he passes from reflex action, habitual action, impulsive action, reasoning action, to the action of intuition and divine will.

GIVE me the supreme confidence of love, this is my prayer—the confidence that belongs to life in death, to victory in defeat, to the power hidden in frailest beauty, to that dignity in pain which accepts hurt but disdains to return it.

—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

OBEDIENCE

THERE was a time when obedience, purity and chastity were prized virtues and monasteries the world over drew to themselves men and women who were prepared to renounce the worldly life in favour of one where rigid discipline was required to be self-imposed. Each of these three virtues required for its flowering the inculcating of a genuine humility. Sacrifice was of course there and austerity, as also that particular type of charity which strength allied to humbleness can alone provide.

Why is it that the world of today has fallen off from discipline and has like the madman and the drunkard sought its felicity in the depths of depraved desires? The answer may, to some extent, be found in the inversion of ethic values which too great a familiarity with modern science has generated. Matter and material things now engross and even obsess the minds of people and have made inroads into their deeper nature, thus atrophying their higher instincts. In consequence, life has now degenerated into a race for acquiring ease through the agency of those physical possessions as have caught the personal fancy of the people. Rivalry is a natural outcome, and co-operation has become an expediency and a last resort for confronting a stronger rival. Even such an institution as the orthodox church has had to bow to the current epidemic of permissiveness on such ideals as obedience and celibacy. What has gone wrong with humanity or rather with those who have the power to mould its thinking?

The cause for the malaise which has gripped large masses of people is a shirking and even a deliberate violation of duties. Duties to oneself; to family, wife and household; duties to race and kin, to friend and foe; duties to kingdoms below the human as to those above it, are getting obliterated from the minds of men. It is the task of each student of the philosophy to enumerate to himself what those duties are and to give them the widest circulation possible. *The Voice of the Silence* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* give these in precise terms for the layman, the chela and the Guru.

When one comes to assess the relationship of oneself to duties, one begins to understand that obedience to the behests of duty is something impersonal. Principles are involved; personalities are incidental. To the average person caught in the treadmill of life, duties are oftentimes irksome, unpleasant and diametrically opposed to what seems the most desirable. The mother has certain duties to discharge towards her child, duties which are bound to limit her outings and social activities. The father owes it to his children to implant in them the love of truth, honesty and tolerance. It demands of him drastic curtailment of club and sports activities; it demands patience, sacrifice and an abounding love. There is no substitute for the love and care of parents. Yet, parents themselves show today a singular slackness in obedience to elementary duties. They set an example of evasiveness, of selfish indulgence and a shocking disregard for truth and discipline. When they see these same traits being displayed by their children on the campus, they are horrified and want committees to probe and tell them what they already know—that disobedience to duty which they themselves portray gets reflected as an ugly image projected by their own children.

This straying away from discipline, this departure from paths of rectitude is nowhere more noticeable than in the teacher-pupil relationship. The ancient ideal of the Guru now no longer attracts the teaching profession. Not the evoking of human values but the mass production of money-spinning robots is the order of the day. There is no incentive nor even liking to forge a close intellectual and soul rapport which alone can give to education its human and even supra-human values. The modern teacher judges his own merit by the number of pupils whom he trains to jump successfully through intellectual hoops. All care, all energy is turned towards that end. It is thus that the teacher fails to obey the duties of his calling. He no longer educes and therefore fails to educate. The noble arts are weighed against material values and found to be wanting. Intellect is sharpened at the expense of intuition, material advancement remains the only goal. The building of character, the pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty is considered of no great

significance. Herein is to be perceived the shifting of allegiance from the true to the untrue; the unwillingness to obey and follow the sterner discipline and the yielding to the seduction of the pleasanter and the less difficult path.

The remedy, it would seem, lies in arousing the desire to break away from paths of indiscipline and the generation of a firm resolve to obey those rules which must necessarily be governing a congregation of souls. It is always right to give unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, but it is an abomination to render unto Caesar the things which are God's.

It will be readily conceded that obedience to certain rules is essential to preserve the health of the body. The gourmet who insists on satisfying his appetites and has therefore to rely on medicines to mitigate the ill effects of his indulgence is a cheat, a renegade who thinks that human ingenuity can bypass the nemesis which follows upon a breakage of Nature's laws. The health of body and mind is preserved by the observance of those obligations and duties as are ordained by their nature and characteristics. It is when man fails to obey a law which is essential to his well-being that illness and disease supervene.

In actual practice, obedience to laws has two broad aspects. The one is concerned with the discharge by oneself of one's own duties. The other is obedience to the laws of Brotherhood, one corollary of which demands that none shall thwart another from carrying out his appointed tasks. In fact, if we pursue the matter to any appreciable depth, we shall find that obedience to the higher laws demands that we seek the good of another even at the sacrifice of our own. And it is futile to say that exceptions can be made to suit the exigencies of society, nation or family. Once a truth is accepted on principle, all action must conform to it unreservedly. The injunction to "help Nature and work on with her" when translated into daily action must mean strict obedience to laws, as rigidly and smoothly to be obeyed as is seen portrayed in the movement of the tides, the marshalling of planets and the whirl in the atoms and the elements.

When we pass from the physical to the inner worlds, obedience becomes imperative since the person who enters there has yet to get experience of the conditions that obtain in the new and unaccustomed realms. The laws that govern water are different from those which govern ice or steam, though it is the same water that undergoes the transformation. So, too, with man. As he steps into the higher worlds, he has to learn to breathe its atmosphere and develop new sinews to work in them. It is when he is new to the changed conditions, when like the new-born child he has to learn to use his eyes and adjust them to correct perspectives, that he has to place his faith in his teachers and implicitly obey their behests. The child who studies the alphabet obeys the sequence of letters. He cannot say that he prefers 'F', for instance, to be placed next to and to immediately follow 'B'. Is the earthly person used to having his own way and relying on the keenness of his intellect, prepared to change his mode of life, give up his prejudices, erase the memories of the half-baked knowledge of science and submit his mind to imbibe the new learning? Is he, for instance, prepared to take in the knowledge without the urge to compare it with the bits of knowledge he has hitherto picked up? Can he pledge himself to serve without cavil or delay the injunctions of his teacher? Can he reverence the teaching? Can he be a servant? Can he react in gratitude, or are his instincts so dulled that only ingratitude can emerge? These considerations are vital to the person before he can dare venture on the paths that lead to the inner realms of light. It is here that obedience becomes imperative. The one who refuses to bow is not yet fit for the higher training and he must be left to the kind mercies of Nature to teach him that obedience is the key that opens the doors to the higher world of light.

Obedience implies the carrying out of orders or instructions which are unpleasant to the person. It may require him to subjugate his inclinations to another's behests and to carry out that which may be abhorrent to his sensibilities. What is it that engenders such obedience that it springs to instant action lending itself as a tool in the hands of its master? It will be seen that when servility

creeps into obedience it makes it beggarly, for it may too often be the result of a fear of consequences that may follow upon disobedience. Such obedience is given to the tyrant and to an imaginary God who can consign one to purgatory or hell. Remove the fear and with it you will remove obedience. Obedience can also be a thing of barter and may be given in the hope of having a return in pleasure, or in gains and favours and the promises of a future heaven. It is not such obedience that is the mead of a truly religious life. The other type, the enduring variety, is not the cringing obedience of the slave nor the commercial type that expects a compensating return.

In the spiritual life, obedience carries more vital overtones, because it invariably springs from a full and grateful heart. Such obedience is humble and is kind. It survives all ordeals, is not easily disturbed. Injustice and calumny have no barbs in their armory to stay its course. When gratitude generates obedience, it no longer appears as an irksome imposition. It comes natural—a serene unimpeded flow as spontaneous as that of large rivers sweeping majestically towards the sea. True obedience reflects the stately movements of the heavens, the kiss of the tide as it recedes from the shore and the orderly sequence of the days and nights of Brahma and of men. The stooping of the larger to the weaker heart reflects an obedience to the laws of compassion which enjoin protection and a loving care of those less endowed. It precedes acts of beneficence and brings with it the strength to suffer all meekly and to render for offence nothing but grace and good.

DEAL with crime in its formative period, and with criminals not as debtors who must pay for misdeeds or as a group of men and women to be segregated and rendered impotent in mind and body, but as stupid sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, who need guidance and strict supervision in normal, wholesome environment.

—L. E. LAWES

THE GARDEN OF HUMAN LIFE

CORRESPONDENCE and analogy were used by the ancient Teachers in educating the people. Myth, drama, allegory, were all so many devices to impart to the groping human intelligence facts and truths of Nature and of Nature's Laws.

Thus, in the nature of every man grow weeds and poison-plants, also beautiful flowers and shady trees. Many a poet and writer, ancient and modern, has compared man's virtues and vices, his good and bad habits, to jungle growths and flowering garden plants.

Seers and singers have seen in the Lotus, for example, the symbol of the Universal Man. In Egypt as in India, the Lotus, *Padma*, was called the sacred flower because in its life-process was seen the unfoldment of the human soul to its perfection—the individual becoming the Universal; man, the microcosm, developing into the Macrocosm, the Heavenly Man.

Similarly, some Western mystics and esotericists saw in the Rose a symbol of the secret knowledge by which the burgeoning of the Soul-bud into the full-blown Rose took place. One aspect of this symbol is worked even today by the Freemasons in what is known to them as their eighteenth degree. This is not divulging any secret, for it is to be found in publicly printed books.

The philosophical principle underlying this ancient mode of learning through symbols and emblems is this: As everything in Nature emanates from the one homogeneous substance which is Life, popularly called God, every object, every being and every kingdom carries within itself and reflects some particular aspect of the Universal Whole. Therefore, every stone and metal, every flower and fruit, every bird and beast, reflects some aspect of Nature, of her Light side or of her Dark side, generally of both. The human kingdom, however, being the highest in manifested Nature, is the reflected shadow and the miniature copy of the Universal Whole. Only one form of Life, namely, the human form, is perfect: in that form all the powers of vast Nature are hidden in latency, that is, in an undeveloped condition. Man's form is a

miniature but perfect copy of the whole of the Living Universe, just as the newly born baby is a miniature copy of the full-grown human body.

Using this Law of Correspondence and Analogy, we find that the jungle, dark, dangerous, pathless, trackless, reflects its qualities and characteristics in human nature. Also, the garden with its well-trimmed hedges and borders, its patterns and paths, its colourful fragrance, its shady nooks and corners, is reflected in human nature. These two may be compared to the evil and the good nature in each person; but we must not overlook that the forest has its own value, and that in the garden also cobras and chameleons are found! Not in a precise scientific way are we here pursuing the study of this comparison. Only in a general way can we treat this metaphorical comparison between the dark, seemingly purposeless jungle, and the gloomy, vicious, unmethodical nature of man; between the well-kept garden and the well-shaped human character.

A garden is not possible in wild nature; without the aid of man, Nature by itself does not produce a garden. Soon the jungle arises in a neglected garden, but never does a garden emerge out of a neglected jungle. Even a virtuous character is overgrown by weaknesses if attention is not paid to it; if we do not systematically water our flowerbeds of virtue they will in no time grow weeds of vice.

For the purposes of our study we may confine ourselves to these aspects of the jungle: (1) its might and strength—the law of the jungle is that might is right; (2) its ferocious beasts, who are afraid of man because, though puny, he is intelligent; (3) its poisonous creepers which kill not only sturdy shrubs, but even giant trees. These three are man's foes, for they have their corresponding reflection in human nature.

(1) In our lower nature, Egotism-*ahamkara* is the predominant force—the "I-making" tendency. All the power and the force of our lower nature proceeds from this "I"—the root of the notion that each one of us is separate from, and therefore superior to, all others. Crass selfishness is its product. All ambitions and

competitions arise from this force of Egotism, the very foundation of our lower nature. That lower nature derives all its might and strength from Egotism, and when it succeeds, the worldly man succeeds. He says, in the words of the *Gita* (XVI, 13-16):

This today hath been acquired by me, and that object of my heart I shall obtain; this wealth I have, and that also shall be mine. This foe have I already slain, and others will I forthwith vanquish; I am the lord, I am powerful, and I am happy. I am rich and with precedence among men; where is there another like unto me? I shall make sacrifices, give alms, and enjoy.

(2) In this jungly nature ruled by the “I,” the “I,” the “I,” prowl ferocious beasts destructive of our noble aspirations. Three of them, which are the main vices of man, his worst enemies and the dangerous wombs of a whole brood of vices, are called “Gates of Hell” in the same chapter of the *Gita*. They are *Kama*, *Krodha* and *Lobha*—Lust, Anger and Greed. The death of Egotism results from the destruction of Greed, the foul soul of competition; of Anger which arises from unfulfilled ambitions; and of Lust which results from uncontrolled desires. Sri Krishna calls them “destroyers of the Soul.” These three beasts are afraid of the spiritual Soul in man, and therefore attack that Soul. And foolish people, remaining unaware of the strength of the very Soul within them, fall prey to the gnawing fangs of lust and anger and greed.

(3) But what are the poisonous creepers of our human nature? Not those growling beasts whose existence and presence are easily detected, but those sly, weak-looking, cringing, curling, parasite tendencies which silently destroy our manhood, our nobility and the possibility of growth itself. Our humanity in the mass is not suffering so much from crass wickedness as from petty folly. No doubt there are many lustful, angry and greedy people in the world, but there are many, many more foolish people whose lives are choked by effete habits, by meaningless customs, by a purposeless going round and round, like the creeper which winds itself around the trunk of the tree that presently it is going to destroy.

These three make jungles of human lives. A garden has to be

fashioned in their stead. How shall we do it?

The answer also comes from the *Gita*: by the sword of knowledge we can cut the nefarious influence of the poisonous creepers; we can also destroy the beasts of Lust, Anger and Greed; in fighting egotism by knowledge we come upon the “Real,” the Real Ego, the human Soul or Thinker, and it teaches us how to make a garden where before the jungle was.

We can create a garden out of this jungle of human nature only when we have found the gardener. The Soul in us is that gardener. If modern education from the very start taught boys and girls to seek their own Souls, within their own minds and hearts, the jungle of character and of the lower nature would not so easily arise. It is harder for the adult to transform his jungle into a garden; but, though difficult, it is not impossible; and, moreover, it is imperative that each man, each woman, undertake the task. Why? Because their very Souls, when they are overpowered by Egotism, by Lust and Anger and Greed, by habits, customs and blind beliefs, will encounter death. Alas! the Living-Dead are many.

How to build a garden out of our human nature? The first requisite is that we act as *human* beings. In us the animal nature predominates. To become human we must invest our daily living with the dignity of purpose. A gardener lays out his plans: what the shape of the beds, and where they are to be; the location of the lawn; how to get water from the shortest distance possible; the buying of good seeds, and then their planting; and finally looking after the process to growth complete.

We need knowledge—knowledge of the ways our mind functions and the recognition of the Soul which is higher than the mind and controls its movements. The Soul is the gardener and his mind is the chief weapon with which he clears the ground, turns the sod, waters the soil and plants the chosen seeds. Hence the need of knowledge of our own make-up, of the Soul with its capacity to control the mind, of the mind with its weakness to be impressed by feelings, emotions and desires aroused by the senses and objects of sense. And thirdly, the knowledge that *every* human

being can and should grow a garden out of his own nature. No one else can do the work; Great Teachers, Poets and Prophets can but point the way—each one has to walk it by himself; this is Karma. Karma is not fatalism; there is no fixed and unalterable destiny. Karma is action—the doing and the becoming. Whatever we may have done in the past, however overgrown with weeds our character may be, however dark the jungle of our feelings and thoughts, the Soul like the Sun in heaven shines on us and the showers of his blessing fall on us. If we but despair not, and with moral pluck take ourselves in hand, we shall learn the truth about happiness and progress and then it will be possible for us to acquire that inner attitude which Tennyson has so well described:

And I must work thro' months of toil,
And years of cultivation
Upon my proper patch of soil
To grow my own plantation.
I'll take the showers as they fall,
I will not vex my bosom;
Enough if at the end of all
A little garden blossom.

THE recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in its full splendour, depth and fullness is its [the Indian Renaissance's] first, most essential work; the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; an original dealing with modern problems in the light of Indian spirit and the endeavour to formulate a great synthesis of a spiritualized society is the third and most difficult. Its successes on these three lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity.

—SRI AUROBINDO

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[In this section we seek to answer frequently asked questions, at U.L.T. meetings or during private conversations and discussions with people who seek the answers in the light of Theosophy. Answers given in this section are by no means final. Only a line of thought is being offered by applying general principles of Theosophy.]

Question: Theosophical literature sometimes refers to the “Heart” of man and of Nature. Does it represent our emotional nature alone or does it stand for something definite, such as love, faith, etc.?

Answer: H.P.B. points out that the muscular heart is of greater importance as compared to other organs in the body. In the article “Psychic and Noetic Action,” H.P.B. classifies the liver, the stomach and the spleen as the personal organs or *Kamic* organs. These organs store the memory of purely physical and personal (and selfish) deeds such as eating, drinking, enjoying personal, sensual pleasures, acting so as to harm another, etc. On the other hand, the brain and heart are organs of power higher than the personality. It is only the higher forms of thought and mental experiences that can be correlated with brain and heart. H.P.B. writes: “Occultism teaches that the liver and the spleen-cells are the most subservient to the action of our ‘personal’ mind, the heart being the organ *par excellence* through which the ‘Higher’ Ego acts—through the Lower Self.” Hence, Heart is said to be an organ of Spiritual Consciousness and corresponds to *Buddhi* principle, which is associated with spiritual discrimination and intuition. *Chandogya Upanishad* describes it thus:

There is this city of Brahman—the body—and in it the palace, the small lotus of the heart, and in it that small ether. Both heaven and earth are contained within it, both fire and air, both sun and moon, both lightning and stars; and whatever there is of the Self here in the world, and whatever has been or will be, all that is contained within it. (*Vernal Blooms*, p. 217)

In this, the body is compared to a city. Just as within the city

there is the most important thing, a palace, so also within the body is the “lotus of the heart,” corresponding to *Buddhi-Manas*, where there is sheer perception of Truth without reference to our likes and dislikes. There are varieties of lotus, which bloom under the rays of the moon or 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. “Through the Gates of Gold” says that the true heart of man, represented by the muscular heart, is the focus 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 difficult of surmounting near “the kernel of the heart.” This egotism is like an iron bar put across the heart, and it has many strongholds. If you conquer it in its outer fringe, in its gross forms, it reappears, laughing at your imaginary conquests. Its final stand is near the “kernel of the heart” where it is most difficult of conquest. It is so subtle and appears in such delusive guise that one is not even aware of its existence.

Also, “Heart Doctrine,” as opposed to “Eye Doctrine” or “Head Learning,” is defined as that which sprang from Buddha’s heart. It is not to be confused with personal feelings and emotional effervescence. Real heart quality is goodness combined with Wisdom. It is compassion and *Buddhic* quality with intuitive perception of Truth. To practise the Heart Doctrine is to have devotion to the interests of others. Heart Doctrine is the result of responding to our Divine nature, or the harmonious working of head and heart. It is said: “The heart has its own reasons, which reason knows nothing about.”

In the mystical language of *Light on the Path*, “heart” and “blood” have yet another meaning. It says: “Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters, its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart.” It describes a stage where the disciple is free

from fear, from anxiety, from suffering, and his whole consciousness is centred in the divine life. But for this to happen, “the feet of the soul must be washed in the blood of the heart,” which is attainment of equilibrium that cannot be shaken by personal emotion. Blood represents the “vital creative principle” in man’s nature, which drives him into human life in order to experience pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow. When the disciple lets the blood flow from the heart he stands as a pure spirit, with the crude wish to live departed from him. He takes birth only in pursuit of a divine object and not for the sake of emotion and experience. (pp. 80-82)

We may take the heart to be the seat of faith, hope, love and devotion. As *Light on the Path* says, “There is a natural melody, an obscure fount in every human heart. It may be hidden over and utterly concealed and silenced—but it is there. At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope and love.” (p. 23)

In Nature, the sun is the heart of the Solar System. Our visible sun is only a *shell* and is the reflection of the real Sun—which is hidden behind the physical sun. The real sun is the storehouse and generator of the vital fluid. “There is a regular circulation of the vital fluid throughout our system, of which Sun is the heart.” It is like the circulation of blood in the human body. (*S.D.*, I, 541)

Question: What is gut feeling or a hunch that some people claim to experience? Some speak of the inner voice, instinctive feeling as regards judging people, prompting from within, premonition, insight, intuition, etc. Are these reliable modes of perception or are they illusions?

Answer: The above experiences are various grades of communication—a feeling or a passing thought—from ourselves to ourselves, and which are real even when vague and not always reliable.

It is difficult to categorize them in their order of usefulness or accuracy of perceptive faculty. But we are all endowed, more or less, with the ability to sense things not perceptible to ordinary physical senses. Sometimes, we can instantly judge people from

their apparent “body language” or by reading faces or any physical clue that just flashes by and is instantly registered, yet not consciously recognized. These are almost like “animal instinct” by which the animals sense proper or improper food, shelter, company, etc., or apprehend a threat, deceit, etc. There is in us, as well as in the animals, an inner sentinel which warns and keeps us on guard, physically and more especially morally.

People in certain professions develop an instinctive cautiousness and readiness by training and habit. People who are expected to respond during emergency, like firemen, sentries on guard, security officers, surgeons and anesthetists, martial art experts—who are expected to make quick or instant decision will have no time to measure different options. They feel something familiar that calls up the memory of earlier experiences, and respond accordingly. It has become a second nature. If you ask them, they would say, “My gut told me so!” These are the people who are habitually alert to the signs of danger, accident, etc.

By the same token, an *inner sentinel* can keep us morally alert to any hidden sign of laxity or negligence, if we practise “concentration” and if we are strictly developing our *moral sense*, which is a gift, present in all of us. There is an *inner monitor*, call it conscience or intuition, which promptly guides our decision-making with an instant warning of propriety for or against a situation or behaviour.

The voice of conscience may be persistent or instantaneous, like animal instinct, but unlike the latter its function is to warn against behaviour or thoughts which the individual has considered not proper through previous experience of learning, prejudice, traditional beliefs or brain-washing. In a person given to practising “concentration,” conscience may be active even during the dream state. But if there is genuine and persistent love of purity and integrity, the frequent promptings one gets are of a still higher nature akin to the “still small voice” of *intuition* which directs one to a definite action or an idea, and which must be answered with a positive response in order to keep alive this higher faculty of

perception. The latter is available to a student-aspirant who subordinates his personal needs to the general good and reflects on universal ethics. It keeps on developing if one strives for ethical and spiritual betterment of self and others.

Intuition is considered in Theosophy as “Divine Conscience.” The human principle of Manas, when freed from Kama or lower desire propensity, turns toward the still more luminous faculty of *Buddhi* for illumination, thereby becoming increasingly receptive. It manifests as intuitive “flashes,” and at times as a direct vision—a sort of momentary clairvoyance. *Its activity is a direct evidence of the Soul-presence in man.*

Intuition, however, pertains to the higher ego, but here too it may not be fully reliable if the ego has to function through instruments which are not pure and responding to its behest. Intuition is far superior to “hunch” or the “gut-feeling” and may be called the higher aspect of the voice of conscience. Voice of conscience needs to be educated.

Finally, there is another form of spontaneous communication or a certain feeling that involves two or more persons in sympathy and having a strong bond of mutual trust and affection. These may sometimes transmit telepathic feeling or a thought-form from one to another.

Mr. Judge’s advice to the student-aspirant is: “If we rely on the higher self and aspire to be guided by it, we will be led to the right, even if the road goes through pain; for sorrow and pain are necessary for the purification of the Soul.”

DON’T judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.

—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

It is disparity between belief and action which has led to the paradox of America being professedly the most Christian of the developed nations, but least so in behaviour. Have they got Jesus wrong? It appears that most believers in America “have replaced the Christianity of the Bible, with its call for deep sharing and personal sacrifice, with a competing creed,” writes Bill McKibben, a scholar-in-residence at Middlebury College (*Harper’s Magazine*, August 2005). A true Christian, in Jesus’ words, is one who fed the hungry, slaked the thirst of the thirsty, clothed the naked, welcomed the stranger and visited the prisoner. America is found to be trailing behind in all these categories. Despite the Sixth Commandment, America is the most violent rich nation on earth with a murder rate four or five times that in Europe, and despite Jesus’ strong declaration against divorce, America registers frequent breakdown of marriages.

There are several competing creeds; some of them are mainly occupied with “Apocalypse,” declaring that “the war between America and Iraq is the gateway to the Apocalypse.” In some other creeds, “the focus is on you and your individual needs. Their goal is to service consumers—not communities but individuals.”

Some churches have sermons on how to raise your children, to reach your professional goals, to reduce your debts and invest your money, to cope with stress, etc., and there are bestsellers compiled by the Christian Booksellers Association, focusing on similar issues. Helpful as these are, they “somehow manage to ignore Jesus’ radical and demanding focus on *others*.” Jesus’ injunction: “Love your neighbour as yourself,” is a “call for nothing less than a radical, voluntary, and effective reordering of power relationships, based on the principle of love.” Both Catholic and Protestant churches have been weakened—their focus being on issues like abortion, same-sex union, etc. McKibben sums up:

The dominant theologies of the moment...undercut Jesus, muffle his hard words, deaden his call, and in the end silence

him....

The T.V. men, the politicians, the Christian “interest groups”...have invited us to subvert the church of Jesus even as we celebrate it. With their help we have made golden calves of ourselves—become a nation of terrified, self-obsessed idols. It works, and it may well keep working for a long time to come. When Americans hunger for selfless love and are fed only love of self, they will remain hungry, and too often hungry people just come back for more of the same.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. describes Christianity as *lip-religion* in practice. In the section on “Charity” she asks, how many Christians would give to the shivering and starving thief, who would steal their coat, their cloak also; or offer their right cheek to him who smites them on the left, and never think of resenting it?

We need to differentiate between Christianity and Churchianity. The rise of the church with a mass of dogmas and doctrines, rituals and ceremonies, obscured the true teachings of the Christ. “Christianity can never hope to be understood until every trace of dogmatism is swept away from it,” writes H.P.B. (*Esoteric Character of the Gospels*). For instance, the pernicious doctrine of vicarious atonement teaches that no matter how enormous our crimes against the laws of God and of man, if the sinner believes in the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of mankind, the stain of crime will be washed away in the blood of Christ. H.P.B. observes that those who believe in it are led more “easily to the threshold of every conceivable crime.” (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 220-21)

Today, adherents of almost all religions pay only lip-service to the ethics, partly because religions fail to make people see *why* they should be good.

People can go to macabre lengths to get a facelift. Modern women, relentlessly and ruthlessly, pursue physical perfection and the elixir of eternal youth. It may be hard to believe but it is claimed that “skin” from executed Chinese criminals is being used in lip

and anti-wrinkle products sold in Europe. The skin is alleged to have been taken from inmates after they had been shot. A Chinese cosmetic company is supposed to be in secret deal with the prison authorities. Lip implants, consisting of tissues harvested from corpses in America, are shockingly commonplace in London. “AlloDerm” refers to the skin culled from the corpses; it is freezer-dried human skin, minus the epidermis, and used for beautifying the lips. “What a Frankenstein’s Monster the beauty industry has become!” writes Paul Bracchi. (*The Times of India*, September 19, 2005, courtesy *Daily Mail*)

These days, we seem to be occupied too much with our personalities—more especially with our bodies. Our body is only an instrument used by the soul and it needs to be kept in good condition. All conditioned things are impermanent and subject to wear and tear. Men and women must learn the art of “greying gracefully.” Body must follow the natural cycle of birth, decay and death. Instead of crushing out personal vanity, we go to any length to boost it. We seek to be attractive by wearing mink coats, leather jackets, leather boots, silk sarees, etc., for which we have never hesitated to kill thousands of animals. Now, we are obsessed to acquire beauty—at any cost—through cosmetics, and struggle to keep old age at bay. It is inward beauty that we must strive to acquire by leading the life necessary, and it is sure to find its reflection in the outer garment. The beauty of form is evanescent. As someone has said: “But beauty dies, beauty vanishes, however rare, rare it be.” Lord Buddha’s words on body and old age, in *The Dhammapada*, are worth meditating upon:

Behold this painted image, this body full of sores, stuck together, sickly, and full of many thoughts devoid of permanence and stability. (Verse 147)

The splendid chariots of kings wear away; the body also comes to old age; but the virtue of the good never ages. Thus the saintly teach each other. (Verse 151)

Research involving grafting of human neural stem cells into the brains of fetal monkeys (or primates) has sparked off controversy among researchers on ethical grounds. Several questions arise: What could be the impact of such grafting on the *mind* of the recipient? Could such grafting help us find treatment for neurological injury and disease? Can we change the capacities of the engrafted animal in a way that leads us to re-examine its moral status? Researchers expect that Human to Non-Human Primate (NHP) grafting may produce creatures with humanlike cognitive capacities relevant to moral status. Some argue that Human/NHP grafting may not be unique in having the potential to alter the capacities of NHPs, as Chimps reared with humans also exhibit humanlike behaviour. Some researchers feel that we overestimate the difference in relevant mental capacities and moral status between Human and Non-Human Primates. The thing to see is to what extent human-NHP grafting will change mental capacities, such as, the ability to feel pleasure and pain, language, rationality and richness of relationships. To the extent these capacities are attained, that creature must be held in corresponding high moral standing and must be treated in a manner appropriate to that moral status. One more cause of concern is that these more humanlike capacities might also confer greater capacity for suffering, and that would be an added factor to worry about when these Non-Human Primates are used for research. (*Science*, July 15, 2005)

What is it that distinguishes a man from an animal? It is self-consciousness and the power to think and choose. These arise from the mind. “Without this *quickenings* spirit, or *human Mind* or soul, there would be no difference between man and beast; as there is none, in fact, between animals with respect to their actions” (*S.D.*, II, 513). Ordinarily, the mind is considered to be immaterial. Or, it is taken to be the “name for the action of the brain in evolving thought.” Thus, it is believed that if there is no brain, there can be no mind. But, the *brain is only an instrument* of the mind. Where did mind come from? Theosophy teaches that there was a point in

the course of evolution, when man in form was devoid of mind. However, when he had developed a brain that was of much *better* and *deeper* capacity than that of any other animal, only at that point, man was given the light of mind by Divine Beings—*Manasaputras*—in a manner comparable to one candle lighting many. As a result, man was endowed with self-consciousness and with the power to think and choose.

Can an improved quality of *brain* endow an animal with humanlike consciousness and cognitive capacities, such as, “the ability to feel pleasure and pain [like human beings], language, rationality and richness of relationships”? It is mind that affects the quality of the brain and not *vice versa*. Mr. Judge writes: “The depth and variety of the brain convolutions in man are caused by the presence of *Manas*, and are not the cause of mind.” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 62)

Language implies speech, and regarding speech Theosophy asserts that “a *human* brain is necessary for *human* speech. And figures relating to the size of the respective brains of man and ape show how deep is the gulf which separates the two.” It has been observed that the brain of the largest ape, the gorilla, measures only about 30.51 cubic inches; the average brain even of the Australian natives—one of the least developed races—measures about 99.35 cubic inches. Thus the brain-size of an ape is not even half the size of the brain of the new-born child. (*S.D.*, II, 661)

THE absolute balance of Give and Take, the doctrine that every thing has its price; and if that price is not paid, not that thing, but something else, is obtained, and that it is impossible to get any thing without its price,—this doctrine is not less sublime in the columns of a ledger than in the budgets of states, in the laws of light and darkness, in all the action and reaction of nature.

—EMERSON