

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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ON RECEPTIVITY	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT ONLY A JOKE!	9
STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA THE PATH—I	13
HOW AWARE ARE WE?—I	19
THE CARES OF THE SOUL	23
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	29
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	33

THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India  
email: [ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in](mailto:ultmumbai@mtnl.net.in) ♦ Phone : 22039024  
website: [www.ultindia.org](http://www.ultindia.org)

### ON RECEPTIVITY

RECEPTIVITY means willingness or readiness to receive ideas and impressions. There appear from time to time great thinkers, who produce a religion or a philosophy by which important effects are eventually brought about. But history clearly shows that though the origin of a new idea or opinion may be due to a single person, the effect or the result of that new opinion will depend upon the condition or receptivity of the people among whom it is propagated. Both scientific and philosophical ideas could be in advance of time. “If either a religion or a philosophy is too much in advance of a nation it can do no present service but must bide its time until the minds of men are ripe for its reception. . . . Every science, every creed has had its martyrs,” wrote H. T. Buckle in his work, *History of Civilization*. (S.D., I, 298)

Kevin Kelly, the author of *What Technology Wants*, points out that the ideas that are far ahead of their time are never implemented. Gregor Mendel’s ideas about genetics were formulated by him in the year 1865, but they were ignored for 35 years. Only when the collective mind of people was ready, three different scientists re-discovered his work. “Innovating is about more than just having the idea yourself; you also have to bring everyone else to where your idea is,” says Kelly.

H. T. Buckle points out that only a few generations later there comes a period when these very truths are looked upon as

commonplace facts. After few more years there comes a period in which they are declared to be not only necessary, but even the dullest person wonders how these ideas could have been denied. H.P.B. feels that our present generation is led away by prejudice and preconceptions, so that the minds steeped in materialism are not quite ripe for the reception of Occult truths. (*S.D.*, I, 298)

In the earlier days, after the founding of the Theosophical Society, H.P.B. performed phenomena expecting them to produce definite effect on scientific and religious men. But these phenomena were misunderstood and misinterpreted, both as regards their nature and their purpose. Science does not recognize the existence of a super-material region governed by law, nor does it recognize the existence of latent powers and possibilities in man. It was hoped that scientific men will undertake the investigation of laws and forces governing the super-material regions, unknown to science but perfectly known to occultism. The phenomena were performed with the hope of arousing the curiosity of the intelligent portion of mankind. The intention was to show that there are human beings who have acquired power over forces and processes of nature through long years of training and that this power is latent in all men, and could be developed by following the necessary discipline. However, they failed to produce the desired effect. The men of science pooh-poohed these “miraculous” looking phenomena, and called H.P.B. the “Greatest Imposter of the Age.” When she stopped performing phenomena, realizing the futility, people concluded that initially H.P.B. was *mistaken in her judgement*, and that later she attempted to rectify the error. She writes: “An occultist can produce phenomena, but he cannot supply the world with brains, nor with the intelligence and good faith necessary to understand and appreciate them.”

In *The Key to Theosophy* H.P.B. writes that the Missionaries vainly sacrificed their lives in South Sea Islands, by going to the people who were savages and cannibals, and were not at all receptive to the truths being propagated by them.

“Do not cast your pearls before swine,” said Jesus. Spiritual knowledge is given out cyclically. The spiritually wise beings use the knowledge of the law of cycles to decide the appropriate time to give or withdraw knowledge. The Theosophical Movement was launched in 1875 in accordance with the cyclic law, when minds of people were found to be receptive to the truths. A Master of Wisdom writes that in giving theosophical ideas they have broken the silence of the centuries. After the dark age of Europe, there is greater receptivity in the West to spiritual ideas. In 1878, H.P.B. wrote in her *Isis Unveiled*, “An era of disenchantment and rebuilding will soon begin—nay, has already begun.”

Though, race mind may be receptive to spiritual ideas, there is a difference between passive and active reception of the new ideas. Receiving every new idea without analysis and reflection could be equally fatal as *a priori* rejection. Mr. Crosbie writes that many are the people who have accepted only portions of Theosophical teachings. For instance, sometimes people refrain from accepting the existence of the astral plane or the Higher Mind because modern science rejects the same, and hence could have no bearing on the present time.

In the *Friendly Philosopher*, Mr. Crosbie mentions that “every change is preceded by a rapid rehearsal of previous processes in evolution. It seems to me that we might use this in our own mental processes.” H.P.B. explains in the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 188) how in the development of human form, there is rapid rehearsal of previous processes. The developing embryo passes through all the forms that the monad passed through in its evolutionary journey up to human stage. First it exists as ovum composed of mostly inorganic matter, the same as that of a stone in its mineral stage of development. At the end of three or four weeks, the ovum assumes carrot-like appearance, and it hangs from the root of the umbilicus almost like the fruit from the bough. The stone has now become a plant. Still later, the embryo develops into an animal-like foetus, with the shape of a tadpole. In a span of nine months or so, the developing embryo

quickly passes through all the stages which it had passed through as monadic essence in the process of evolution. This process of rapid rehearsal applies to every change, which we can take advantage of in our thought process. We should not accept any new idea at once without the “rehearsal of previous processes” with respect to the new idea. If there is a ten story building, we do not jump from tenth floor to the ground floor, but go down, step by step. For example, in the past, if we have accepted the idea of impersonal God after a lot of study, thinking, reasoning, analysis and intuitive perception, and if someone comes up with a theory which proposes once again a personal God idea with reasons, we do not jump to that idea and accept it. We would once again go through the same process of study, reflection, reasoning, analysis and application of intuition in order to see whether the idea is convincing or not. We make use of what we know in studying the new idea. We go over the same process each time and allow the mind, as it were, to step in at an appropriate moment. By this process, there is a net gain. We do not destroy the old and get the new one, but build further with the material of the old. We have to go step by step. It is the old story of the Dublin City Hall. They passed a resolution: Resolved, that the city needs a new city hall; Resolved, that we will construct a new city hall; Resolved, that we occupy the old city hall until the new city hall is completed. That is what we must do. We must *occupy*, but not rigidly hold, old “ideas” while we are renovating them.

Mr. Judge advises that someone who wants to apprehend truth must be able to lay aside his preconceptions. If he holds on to his preconceptions, he can never really acquire a new idea or a new point of view. Some people come to Theosophy, bringing with them their own background, and because they hold onto their own ideas, they are unable to grasp the philosophy of Theosophy. They seek to read new books on Theosophy, instead of re-reading a few old books. There is a need to enter into the author’s thought and touch the mind of the author. Even when someone says that he has mastered a certain book, a closer examination reveals that actually, only that

which coincided with his previous training and line of thought has been grasped.

There is a story from the Zen tradition about a professor who visits a Zen master to ask some questions. After they have spoken a little the Zen master offers him some tea. The master begins to pour the tea, and keeps pouring even after the cup is full and the tea begins to overflow. The professor told the master, “My cup is full. It will not hold any more tea.” And that was precisely what the Master wanted to convey, “your cup is full, come back when you are ready to receive the answers to your questions.” Often we ask questions and want solution or explanation, but we are not really receptive.

The first step consists in learning to *listen* attentively to the spoken or written words, by submitting our mind to the author and by trying to contact the mind of the author. When only our *mind* is in attunement with the written or spoken word, we get the meaning at the intellectual level. But when both our mind and heart are attuned to the speaker or the writer we are able to go beyond the “letter,” and grasp the very spirit of the teaching. There seems to take place invisible osmosis. Scriptures are instinct with a life of their own, so that those who approach them with devotion and reverence are able to osmose these pure vibrations, even if they might not fully comprehend the text. Poet George Russell describes his first meeting with Mr. Judge, thus: “I hardly thought what he was while he spoke; but on departing I found my heart, wiser than my brain, had given itself away to him; an inner exaltation lasting for months witnessed his power.” In *Foreword to Vernal Blooms*, by Mr. Judge, we are told that “the attentive reader of this volume will learn much but the ardent one will gain, by invisible osmosis and assimilation,” the outstanding qualities of Mr. Judge, that of untiring patience and gentleness.

In the case of a high chela who is accepted by the Master, his consciousness becomes an outpost of his Master’s consciousness. Since his consciousness is in complete attunement with that of the Master, there is a psychic interchange. A Master of Wisdom writes:

“As the water in a full tank runs into an empty one which it is connected with; and as the common level will be sooner or later reached according to the capacity of the feed-pipe, so does the knowledge of the Adept flow to the chela; and the chela attains the adept-level according to his receptive capacities.”

We have made our brains receptive and porous to outer influences, but not porous to influences from within. We are receptive to the suggestions of religious and political leaders; to the suggestions of the society and people around us. Theosophy tries to train the students through enquiry. A student is called upon to resist impulsive and quick response to outer suggestions, and train himself to evaluate every suggestion calmly in the light of the philosophy of Theosophy. Mr. Judge asks us to put every proposition before our higher nature, and wait for the answer.

In a tranquil lake is reflected the perfect image of the sun, so also the brain free from the turmoil of passions and desires is porous to the soul’s influence. The aim of self-discipline is to make the brain porous and receptive to the influences of the divine nature. Human brain may be compared to a pane of glass. The brains of average people are like common glass which is covered with dust of likes and dislikes, emotions and prejudices. But the brain of a sage is like a perfect lens held at the exact angle which focuses the sunlight to produce clear image.

We may obtain guidance and solution to our problems during dreams. But we do not bring back the memory of it to the waking life. What and how much our brain can remember of these dreams, depends upon how porous or receptive our brain is. We begin to develop receptivity when we open our heart to “Humanity’s great pain,” when we search for the reason and the purpose of that pain, and use our knowledge as well as our compassion to heal it. When we have done all this, the benign influence of the great Saviours of the world flows in and floods our receptive heart and mind, and we are helped in our work.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT ONLY A JOKE!

“I SAY fellows, I heard a good one yesterday.” The voice of Miles Dawson rose above the hum of chatter that any schoolboy would have understood to mean the absence of the teacher from the classroom. The scraps of talk were suspended to hear the joke which Miles told with gusto but not too loud to be heard outside the room.

“Two men, both in a hurry, bumped into each other on the sidewalk. One man shouted, ‘Why don’t you look where your’re going?’ and the other, just as angry, shouted, ‘If you’d go where you’re looking it would be all right!’ The other fellow was cross-eyed.”

Chuckles and titters swept the classroom, but there was one shout of “Shame!” just as the door opened and Mr. Mason walked in. He was well-built young man and would have been rather handsome but for his being cross-eyed. He was new to the school that year, but the prompt tentative verdict of his pupils had been that he was “all right.”

“Boys, I had asked you to be quiet while I was with the headmaster. I did not hear much noise as I came back, but one boy shouted something just as I came in. Who did that?”

Ted Martin stood up promptly. “I apologize for making so much noise.”

“All right, Ted. We will let it go this time, but please remember, all of you, when I am called out of the room, to spend your time in studying. Nobody has a right to disturb the others here or in other classrooms.”

The class went on but when the bell rang for the mid-morning recess several of his classmates gathered approvingly around Ted on the playground. Miles Dawson was especially incensed. “What did you mean, calling ‘Shame?’” he demanded crossly. “What is wrong with telling a good clean joke like that? Don’t you like people to have fun, Mr. Long-face? You might have got us all into trouble, shouting that.”

“You know I like fun, Miles,” Ted answered quietly. “But when you told it and when others laughed, it was really making fun of our teacher, wasn’t it? Weren’t you thinking about him when you told it? And weren’t those who laughed thinking about him too?”

“How do I know what they were thinking about? I did think of ‘our teacher,’ of course. So what? It was only a joke.”

“Well,” Ted persisted, “if your mother or your father was cross-eyed, would you make jokes about being cross-eyed?”

“No, naturally not! But what’s that got to do with Mr. Mason?”

Another boy struck in, “Mr. Mason is just our teacher. He’s paid to teach us, isn’t he? And we don’t even know him very well yet. It was decent of him, though, to drop it after you apologized for shouting, without wanting to know what you shouted and why.”

“I didn’t apologize for saying ‘Shame!’” Ted wanted to make that very clear. “I only said I apologized for making so much noise. I do think it is shameful to make fun of our teacher.”

His friend Douglas said thoughtfully, “Mr. Mason must know a lot more than we do, of course, or he wouldn’t be here, but it didn’t hurt him for us to laugh behind his back. Ted would never have been mean enough to tell him! Would you, Ted?”

“No, of course not,” Ted answered, but I have heard a lot from my father and mother about how boys used to honour their teacher a long time ago. It may not have hurt Mr. Mason but I am sure it isn’t good for us to make fun of him. And for something he couldn’t help, too! That isn’t even fair!”

“I can see it wasn’t very sporting,” Miles confessed.

“No,” Ted insisted. “Why, in India long ago quite young boys used to be sent to live with a teacher. And a boy always looked up to his teacher and did whatever he could for him; and his teacher was like father and taught him all he needed to make him wise and good himself. My mother made me learn a sentence about it once. Do you want to hear it?” he asked rather diffidently.

“Fire ahead!” Miles cried magnanimously. “I can take it! But I certainly was sore!”

“Well, this is it: ‘It was among these people a great sin, a thing that did one actual harm in his moral being, to be disrespectful to his teacher, even in thought.’”

It was thoughtful little group that moved after Miles and Ted towards the building as the bell sounded to call them back to class.

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In a letter written by W. Q. Judge in 1886, he emphasizes implanting of right ideas in the minds of children. He mentions: “There are many persons studying with us who do not say one word to their children, but allow them to go on imbibing the false theories of the current religion, weakly hoping that when the children should have grown up, the errors can be corrected. How unjust this is to the children who are thus filled up with the obstacles to future progress! Surely, if members believe there is anything in Karma or Reincarnation, how easy to tell the children. They ought to hold weekly meetings for the benefit of the latter where they might be offered spiritual food. The good done in this way is not to be calculated....The children of today are the adults of a few years hence, and if in some way they can be put on the right track, so much the better for the race of which they will themselves be the guides.” A mistake not corrected in childhood gets carried forward and becomes difficult of eradication in old age.

Both teachers and parents occupy an important place in a person’s life. From the earliest times, at least in the East, the teacher was given great reverence by the pupil, and the pupil was taught to look upon his teacher as second only to his father and mother in dignity. It was believed that if the pupil were disrespectful to his teacher, even in thought, it would bring about an actual harm to his moral being. The reason being that there exist a *guruparampara chain*, which extends from the teacher who may perhaps only teach you your alphabets, ending in the highest spiritual chief or guide, in whose ray or descending line the pupil may be. Whether the teacher

deserves it or not, by his reverent and diligent attitude, the pupil progresses and is able to transcend his erstwhile teacher. The ordinary teacher-pupil relationship on material plane is seen as a reflection of the guru-chela relationship on a higher, spiritual plane.

In *The Light of Asia*, while describing Prince Siddhartha's childhood, we are told that when he was sent to a teacher, he could recite far beyond what the teacher knew, but he was still respectful. Buddha's teacher, Sage Viswamitra, prostrated himself before the prince and said: "[Thou] art Teacher of thy teachers—thou, not I, art Guru. Oh, I worship thee, sweet Prince! That comest to my school only to show Thou knowest all without the books, and know'st fair reverence besides."

There is the *mantram*, "*Matri devo bhava, pitri devo bhava and acharya devo bhava*," which enshrines the old ideal, conveying the sound practical advice that if we wish to learn and receive anything worthwhile from our parents and teachers, we must treat them as we would a god. We must look upon them as a channel and messenger of God, who is brought nearer to us through these significant persons. Now the time has come when the old truth must be seen in a New Light. We may say that the old mantra is a call to the parents and teachers to be as a God, and that their true worth lies in how far they can be a good instrument and a channel for God's work, writes Alok Pandey. (*The Advent*, August 2008)

Strictly speaking, only a spiritual teacher is fit to be looked upon as a god. The spiritual teacher is called a Guru and a true Guru is always an Adept in Occult Science. He is a man of profound knowledge and one who has brought his carnal nature under the subjection of his WILL.

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TRY to progress in harmony....Be a centre of harmony  
yourself and others will help you in spreading that feeling.

—W. Q. JUDGE

## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA THE PATH—I

THE CHAPTER is called *Maggavaggo* or "The Path." In Sanskrit, "*marga*" means the path. It is the path shown by the Buddha to enable us to become perfected human beings and reach Nirvana or state of enlightenment. All spiritual traditions point out the path which would lead to perfection. In the *Gita*, we come across three paths: *Karma Marga* (the path of action), *Bhakti Marga* (the path of devotion) and *Gnana Marga* (the path of knowledge), which shri Krishna points out must be blended into one. We are pilgrim-souls in exile, journeying back to our divine home. *The Voice of the Silence* speaks of the journey of the pilgrim-soul and points out the difficulties on the path. It speaks of seven gates on the path that can be opened only by the one who has brought with him the keys of transcendental virtues.

1. *The best of Paths is the Eightfold Path; the best of Truths are the Four Noble Ones; the best of states is that of Detachment (Viraga); the best of men is the Seer. (273)*

When happy prince Siddhartha, who knew nothing of sorrow and suffering, saw the sight of an old man, a sick man and a dead body, and asked searching questions, whether such was likely to be the fate of all human beings, he came face to face with the greatest reality of life—reality of sorrow. So moved was he by the sight of suffering and the fate of human beings that he left his happy palace and loving wife and son in search of a solution to end all suffering. After attaining enlightenment, he came back into the world in order to teach humanity how to become free from suffering.

All men seek happiness. They desire to know how this thing called "pain" can be exchanged for "pleasure." The Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha show us the way. These truths are: (1) Life in the world is full of suffering. (2) There is a cause of this suffering. (3) It is possible to stop suffering. (4) There is a path which leads to the cessation of suffering.

The First Noble Truth is the fact of suffering in life. The penetrating gaze of the Buddha went beyond the obvious source of suffering such as disease, old age and death. He realized the great truth of life that “sorrow is.” This has been put in few words in *The Light of Asia* as: “Life which ye prize is long-drawn agony: only its pains abide; its pleasures are as birds which light and fly.” In the midst of happiness, we are aware that “there is always the shadowy form of despair standing behind man ready to touch him with its terrible finger if for too long he finds himself content.” The materialists may reject this wholesale condemnation of life in the world. They may list out variety of pleasures that life offers us. But, the wisdom of the Buddha shows that worldly pleasures appear as such only to short-sighted people. Their transitory nature, the pains felt on their loss and the fears felt lest they should be lost, and other evil consequences make pleasures lose their charm and turn them into positive sources of fear and anxiety.

The Second Noble Truth is about the Cause of Suffering. It is explained by the Buddha in the light of his “Doctrine of Conditioned co-production” or the “chain of causation.” According to it, nothing is unconditional; the existence of everything depends on some conditions or causes. As the existence of everything depends on some prior cause, it is logical to conclude that there must exist something which is the cause of our misery. It is described as a chain of twelve *Nidanas* or Causes. *Avidya* or ignorance is the cause of false perceptions. As the drunken man sees things differently from what they really are, *Avidya* makes us see things wrongly and thereby produces impressions (*Samskaras*) or *Vasanas* or aggregate of mental conditions or various states of consciousness. The aggregate of mental conditions, under the law of Karma are responsible for the production of the first moment of consciousness or *Vijnana* in a “new” life. It is the consciousness which descends into embryo in the mother’s womb, which is only the effect of the mental conditions or impressions (*vasanas*) of our past existence. This gives birth to body-mind organism (*nama-rupa* or personality).

Depending upon *nama-rupa* arises *sad-ayatana* or six organs of cognition, *i.e.*, five senses and the mind. Depending upon *sadayatana* arises the sense-experience due to contact (*sparsa*) of sense-organs with objects. From *sparsa* arises pleasant or unpleasant feeling (*Vedana*). Depending upon *Vedana* arises desire or thirst (*Trishna*) for the pleasant sensation, and that in turn leads to our clinging (*Upadana*) and grasping or attachment to the objects of the world and creates in us the desire to be born (*Bhava*). This desire for birth or the *will to become* is the force of blind tendencies or predisposition which causes birth (*Jati*). Birth is the cause of all suffering as it is subject to *Jaramarana* or decay and death. A man may experience sensations (*vedana*), but if he does not allow craving to arise, then the chain is broken and the person may be liberated. This can be achieved by realizing the transitory and painful nature of the worldly existence. Thus, ignorance is the root cause of impressions or tendencies that cause birth. Some devout Buddhists remind themselves of this teaching of the Buddha by turning the wheel, which symbolizes the wheel of causation.

The Third Noble Truth is about the cessation of suffering. It follows from the second truth that misery depends on some conditions. If these conditions are removed, misery would cease. First of all, it should be noted that liberation from misery is a state attainable here in this very life, if certain conditions are fulfilled. When the perfect control of passions and constant contemplation of truth lead a person through various stages of concentration to perfect wisdom, he is no longer under the sway of worldly attachment. He has broken the fetters that bound him to the world. He is, therefore, free, liberated. He has attained Nirvana—the extinction of passions and, therefore, also of misery.

The Fourth Noble Truth affirms that there is a path (*marga*) to reach freedom from misery. The path recommended by the Buddha consists of eight steps or rules and therefore it is called the Eightfold Path. It gives in nutshell the essentials of Buddha Ethics. Since all men desire to get rid of the cause of suffering, the path is open to all.

The noble path consists in acquisition of following eight things:

(1) Right views (*Samyagdrsti*)—As ignorance with its consequences, namely, wrong views (*mithyadrsti*) about the self and the world, is the root cause of our sufferings, the first step to moral reformation should be the acquisition of right views or the knowledge of truth. Right view is defined as the correct knowledge about the four noble truths. It is the knowledge of these truths alone and not any theoretical speculation regarding nature and self, which according to Buddha, helps moral reformation, and leads us towards the goal—nirvana. (2) Right resolve (*samyaksankalpa*)—A mere knowledge of the truths would be useless unless one resolves to reform life in their light. The moral aspirant is asked, therefore, to renounce worldliness (all attachment to the world), to give up ill-feeling towards others and desist from doing any harm to them. These three constitute the contents of right determination. (3) Right speech (*samyagvak*)—Right determination should not remain a mere “pious wish” but must issue forth into action. Right determination should be able to guide and control our speech, to begin with. The result would be right speech consisting in abstention from lying, slander, unkind words and frivolous talk. (4) Right conduct (*samyak-karmanta*)—Right determination should end in right action or good conduct and not stop merely with good speech. Right conduct consists, therefore, in desisting from destroying life, from stealing and from improper gratification of the senses.

(5) Right livelihood (*samyagajiva*)—Renouncing bad speech and bad actions, one should earn his livelihood by honest means. The necessity of this rule lies in showing that even for the sake of maintaining one’s life, one should not take to forbidden means but work in consistency with good determination. (6) Right effort (*samyagvyayama*)—While a person tries to live a reformed life, through right views, resolution, speech, action and livelihood, he is constantly knocked off the right path by old evil ideas which were deep-rooted in the mind as also fresh ones which constantly arise. One cannot progress steadily unless one maintains a constant effort

to root out old evil thoughts, and prevent evil thoughts from arising anew. Moreover, as the mind cannot be kept empty, one should constantly endeavour also to fill the mind with good ideas, and retain such ideas in the mind. This fourfold constant endeavour, negative and positive, is called right effort. This rule points out that even one high up on the path cannot afford to take a moral holiday without running the risk of slipping down.

(7) Right mindfulness (*samyaksmriti*)—The necessity of constant vigilance is further stressed in this rule, which lays down that the aspirant should constantly bear in mind the things he has already learnt. He should constantly remember and contemplate the body as body, sensations as sensations, mind as mind, mental states as mental states. About any of these he should not think, “This am I,” or “This is mine.” This advice sounds no better than asking one to think of spade as spade. But though it appears to be very simple, it is not easy to always remember what things really are. It is all the more difficult to practise it when false ideas about the body, etc., have become so deep-rooted in us and our behaviour based on these false notions has become instinctive. If we are not mindful we behave as though the body, the sensations and mental states are permanent and valuable. Hence there arises attachment to such things and grief over their loss, and we become subject to bondage and misery. But contemplation on the frail, perishable, loathsome nature of these helps us to remain free from attachment and grief. This is the necessity of constant mindfulness about truth. (8) Right concentration (*samyaksamadhi*)—One who has successfully guided his life in the light of the last seven rules and thereby freed himself from all passions and evil thoughts is fit to enter step by step into the four deeper and deeper stages of concentration that gradually bring about cessation of suffering.

Since the Path suggested by the Buddha enables us to begin the journey from where we are, to ultimately becoming free from the curse of misery, it is called the best of paths. It is based on the Four Noble Truths which are scientific and logical. There is a reason

why the Buddha calls the state of detachment as the best of states instead of calling “happiness” as the best of states. Happiness can be attained either when existence is in accordance with our desires or when our desires are in harmony with existence. While the latter alternative is difficult, the former is impossible. If we cannot gain happiness by refashioning the world, we shall have to find it by reforming ourselves, writes Sangharakshita. Happiness comes only when we desire and are attached to nothing—a state of perfect detachment or *Viraga*—the non-identification with any of the experiences, whether pleasurable or painful.

The Seer is a man who possesses five-fold vision or five powers of perception. Ordinary man sees with his physical eyes. But there are other types of perceptions such as intuitive perception, inner perception, spiritual clairvoyance which transcend the barriers of time and space. *The Voice of the Silence* speaks of “right perception of existing things and the knowledge of the non-existent.” Buddhism speaks of five types of sights, viz, *Mansa Chakshu*—sight through fleshly eyes, *Dharma Chakshu*—the eye of religion, the faculty of seeing through religion; *Prajnana Chakshu*—the power of seeing by intellect, *Divya Chakshu*—the faculty of seeing what is invisible to the naked eye, and *Buddha Chakshu*—the vision such as that possessed by the Buddha, it is Spiritual Seership. The Buddha could see the Karma of all beings and he knew the ultimate divisions of time. He was not deceived by temptations presented by Mara. The Seer knows the past, present and future.

(To be continued)

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My grand-father once told me that there were two kinds of people; those who do the work and those who take the credit. He told me to try to be in the first group; there was much less competition.

—INDIRA GANDHI

## HOW AWARE ARE WE?

### I

The average human looks without seeing, listens without hearing, touches without feeling, eats without tasting, moves without physical awareness, inhales without awareness of odour or fragrance, and talks without thinking.

—LEONARDO DA VINCI

LEONARDO, the greatest multidimensional genius of his times, acknowledged his great arts, scientific works and the philosophical insights to his extra-ordinary and heightened awareness in all departments of human endeavour, and to his ability to ask pertinent questions to himself, and to learn from honest, raw experience. He attributed to the faculty of awareness his observations on the laws governing human body and mind, which he recorded in his “Notes.” He called this practice, the “principle of *Curiosita*,” in his native Italian, to be followed by the “principle of *Dimostrazione*,” or the knowledge through experience. He had formulated seven such “principles” for living a life of creativity.

So multi-dimensional were his interests that no department of human endeavour or of nature missed his cognizance and searching eyes. All his creative works and the records of his perceptions, even of the cosmic laws, were the product of his first-hand experience and insight. His was the penetrating and open mind, with sensitivity to notice things and the natural phenomena which could be easily missed by others. However, he was willing to constantly adjust or correct himself in his independent search for Truth. But behind all these was the unrelenting quest for continuous learning. For instance, he could marvel even at the simple familiar things, like resilience of the tongue’s movements, the accommodative power of the eye’s pupils, and particularly the amazing movements of the bird’s wings, and muscular co-ordination arising from body-brain connectivity, for which he recommended jugglery as an exercise in physical and

mental dexterity!

Such was the self-taught genius of the Fifteenth century, at the end of the “dark” Medieval period and the beginning of the dawn of Renaissance in Europe. The above introductory quote from Da Vinci’s “Notes” is an honest comment on human habits and how he could easily miss out, sometimes, on sensing things hidden in ordinary-looking movement and the Nature’s behaviour, which only an alert and curious nature may appreciate. Only Da Vinci could truly say: “The eye encompasses the beauty of the whole world.” For the poet in him was forever in search for Beauty and Truth even in ordinary things. Dr. William James rightly said: “Genius, in truth, means little more than the faculty of perceiving in an un-habitual way,” and we may add, to see things truly and to see them whole.

We all have the great potential for observing, learning and creating, and yet, we have made ourselves self-limited even in the most natural habit of becoming aware and observing the self and others. Besides, there is no object of awareness more important than the contents of our own mind through the flow of ideas and images that are a constant background of our existence. We rarely make a sincere effort at knowing ourselves as we truly are.

Do we ever “catch ourselves” and quietly notice the movements of the Mind, and the quality of our consciousness? Not a moment can a man be without this familiar activity, loosely called “thinking.” But in reality, this is not “thinking” as such, for we may be just absent-mindedly letting things pass by, like humming the tune in the background! Sometimes we may be vaguely reacting to the passing shows, inner and outer, without producing an actual thought-pattern with a meaning and direction. It is just as if one daily walks on one’s familiar street, automatically, and by the force of habit. Only when we take up an idea which has a definite form and object that we are really *thinking to some purpose*. “Awareness as a technique” begins with being silent, or rather relaxed, and watching the thoughts and impulses that may arise, and making a note or record. We may notice that besides the thought-forms there may be

fleeting reactions, impulses, feelings, motives, etc., but we are not at present, to add anything to them. We are here just to watch and *just be aware*. This exercise is an excellent aid to the more important discipline of “self-examination,” in the time set apart during the day.

For many, this simple thing as deliberate awareness is quite unfamiliar. Those of us who value the guidance of higher nature and are concerned with true inner needs may sadly discover our occasional failures to detect some valuable lessons and some good things that happened to us, all due to the lack of awareness. Due to the lack of awareness and careless habits we may fail even to acknowledge with gratitude some providential help received or even the advantages of life we enjoy every day. At times, an opportunity knocks at the door and we do not attend, or fail to recognize the auspicious “visitor” and perhaps a “messenger.” For instance, we might dismiss as fancy a dream-intimation!

There are life’s insignificant-looking experiences, which could well be our tests—of our patience, or endurance, or forgiveness or willingness to listen to others. For instance, our teacher or a friend may firmly scold us and this may prove to be an actual benediction, if we could accept the whole unpleasant episode in the true spirit of discipleship and its obligations. There are many such unexpected “blessings” in life, which we may have allowed to pass. If we are truly aware, we should be a little more alert to the inner voice of warning or a timely reminder, or a wholesome inspiration to do the right things.

A man of the world may be habitually much pre-occupied with his familiar ground and the constant chatter of his personal nature. He may even gradually become indifferent to the presence and the feelings of others. Such soul-lethargy makes one cold and dry, an egotist with very narrow perspective of life and its object!

But, for a student who has higher aspirations, such failure to heed matters that happen to him disqualifies him for greater responsibility that may be entrusted to him some day. There is a Persian saying: Do little things now, so shall great things come to

thee asking to be done. But it all begins with awareness of one's own inner stuff and one's place in the scheme of things. Awareness skills are important steps in mental discipline, as also a part of character development. There is the Zen Buddhist story which shows the value of being "attentive" to "small matters." A seeker went to the Zen master known for his teachings on meditation in order to become his pupil. The first thing that the teacher asked him was where and in what position he had placed his slippers outside the room. The pupil had not taken note of such "petty" matters! The teacher then told him that one of the first steps for the meditation skill is to be a good observer of one's own movements and things around. Every little thing must be done with deliberation and awareness. The seeker was asked to return after some period, when he would feel ready for further instructions.

To respond ethically and aesthetically to all conditions of human life is the natural function of our egoic-consciousness. Therefore, if there are any moral or psychic inadequacies, it means poor cultivation of aesthetic and ethical awareness. Indifference and insensitivity are signs not just of unrefined taste, but also of the untrained faculties of the Higher Mind. We might regard it as the failure of education to awaken the appreciative faculty, and the pursuit of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. Training in self-awareness becomes an aid to increase the power of concentration, mindfulness, and the refinement of thought-feeling-motivation complex.

In case of Leonardo da Vinci it is this simple but regular habit of ever-wakeful awareness, his heightened power of observation, and the ever curious inquiring mind, that led to certain insights, and truth concerning the physical and philosophical questions. Although da Vinci was not conventionally "religious," he had the insight and the streaks of the mystical in his approach to life and his creative arts, which may be largely attributed to his awareness of the cosmic order and purpose.

*(To be concluded)*

## THE CARES OF THE SOUL

ALL RELIGIONS teach that we must take greatest care of our soul-life for our own happiness and emancipation, and that negligence in this regard will result in great loss to us. In all scriptures clear teachings are there on this subject. But there is clearly a wide gulf between the spirit of the original pure teachings of every religion and their perversion by the subsequent growth of sectarian dogmas. For instance, it is a common belief that man has an immortal soul and that he may well lose it if he is negligent in its care. This belief has a grain of truth yet it has been very much perverted by sectarians. On the other hand, it is believed in some quarters that since man has an immortal soul, he can never lose it even if he lives an evil life. Innocuous as such beliefs may seem on the surface they are nevertheless subversive of human happiness and obstacles on the path of human progress.

The ancient teaching points out that though we are essentially, as Souls, eternal and divine, yet as *personalities* in earth-life we are mortal, and that unless we consciously make efforts to link our everyday waking consciousness with the Higher Self—the God within us—the *personal self* will perish entirely at death. Immortality is not granted to man; he has to take it by conscious effort and merit.

No man or a being, however high, wise and powerful, can ever save us by conferring on us immortality nor avert the consequences of our thoughts and acts from reaching us for our weal or woe by the unerring law of cause and effect. Each individual has to work his own salvation by his own mental and moral effort by placing reliance on the God within himself, his Higher Self. This is the fundamental law of our being. When one understands this law one will naturally act responsibly in life in every relation and situation, and when such true beliefs based on knowledge are generally prevalent, individual happiness and social harmony will invariably follow. On the contrary, when minds of credulous populace are indoctrinated with such false ideas as "vicarious atonement," or by

such ideas that man is a product of animal evolution and no more, as materialistic science of the day teaches, man acts irresponsibly and selfishly, giving rise to every conceivable crime and immorality in society. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for us to understand the true sense and the meaning of the ancient teachings concerning the soul and its care, and work towards the spread of right knowledge for the good of the world.

What is the soul? Going beyond such vague statements as that man *has* a soul, Theosophy shows and demonstrates that man *is* a soul. Man is not his body but a triad of Spirit-Soul-Mind—which three are one; it is the immortal Divine Ego, who is the Real Man, the inseparable portion of the Supreme Spirit, who dwells in the perishable body. But we must learn well the distinction between the divine immortal *Individuality* and the mortal *personality*.

The question that is commonly asked is that if the Real Man is divine, the “Sovereign Lord,” he must be all-knowing; why then is it necessary for him to fall into matter, to assume mortal shape and experience the endless sorrows of the world? H.P.B. explains the apparent paradox in her *The Key to Theosophy* (p.181): “Try to imagine a ‘Spirit,’ a celestial Being, whether we call it by one name or another, divine in its essential nature, yet not pure enough to be *one with the ALL*, and having, in order to achieve this, to so purify its nature as to finally gain that goal. It can do so only by passing... spiritually and physically, through every experience and feeling that exists in the manifold or differentiated Universe. It has, therefore, after having gained such experience in the lower kingdoms...to pass through every experience on the human planes.”

Individuality or the Higher Immortal Ego goes through innumerable cycles of reincarnations and gathers experiences through the personalities it informs. The moral effects of its actions during each earth-life—*Karma*—determine the character, tendencies, mental and moral qualities and circumstances of life of each of its earthly personalities. As one thinks and acts, so does one shape one’s life and destiny. There is no escape possible from the effects we produce

by our actions except by and through restoration of the harmony of life we disturbed by our experiencing them.

That which survives every personality at the end of its mortal life in each incarnation is only such of its thoughts and aspirations during life which are spiritual in quality, such as, unselfish love, nobler aspirations and feelings, pursuit of ennobling arts and abstract knowledge, and an innate *belief in immortality and after-life*. Such finer mental energies of the man who departs are assimilated to the Divine Ego, and form the basis for a subjective post-mortem life of uninterrupted bliss, called *Devachan*. In that state the soul is not aware that it died but feels that it is the same personality it was on earth, and imbued with all that was the highest, happiest and the noblest moments of its life. After enjoying the state of bliss for a length of time commensurate with its merit in earth-life, and assimilating the idealized experiences, which add on to others it had acquired in previous lives, the Ego returns to another incarnation, in conditions and circumstances determined by the unerring justice of the Karmic law.

Therefore, the nobler aspects of every averagely good man and woman of the world do survive the death of the body. There is a natural devotion of the human Soul towards its parent source, the God in all beings. This is centripetal force. On the other hand, there is also the out-going impulse in the Soul to seek life’s experiences in incarnate life under Karmic and evolutionary law, which again has its source in the Divine Spirit. This is the centrifugal force. As long as harmony is maintained in life between these two opposite life energies, man cannot die entirely in each of his long cycles of reincarnations, but something of each of the personalities survives to become immortal. Like so many beads strung upon a string, these idealized experiences of each of its many lives are strung, so to say, upon the *Sutra-atman*, the “Thread Soul,” the Immortal Divine Individuality. The *law of spiritual continuity* is thus maintained, till, at long last, through assimilation of manifold experiences of all aspects of manifested universe, the Ego flowers into conscious

divinity, realizing its oneness with the Supreme Spirit, partakes of its omniscience and omnipotence. Human man becomes Divine Man and lives in Spirit.

As long as this law of spiritual continuity is conscientiously observed in life, one maintains an inner psychic communication—called *Antahkarana* in Theosophical parlance—with the divine spark which lingers in the depths of one's consciousness, however faintly. Such are on the road to conscious immortality, Nirvana, however far in time, through ages, the consummation may be. This is the path described in the Upanishads metaphorically as the *Path of the Moon* thus :

But those who depart in smoke, at night, during the fortnight of the waning moon, proceed for a while to the regions of the moon and again return to mortal birth. (*Gita*, VIII)

This is called the path of darkness; darkness, because it is the result of spiritual ignorance, *avidya*, which binds the Soul through illusions of matter to mortality of conditioned existence, though something of the personality survives bodily death.

But the Wise people who strictly adhere to the law of spiritual continuity, carefully observing the law of harmony of life throughout their long course of Soul-pilgrimage will, at last, after many births, through cumulative assimilation of experiences of life, grow in knowledge, wisdom and power, in their Soul-life, and are able to overcome illusions of matter at a certain critical stage of their evolutionary development, and consciously unite with their Divine Consciousness. Thus they pass on from darkness to light, from death to conscious immortality. This is the higher path, which Souls finally, after many rebirths, evolve into. It is called the *Path of the Sun* :

Fire, light, day, the fortnight of the waxing moon, six months of the sun's northern course—those going then and knowing the Supreme Spirit, men go to the Supreme. (*ibid.*)

This is the end towards which all souls are progressing. The

symbolical meaning of the metaphors used is evident to intuitive students, who will not make the mistake of taking the symbols literally. Teachers say that the seasons, lunar phases, sun's movements, etc., referred to in the verses are symbolical representations of condition of Soul and to the various channels in the body, connected with the seven plexuses and the other minor ones, by which Souls exit at death, corresponding to the various appropriate stages of its development and progress in man's inner life. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-gita*, pp. 151 & 152)

These are the two paths by which Egos progress—the one by which one returns to earth-life again and again, gathering and assimilating experiences from each, and the other by which one, after quitting the body at death, returns no more but attains to conscious immortality in spirit.

But there is a third path, which is warned against by Teachers, which is *the path of annihilation of the soul*. It is spiritual death of a person before his body dies, which results from negligence in following the laws of spiritual life on earth. In such a case, after many lives of such negligence, the human consciousness becomes divorced entirely from Divine spark and nothing of the man will survive at death and his personal consciousness is annihilated. Such a man may be highly intellectual with many distinctions and achievements in his worldly life, but he is spiritually dead. “Spiritual death results from disobedience of the laws of spiritual life” (*Isis*, I, 318). Even then, teaches Theosophy, the self-condemned Soul may repent and re-establish the broken inner psychical connection, *Antahkarana*, which connects the personal Mind-Soul with its Divine parent Soul, with supreme effort, sacrifices and suffering. But the more one deviates from the laws of harmony of life the more difficult it becomes for the human Soul to regain ground. The path of annihilation is vividly described in the Sixteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita* thus :

Confounded by all manners of desires, entangled in the

net of delusion, firmly attached to the gratification of their desires, they descend into hell. Esteeming themselves very highly, full of pride and ever in pursuit of riches, they perform worship with hypocrisy and not even according to ritual, but only for outward show. Indulging in pride, selfishness, ostentation, power, lust, and anger, they detest me who am in their bodies and in the bodies of others. Wherefore I continually hurl these cruel haters, the lowest of men, into wombs of infernal nature in this world of rebirth. And they being doomed in each succeeding rebirth, never come to me, O son of Kunti, but go at length to the lowest region.

The Teacher explains in the footnote that this is final annihilation of those who deny their own souls and thus lose it, and that it is worse than the hell spoken of for there is no return. Hell is no spatial location outside of us; it is rather this earth-life itself, man's own intensely negative mental state, made sorrowful by man himself by his own ignorant actions. Lord Buddha teaches that if one is slack in doing good one's mind will naturally incline to delight in evil by the impulse of lower passions, and that, restraining the evil thoughts, one must hasten towards the good. The practice of the law of virtue, which is declared in the holy writ, the sacred scriptures of all nations, is said by every Teacher to be obligatory on every human being. On the other hand, conscientious observance of the laws of higher life leads man to the highest path—emancipation from ignorance which is death.

Let us then acquire the right knowledge of the spirit of what is declared in the Holy Books and learn to discriminate between what is fit and what is unfit to be done, and constantly endeavour to bring our thoughts and actions every day, every moment of our lives, to conform with the immutable laws of spiritual life. This alone, and nothing else, can lead us on the path of true happiness and highest progress.

## 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:** How can we overcome the given state of mind? What is the reason for dissatisfaction of human mind?

**Answer:** Probably the question implies “the state of mind at a given time”—happy, sad, excited or otherwise. The simple principle is, “two thoughts cannot occupy the mind at the same time.” The mind must be diverted and made to dwell on something which one likes, or something which tends to elevate the consciousness. Mr. Judge suggests reading of books or listening to music which one has by experience found to be elevating. Sometimes taking few deep breaths can hugely calm the mind. There is a method of meditation called “*preksha dhyana*” where one is supposed to take the position of an observer; and from that detached position, observe the thoughts and feelings arising in the mind, and let them pass. When we do not lend energy to thoughts, they do not inhere. Another way is to analyze the nature of the problem or anxiety or pain and decide to take necessary steps to overcome it, if possible. Having done that we should resolve to dismiss them from the mind. Mr. Judge suggests to someone who was experiencing depressing feeling, to participate in the joy of others. Buddhists call it *Mudita* or sympathetic joy. If the pain or difficulty is such that there is no alternative but to live with it, then one must accept the situation and move on. Enormous and deep faith in the working of the law of Karma is very essential. “All things work together for the good, for him who loves the Law.” Regular practice of meditation helps one to detach the mind, at will, from the subject or object and put it on the desired subject. There is no short-cut to mind-control.

As to dissatisfaction of the mind, when mind is attached to *Kama* or passions and desires, we have strong likes and dislikes. When things and people are not to our liking we are dissatisfied. When people do not live up to our expectations, again we are dissatisfied. We put ourselves at the centre, and want everything to adjust as per our wish and will. When personal will is frustrated there is great dissatisfaction. “The way to inward peace is in all things to conform to the pleasure and disposition of the Divine Will. Such as would have all things succeed and come to pass according to their own fancy, are not come to know this way; and therefore lead a harsh and bitter life; always restless and out of humour, without treading the way of peace.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 36*)

There could be one more reason for dissatisfaction, and that is when a person genuinely aspires to live the higher life. Then, he or she is not satisfied with the ordinary, worldly things. This is called the “Divine Discontent,” which arises from the feeling that there is more to life than meets the eye. To him the “sense of Space is like the bars of an iron cage” and the “passage of Time is as the stroke of a sledge-hammer,” and then follows the genuine quest to find out the purpose of life, and to live the higher life.

**Question:** Does one’s behaviour always reflect one’s mentality?

**Answer:** Mentality means mental character or disposition. We speak of a person as having stingy mentality or generous mentality. We speak of people as being narrow-minded and broad-minded. We are born with a certain mentality, and we change it for the better or worse by the kind of thoughts we entertain. There is the aphorism: “Sow a thought, reap an act; Sow an act, reap a habit; Sow a habit, reap a character; Sow a character and reap a Destiny.” Lord Buddha says, “All that we are is the result of what we have thought: all that we are is founded on our thoughts and formed of our thoughts.” Thus, our actions are based on our thoughts. However, if a person acts on the spur of the moment, without deliberation or thinking over, then his behaviour will not reflect his mentality. A person who

murders another in the mood of rage, may be otherwise a mild person. Likewise, people can *pretend* to be good when they are not *really good* and they can keep up the façade for a long time and fool many people. People can pretend to be highly pious, religious and spiritual by externally doing all that is required to earn that label, but may not really be spiritual and pious. H.P.B. calls this Cant or insincere moral talk and considers it as an unpardonable sin. Ideally, of course, our behaviour should reflect our mentality, and we call such a person “transparent.”

We may learn a lesson to not judge by appearances. Even when the outward action is the same, the inner attitude and the motive with which it is done may be different. There is the instance of three brick-layers engaged in constructing a building. One person when asked, what he was doing, said that he was laying down the bricks. The other said that he was constructing a wall. The third, however, replied that he was building a church! “Whether a temple is intended or a building for a saloon, similar work has to be performed; so actions are no safe basis to judge from,” advises Mr. Crosbie.

**Question:** What do we mean by “happiness”?

**Answer:** Happiness, as obtains in the world is a subjective term. We mistake pleasures for happiness. Anything that pleases our senses, mind and heart gives us happiness. There is an instructive story in *Eternal Verities* for children. A little girl was unhappy and she asks the worm how to be happy and was told to stick her nose into the ground and wriggle it. The squirrel told her to leap from tree to tree in order to be happy, but nothing gave her happiness. Each one had his own point of view and way to become happy. It was when she went and helped her mother in the kitchen that she was truly happy. Happiness is the state of mind, and as Lincoln points out, “Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” In the midst of pain and difficulties if we are able to remain calm, and learn the necessary lesson, we experience higher kind of happiness. There is joy beyond pleasure. “The joy of Life

is ours only when we are able to distil out of all experiences, pleasurable or painful, the perfume they contain. Real happiness is above pleasure as it is above pain, for it is made of the essence of both. To enjoy life, therefore, we need to go through every experience, pleasant and unpleasant, with graciousness and equanimity,” writes Shri B.P. Wadia in *Thus Have I Heard*. True happiness is unconditional happiness, and that is often described as one of the attributes of Deity. When our *chit*, or consciousness is *en rapport* with Divine consciousness we experience this bliss. It is also described as *sahaj ananda*, which is the feeling of bliss that comes from the deeper layers of our being and is not dependent on any external “thing” or condition.

**Question:** What is the use of physical life on the “Path” towards perfection?

**Answer:** The body is considered to be the prime instrument in reaching the spiritual goal. We were not always in physical body, but we will always be in some or the other kind of material body. Mr. Judge says that the goal of evolution is to know that we are divine while we are in the body. For this we need to overcome the illusion of matter or *Maya*. It is material life which produces the illusion of separateness, and all the trials of higher life are ultimately geared towards realizing that we are all one, and that there is no such thing as separateness. We see that matter is essential to see the light. A bulb becomes incandescent because the filament offers a certain amount of resistance. It offers just enough resistance for the bulb to be lighted up. So also the personality must be so moulded that it becomes a useful instrument for the Soul within and not obstruction or “dead weight”—like the total resistance of the filament which altogether stops the current from flowing. Soul and body must work in harmony. It is only when soul passes through the envelopes of matter and gains experience that it can attain to knowledge and perfection.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

When Dr. Eben Alexander a neurosurgeon found himself in a coma, he experienced things he never thought possible—a journey to the afterlife. He has narrated his experience in his book, *Proof of Heaven*, and the excerpts of which have been published in *Newsweek* for October 15, 2012. In the fall of 2008, he woke up with intense headache, and within hours his entire cortex—the part of the brain that controls thought and emotion, and that in essence makes us human—had shut down. He seemed to have contracted very rare bacterial meningitis. While he was in coma for seven days, he experienced something so profound that it gave him a scientific reason to believe in consciousness after death. He mentions that while the neurons of his cortex were stunned to complete inactivity, his brain-free consciousness journeyed to another, larger dimension of the universe: a universe he never believed existed. But that experience has convinced him that we are much more than our brains and bodies. Death is not the end of consciousness, but rather a chapter in a vast and incalculably positive journey. He admits that there have been others before him, who experienced that consciousness exists beyond the body. But his experience was unique in that it happened while his cortex was completely shut down, and not while there was partial malfunctioning of cortex. According to the current medical understanding of the brain and mind, there is absolutely no way he could have experienced even a dim and limited consciousness during the period of his coma.

He saw pink-white clouds and very tall, transparent shimmering winged beings, who were quite simply different from anything known on earth. They were more advanced, higher forms. Seeing and hearing were not separate in this place where he was. “I could hear the visual beauty of the silvery bodies of those scintillating beings above, and I could see the surging joyful perfection of what they sang.” You could not look at anything in that world, because the word “at” implies a separation which did not exist there. He

became aware of the presence of a woman with him, and she spoke without using any words. The message ran something like this: “You are loved and cherished, dearly, forever. You have nothing to fear. There is nothing you can do wrong.” When he put questions he got the answers, in which thoughts entered him directly, and he understood the concepts instantly and effortlessly, which would have taken him years to fully grasp in his earth life. His experience could be best described as being in a place of inky darkness that was also brimming over with light. “I intend to spend the rest of my life investigating the true nature of consciousness and making the fact that we are more, much more than our physical brains as clear as I can, both to my fellow scientists and to people at large,” writes Dr. Eben Alexander.

What is man? There are three possibilities. (1) Is man just a body? (2) Is he a body that has a soul? (3) Is he a soul that has [or uses] a body? Our everyday experience shows that man is not just a body. If we accept that man *is* a soul, then what is the relation between the soul and the body? William James pointed out that we can say that body *produces* life [soul], *or*, that the body *reflects* life. He gives an analogy. Light is produced by a candle; if the candle is put out, its light disappears. But light is reflected by a mirror; if the mirror is taken away the light still continues. So also we may suppose that the body reflects the soul, therefore it is rational to believe that soul can exist apart from the body. We may argue that we do not have a *direct* experience of the soul existing independent of the body, but so also, we have no *direct* experience of electrons and protons in an atom.

However, there are innumerable instances of people who have had OBEs [Out-of-the-Body-Experiences]—in which they describe rushing out of the body, observing the body from a distance and re-entering it—showing that soul can exist independent of the body. Both OBEs and NDEs (or Near-Death-Experiences) go to show that there exists consciousness independent of the body. Brain is the instrument of the mind. The depth and variety of brain

convolutions are due to the presence of mind and not the cause of mind. Mind is not the epi-phenomenon of matter.

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In a stupendous breakthrough, three Russian scientists have stumbled upon the secrets of organ regeneration and eternal youth. Dr. Hazel Wardha, a Ph.D. in English literature from Monash University, Melbourne, and a certified Senior Pranic healer in Australia, throws light on the work of Dr. Grigori Grabovoi, Dr. Arcady Petrov and Igor Arepjev, in an interview with Shivi Verma of *Life Positive*. She points out that in cell regeneration, whole organs, that have been surgically removed, can be regenerated and made fully functional. Women can regenerate their uteruses and have babies again! Not only internal organs but teeth, hair and other cells anywhere in the body too can be regenerated. “Cells have a consciousness, which can be influenced positively or negatively by human thought. Thought when combined with strong intention and specific techniques, can direct powerful energy to alter the programmes and information in the cells and get positive results...The combination of subtle energy, concentration, intention, inner vision and specific techniques positively affect the consciousness of a person and his/her cells convert the new knowledge into cell regeneration,” explains Dr. Wardha. All the three scientists possess highly developed clairvoyant faculty with which they can observe the internal processes occurring in the cells, and are able to address and correct the cause of disease in the body. Dr. Petrov describes in his trilogy, *Creation of the Universe* that he was able to regenerate his gall bladder, which had been surgically removed many years ago, within two weeks. The whole process was ultra-sound monitored by a radiologist, which took place during three sessions.

Does this have scientific basis? They state that they cannot explain the occurrence of such phenomena. It seems that there are amazing

powers of recuperation and rejuvenation within the human body. If nature can regenerate itself, why can't we? They are of the opinion that we, as the children of the Creator are also co-creators. Man can triumph over disease, ageing and death. "The body is the 'temple of the soul,' and the powers of the Divine are inherent in us which needs to be developed. As we become aware of our spiritual origins, we move into higher states of consciousness and become capable of performing miraculous actions which ordinarily seemed impossible. And miracles occur when we work in synchrony with nature," explains Dr. Wardha. (*Life Positive*, October 2012)

Every cell and atom is endowed with its own life, consciousness, will, intelligence, memory and instinct to its own degree and plane of perception. Body is like mother earth in that it is made up of a number of infinitesimal "lives." Their action forced forward by the Life energy—called *Prana* or *Jiva*—will explain active existence and physical death, writes Mr. Judge in *The Ocean of Theosophy*. These cells or rather the "lives" forming the cells are continually impressed by our thoughts, feelings and desires. Our thoughts affect both our physical and our astral bodies.

When some organ is surgically removed, the astral counterpart of the organ still remain intact. The regeneration of cells and organs of the body could probably be explained on the basis of the power of thought, Will and Imagination. Imagination is the most useful faculty with a dynamic force. The Imagination is the picture-making power of the human mind. In the ordinary average human person it has not enough training or force to be more than a sort of dream, but it may be trained. A person with trained imagination can make an actual image or a form in the astral substance, which may be used as a mould or matrix. Will and thought can be used to clothe the form with the matter.

*Itchasakti* is the power of Will and *Kriyasakti* is the power of thought. *Kriyasakti* is defined as "the mysterious power of thought which enables it to produce external, perceptible, phenomenal results by its own inherent energy. The ancients held that any idea will

manifest itself externally if one's attention is deeply concentrated upon it." Similarly we can obtain the desired results by the strong power of will.

The article, "*The Elixir of Life*" explains that both astral and physical bodies are made up of atoms or "lives." When we purify our thoughts and desires, we are able to give pure impulse to these "lives," leading to refinement of the matter which composes our body. Following the law of affinity, refined atoms will be attracted to our body. In an ethereal form there is less friction among the atoms leading to reduced wear and tear of the body. This is the key to longevity.

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The family that eats together stays together, says the author Laurie David in her recent book *The Family Dinner: Great Ways to Connect with Your Kids, One Meal at a Time*. Sitting down on a dinner table and having a leisurely, engaging talk with family members has become a rarity. Most of us are so tired at the end of the day that we look for a quick dinner, and then hit the pillow as soon as possible. With our ever-escalating pressures at work and home, finding enough time to sit at the dinner table to share a meal and talk to each other has become an "endangered ritual," says a documentary film producer (Oscar-winning *An Inconvenient Truth*).

"It's the dinner table where we learn our parents' values, where we practice how to listen to others, what portions to take, how to take turns, etc. It is also the place where we learn about our family history, about our grandparents, for example, that may be told to us through stories and anecdotes from their lives," writes Laurie David. We can never forget the taste of the food cooked by our mother because the taste of the food and the love that we felt while sharing a meal during the childhood stays with us for a long time. There still are busy people who feel that it is important to sit together for dinner to preserve the sanctity of a marriage and family. A businessman says that we should make sure that we bond over dinner, and the

family rule is to never discuss work at the dinner table.

Like food is sustenance for our bodies, mealtimes are sustenance for our family. “Family dinner should be about quality time spent together with no television blaring, no Blackberrys to check. Everyone should be present physically and mentally,” says sociologist Nandini Sardesai. “A study published last year by the National Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA), at Columbia University, reveals that teenagers who eat dinner with their families are less likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or use drugs,” writes Shikha Shah. (*Times Life! (Sunday Times of India)*, October 21, 2012)

Human beings need company of other human beings, notwithstanding all assertions for independence. Many young people want their own “space.” In the modern family life and social set up, as one grows up one tends to drift apart. A demanding job or profession leaves little time to experience loneliness. But then there is the need to *share* our frustrations, disappointments and achievements; and communications through electrical gadgets, mobiles, web cameras and e-mails, cannot give the same joy that we experience in a person-to-person contact. Eating food with others at dinner or having lunch with the colleagues in the office gives us an excellent opportunity of sharing our thoughts, our anxieties, our ideas, and of strengthening our bonds with them. When we eat our food alone, we tend to gulp it down hurriedly, as some task to be completed. The effect produced on the body tends to be different when we savour the food we eat, and that happens when we eat in company.

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ONE of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon, instead of enjoying the roses blooming outside our windows today.

—DALE CARNEGIE