

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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DIVINE VIRTUES

VIRAGA—PERFECT DETACHMENT

THE FOURTH Paramita is *Viraga*, described as, “indifference to pleasure and to pain, illusion conquered, truth alone perceived.” Following the first three Paramitas, we have gained love, harmony and patience, and now stand at the middle point of the Paramita Path. So far, the mind has been taught to express love in charity, to speak and act in harmony, to learn to wait, patiently. But, Mind should also be free from the senses, turbulent emotions, uncontrolled speech and instinctive actions, above all, it should be made free from illusion. *Viraga* is the golden key which helps the aspirant to pass the gate of temptations—temptations, which tend to ensnare the personal man.

Viraga means without *raga* or attachments: no attractions to things, and also no aversion. The exercise consists in rising above the pairs of opposites. *Viraga* is definitely *not* indifference to the world. *Viraga* is described as “Higher Indifference,” to distinguish it from lower, *tamasic* indifference. Running away from the field of duty and abandoning the works to be performed is the result of *tamasic* indifference. A so-called Hindu *Sannyasi* or Muslim Fakir claims to be *Vairagi*. Often it is false *vairagya*. The higher indifference is the capacity to *evaluate* every man, every object, every event at its true value, its correct worth. *Viraga*, or dispassionate awareness allows us to look at everything and

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

Vairagya is *mental detachment* from all connections with the world. At times, we give up the desire *outwardly* but within there is longing for sweets, cakes, alcohol, movies, etc. As one controls the senses, one must also control the mind and not indulge in mental gratification by fantasizing. *Gita* calls such a person, false pietist of bewildered soul. It is important to recognize that *ultimately*, it is the *mind*, and not the senses that lead us astray.

The Theosophical student is not likely to fall prey to hypocrisy, but very likely he will come under the baneful influence of false *vairagya*: the indifference towards the world of objects, of senses, which he sees as a womb of pain and suffering. It would be disastrous to try and obliterate every sense of pain and say that one would be unaffected by pain. It is a mark of hypocritical pretension and not of spiritual progress to say that one could see his children, wife, or parents die and not feel anything whatever. Feelings are an integral part of the constitution of man, which must be controlled and not destroyed. If we wish to experience peace and joy of life we must refrain from closing the “gates of feeling.” “He who determines that nothing shall make him suffer, does but cloak himself in a profound and chilly selfishness. It will protect him from pain; it will also separate him from pleasure,” says *Through the Gates of Gold*. The great pain and desolation that he experienced on death of his beloved friend, led St. Augustine to conclude that if love is to be a blessing, not a misery, it must be for the only Beloved who will never pass away, *i.e.*, God. Prof. C. S. Lewis comments that to love at all is to be vulnerable. You may wrap your heart carefully with hobbies and little luxuries, avoiding all entanglements. No doubt, it will be safe in the casket of your selfishness—safe, dark, motionless and airless, but it will also

become impenetrable and irredeemable.

We cannot appreciate life by remaining at the periphery or know about the depths of the ocean by sitting at the shore and only wetting our feet, for the fear of being drowned. The universe exists for the experience and emancipation of the soul. We are expected to blend the capacities of a stoic and a voluptuary. “He must be capable of testing and valuing to its most delicate fraction every joy existence has to give; and he must be capable of denying himself all pleasures, and that without suffering from the denial,” says *Light on the Path*. In other words, we should be able to enjoy the pleasures and yet not become *dependent* on them. “We must be able to use things when we need them and then relinquish them without regret when they have outlived their usefulness. We must be able to appreciate and enjoy the places where we tarry, and yet pass on without anguish when we are called elsewhere,” writes Peace Pilgrim.

A spiritual person is not a stoic. On the contrary, he feels more keenly the pain and pleasure, and yet does not allow them to shake him or influence his decisions. He is able to achieve this by allowing only a part of the incarnated mind to experience the emotion, while keeping another part detached, and thus assuming the position of an observer. A certain amount of detachment is necessary to extract lessons out of our experiences. Our involvement with an event is like raw material and reflection upon it is like processing of raw material. We process it the best, when we are detached. The more detached we are, the less is the time gap between experiencing and analyzing. A time comes, when part of us remains detached and observes—making it possible to analyze and experience simultaneously. We can learn to experience pain and pleasure with detached concern. There must be dissociation of “I” from happiness and unhappiness. How long can the thoughts remain happy or unhappy without the co-operation of “I”? When difficulties come and they are regarded as opportunities for learning lessons, we will give right response to them. When we learn to look at them dispassionately, using *Viveka-vairagya*, we will not make

mountains out of molehills and see them for what they are, and extract the right lesson.

Indifference to pleasure and pain means transcending both pleasure and pain, and to achieve that, we are asked to “wear out,” first pleasure and then pain. What does “wearing out” pleasure mean? In the systematic search for pleasure, the ego learns not to seek pleasure by hurting someone. Then, one learns to sacrifice legitimate pleasures for others’ sake. Then one learns to analyze pleasures, and appreciate that pleasures are short-lived. Then the person may reach a stage when he is able to say, “I have seen all sorts of pleasures, and I am not going to go searching for them. It is fine if they come, and it is perfectly alright if they do not come my way.” Simultaneously, there is also refinement of pleasures. As we progress, the psychic nature looks for refined food. For instance, we would prefer quiet and solitude of mountains and seashore, and proximity to nature than activities and pleasures that involve going to crowded places. There is attraction for artistic pleasures such as music, painting, drama, literature, etc., but as our taste refines we look for more depth and substance in these pleasures to satisfy our psychic nature. The test of inner progress is whether there is an easy acceptance when any or all such pleasures are denied. We are so dependent on outside things and people for our happiness that if any of them is missing we feel thoroughly miserable.

Viraga or true detachment should lead to conquering of illusion and perception of Truth or Wisdom, and it comes through spiritual insight. To acquire spiritual insight one must understand and realize the three characteristics of the conditioned existence: All conditioned existence is *Dukkha* or suffering. All Conditioned existence is impermanent. All conditioned existence is devoid of true selfhood. We see that the process of birth, growing up, old age up to death is full of suffering. There is suffering arising from our likes and dislikes. It does not mean that there are no pleasant experiences in the world. But it means that at the bottom of even

pleasant experiences, there is pain. There is concealed suffering. Something may be a source of pleasure but it may be tied up with anxiety, as we are afraid of losing it. It could be a person, a thing, or position or power. The predicament of the person who enjoys position or power is described in Buddhism by giving the illustration of a hawk. Suppose there is a hawk that takes a piece of meat and flies away holding it in his beak. Soon, hundreds of other hawks will be seen flying after him. Some peck at his body, some at his eyes, trying to take away that piece. In the same way, possessing so many pleasures in this highly competitive world is like holding a piece of meat. To look at, a person may be happy, surrounded by all the comforts of life, but there may be underlying anxiety and suffering. There is always *potential suffering* attached to everything in this world. Something may be a source of joy, today, but sooner or later, it may have to be given up.

There is *vairagya* or detachment which comes and goes. It is called *smashan vairagya*, the kind of detachment which arises when one sees the dead body burning in a crematorium. But on returning home, one gets engrossed in the worldly activities and attractions within few days. Often it is extreme pleasures which lead to satiety and that in turn leads to detachment. But more often than not it is pain which leads to true detachment. There are incidents which shatter our faith and jolt us out of our complacency. There is the story of King Bhartrihari, who had obtained from a Rishi, a fruit that could bestow upon the eater peace and immortality. The King thought that the only person who deserved this fruit was his beautiful wife, whom he loved dearly. The queen, however, gave the fruit to her paramour, who was none other than the charioteer, who used to take her for drives now and then. The charioteer loved a prostitute and gave the fruit to her. The prostitute thought that the only person who deserved the fruit was King Bhartrihari himself, and so she gave the fruit to him. The King was amazed to receive back the fruit that he had given to his queen. But then he recalled what his brother had told him, that the queen was an

unchaste lady and that her lover was King's charioteer. At that time the King had not believed his brother, as his wife had prevailed upon him, and had exiled his brother from the kingdom. But now, after due investigation he realized that the charge brought against his queen by his brother was true and that he had been fooled by his wife to exile his dear brother. The King was overcome by deep sense of sadness and detachment, realizing the hollowness of human relationships. Leaving the worldly life, he meditated for several years and attained to Self-knowledge. He wrote a book, which is known as "Bhartrihari's Vairagya Satkam," or the "Hundred Verses of Renunciation," reading which one is induced to renounce worldly attachments and lead the life of a recluse.

The inner spiritual life cannot truly commence without a base, a foundation of *Vairagya*. *Viraga* may be regarded as the starting Paramita. What accomplishes the transition from being ordinary good man to being a spiritual man is the cultivation of detached-attachment or detached concern. The *Gita* advocates performance of the acts of *Dana*, *Tapas* and *Yagna* only in the Seventeenth Chapter, but the very Second Chapter of the *Gita* demands detachment—which includes impersonal love, cultivated by overcoming self-identifying attachment to one's wife, children and household. We expand the circle of love by overcoming likes and dislikes.

True spiritual progress is not possible without "mental abnegation," which is renouncing attachment to the results of our action. "It is not ours to say what shall be the result of an action; the Law will bring about a result much better, perhaps, than we had imagined. If the results, if the passing daily circumstances, are not those we expected, then by means of Devotion we accept them as just what the Law intended. But if we fix our desire on accomplishing even a seeming good result, we are bound by that desire, no matter whether our wish is accomplished or not," writes Mr. Judge. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 68-69)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT GET YOUR LUGGAGE READY

ONE NIGHT I seemed to see a great and populous country. It teemeth with life and wealth, yet no sound, no motion arose from it. It was a petrified land. Rich harvests turned the earth to gold, but no response came forth. The march of the seasons was arrested. Never was land more fertile, more beautiful. It needed but the heart and hand of man to continue its prosperity. High mountains, too, were there, where the gods abode, hovering so near to men that I cried aloud to see these divine opportunities neglected or forgotten.

Pondering upon a sight so mournful, I saw that the inhabitants of this country had all a strange kind of mental atrophy which annulled all efforts, frustrated every activity. Surrounded by everything which could secure usefulness, happiness, and fullest development of their natures, they did not know how to set about securing these ends. In an intellectual darkness, they were dimly conscious of their wretched condition, and called for someone to come and remove the torpor of their minds, to tell them how they might enter into this splendid Life and possess it. The anguish of this paralyzed and waiting multitude was so great, that I too began to share their pain and their expectancy as I looked on, and I called aloud anxiously, "Will no one come to help them?"

Some unseen person promptly answered me, "Helpers have already set out for this country, which is called 'The Future.'" "Will they soon arrive?" I asked. My informant replied, "Look, and judge for yourself."

At this I felt impelled to turn around and saw great masses of clouds breaking open before me, making a rift through which I could look. The view was so misty that I understood, in some mystic way, that I was about to see into the Past. What I perceived was a long railway train starting on a journey to some very distant point. There was great confusion about it. Some of the travellers were leaning out of the slowly moving train, gesticulating towards huge

piles of luggage left behind. Others were endeavouring to turn the air brakes. Some had reached the engineer, and were arguing briskly, urging him to stop the train or to go back. Many others slept, and by their feverish rest I could see that their thoughts were on the baggage vans. Meanwhile, back in the station, were travellers absorbed in checking and marking their luggage, or wandering about half dazed, trying to find their personal effects, and to keep them distinct from the rest. People were arriving, too, in a constant stream, belated by their overladen coaches, and, in far homes, I saw others bustling hither and thither, packing and repacking. All of these were so absorbed that they did not know the hour was past, or that the train had set out for the land where they were all bound to go.

“Are these the helpers?” I asked. My unseen friend said that they were.

“But why do they not make haste when they are sorely needed?”

“You see they are willing enough, but their luggage detains them.”

“Could they not do with less, and arrange it more rapidly! Or even discard much of it, which seems to consist of mere personal luxuries fostered by habit?”

“They could indeed, but this they do not understand.”

“And will no one reach that unfortunate country?” I exclaimed.

“Yes; the train will arrive there, but it will be detained. And many of the people in it are so harassed by the thoughts of their lost or strayed luggage, or so preoccupied in keeping it together, that they will not be able to set to work promptly on their arrival. Thus they will not resist the peculiar lethargy which prevails in that land, and they will swell the numbers of the unfortunates, who, like them, originally started out hoping to reach a happy future.”

“Are there, then, no persons of clear and unencumbered minds,” I asked, “who can be of use to the rest?”

“Indeed there are, but they are comparatively few, and are swallowed up in that great crowd. There in the train you may see

an occasional traveller who is tranquil, whose thought is fixed upon his errand. There are such also in the city, and they are putting forth all their strength. Who shall say whether they can do much? What is needed is that the great majority of men should try with one accord to think of The Future, to prepare to enlighten and free it. They cannot attain the great prizes here and now, but they can do something; they can prepare for it.”

This person spoke so quietly that his even tones annoyed me. “And you,” said I, “you appear to take all this suffering and possible disaster very coolly.”

“I am not ‘cool’ as you say, but I am calm. I am obliged to be, for I have seen this sight for many an age; I shall see it for many more. In all time the sad lesson repeats itself. What you have seen is what takes place age after age. The waiting races are always delayed by the impediments of those who start out to reinforce and to help them.”

“And what luggage is this that they cherish so much as to let it stand between them and their highest impulses, their noblest endeavour? Why do they not cast it aside?”

“This luggage is needed by every traveller if he would not arrive in that distant country utterly helpless, to be himself a burden to the community. Know the truth, my friend. This luggage, which every man and woman carries, is *the mind*. They cannot cast it away. What they need to do is to set it in order; to cast all useless thoughts and energies, all personal mental habits aside; to concentrate and strengthen it; above all, to hold it in readiness to start on the journey to the Future, so that when they arrive they may at once begin, without loss of time, to redeem and lift that Age. Then the journey will be more swiftly made; then there will be no such long waits between stations, no obstructing of trains. I and my companions are set apart to endeavour to teach men this; we learned it through our own experience many cycles ago. And in your age as in ours, men are slow to comprehend; slower even, for in yours the darkness has settled down like a pall. Yet Hope is the

very nature of Life itself, and hence, we hope.”

He said no more to me then, and the vision came to an end. I saw how true was all that I had heard, and each day bears fresh witness to its truth.

The mind of man is a tremendous Force, capable of engendering many energies, of various grades, correlating and interacting. The highest of these act on every plane; the lower upon lower planes only, where they tend to beget obstructive consequences by, so to say, intensifying or thickening—condensing too—into gross and material strata, which greatly impede the entrance of higher force to our plane, and isolate it and us by degrees.

What then determines the quality of a mental energy, so that it becomes of a “high” or “low” order? Its relation to the personal self determines it. The free will of man has its point of departure in the mind. He can generate thoughts which, by concentration upon, or relation to the self, tend to contract his sphere (in more senses than one), and to preserve his Being intact in the life of separateness. Or he can evolve thoughts which relate to the whole world; which flow out towards the Unity, and, by their action and interaction upon the highest forces, a part of which they are, tend to dissolve his personal life as such, to unite all his principles to their cosmic sources, and reveal the beauty, power, and wisdom of Being to his enraptured soul.

Very many of us can find but little work to do for Humanity, though work is here, pressing enough, tangible enough. But circumstances of iron control many, and these are Karma. What each one can do, however, is to purify the mind, and to develop in it such affinities, such tendencies and habits, as may be drawn up into the higher nature. These, then, will guide our soul’s course after death, leading the Ego to reincarnate there where it can at once begin the work for Humanity. The predominating love spun by our nature is like the stray end of the spider’s web, cast loose upon the air. It reaches across to some branch to which it instantly adheres, and upon it the Ego, the mysterious weaver of Life’s web,

crosses the gulf we call Death, and finds each life in strict continuity with the preceding one. These few thoughts cannot be better illustrated, or more fitly closed, than by an extract from a private letter written by H. P. Blavatsky:

“What is this about the soldier not being free?” Of course no soldier can be free to move about his physical body wherever he likes. But what has the esoteric teaching to do with the *outward man*? A soldier may be stuck to his sentry-box like a barnacle to its ship, and the soldier’s Ego be free to go where it likes, and think what it likes best. * * No man is required to carry a burden heavier than he can bear, nor do more than it is possible for him to do. * * If one cannot, owing to circumstances or his position in life, become a full adept in this existence, let him prepare his mental luggage for the next, so as to be ready at the first call, when he is once more reborn. What one has to do before he pledges himself irretrievably, is to probe one’s nature to the bottom, for self-discipline is based on self-knowledge. It is said somewhere that self-discipline often leads one to a state of self-confidence which becomes vanity and pride in the long run. I say, fool is the man who says so. This may happen only when our motives are of a worldly character, or selfish. Otherwise, self-confidence is the first step to that kind of will which will make a mountain move. “To thine own self be true, and it must, follow, as the night the day, thou cans’t not then be false to any man.”

“The question is whether Polonius meant this for worldly wisdom, or for occult knowledge; and, by ‘own self,’ the *false* Ego (the terrestrial personality), or the spark in us which is but the reflection of the One Universal Ego.” It appears, then, that our best course of action is to get our mental luggage ready, and especially to free it from the thought of self, or the “terrestrial personality” living in a dream of separation.

(Reprinted (abridged) from *The Path* magazine for March 1889, written by J. Campbell VerPlanck)

STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

LIVING THE HIGHER LIFE—I

[Adapted from lectures on the *Bhagavad-Gita* delivered at One West Sixty Seventh Street, New York City, October 1927–March 1928.]

“SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE includes every action. Inquirers ought to read the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It will give them food for centuries if they read with spiritual eyes at all. Underneath its shell is the living spirit that will light us all. I read it ten times before I saw things that I did not see at first. In the night the ideas contained in it are digested and returned partly next day to the mind. It is the study of adepts,” writes Mr. Judge (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 21). The title of the article and the quotation from Mr. Judge gives clear indication of the importance and purpose of the study of the *Gita*. The book, like any other book or object in the world, has dual nature. It is a Soul, an entity embodied in a physical tangible form. To study the mere form side, would require long years of study, reading and hard work, connected with all the scholastic commentaries. But studying the form side of the book, would not give us what we are really trying to derive from the *Gita*, that is a guide, a chart, a friend, to help us discover what the meaning of the Higher Life is, and to help us live the Higher Life.

The Orientalists and Scholars who have attempted the translation of this book, have certainly rendered to the world a great help, but unfortunately, too many of them have only looked at the form side of the book. One of the Indian scholars, Mr. Tilak, compares the work of these commentators to the story in the ancient *Puranas* of India. In this story we have a group of monkeys trying to cross the ocean and succeeding very well indeed in their achievement, but although they succeed in actually going from shore to shore, they know nothing about the depth of the ocean they have succeeded in crossing. Now, many of these scholars have done what the *Purana* monkeys did, *i.e.*, they have gone through the reading and form side of the book, but they do not know at all what the deeper side

is. What we want to get at is the underlying meaning, the soul aspect of that great poem.

However, it is necessary to consider one or two external, outward points in connection with this book. We say that the book is 5000 years old. This teaching was given by one of the great Indian *Avatars*, 5000 years ago, which marked the opening of the cycle of *Kali Yuga*, the Iron Age. Though the Message was given 5000 years ago, the book itself was not recorded or even compiled in its present form at that time. Every time, after the Teacher disappears, having given the Message, the Message is gradually changed in the outside world, crystallized into its dead letter form, and finally, corrupted. This was also the case with the Message of Shri Krishna. After passing away of Krishna the message was gradually made a creed, an orthodox dogmatic religion, the spirit of the teaching was lost, and only the letter remembered.

When the book itself in its present form was recorded is really not known in the public world of oriental texts. In connection with the date of the writing of the *Bhagavad-Gita* great discussions and controversies have taken place. We know that the *Gita* is only an episode in the great epic poem, the *Mahabharata*, and we know the Lord’s song and these historical texts which make up the *Mahabharata* were sung and recited orally in India, and were transmitted from generation to generation before recorded. But one fact is certain, the *Gita*, in its book form could not have been written any later than 600 B.C., because in the *Gita*, all the philosophies and systems of ethics are mentioned, but the Buddhistic system is not mentioned even once, which points to the fact that the *Gita* must have been written before the Buddha came to the world, and the date of Buddha is known as 600 B.C.

That, then, gives us an idea of how ancient the teaching and the recording of it is. The *Mahabharata* is perhaps the longest epic poem in all the world, and together with the *Ramayana* has served as a model for the two great western poems, the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey*. The *Mahabharata* was recorded by Vyasa, who certainly

was a great Teacher. Vyasa tried to give the ancient teaching of Krishna and around that teaching he built the classical story of Indian tradition, the *Mahabharata*, and thus tried to reconcile the outward form of the teachings that had been given with the great teachings of Krishna himself as the nucleus and story.

Now the number of commentaries written on the *Gita* is tremendous, and these commentaries were not all written by scholars or teachers belonging to the same religion or sect, which indicates how universal the teaching of *Gita* is. The first translation of the *Gita* from the Sanskrit language took place in 1775 in London. The book was published by Charles Wilkins. It corresponds to the effort always made to preserve the ancient teachings at the last quarter of every century. Thus, for instance, the message of Theosophy was given in 1875; the message of the *Gita* in its English translation was given to the world in west in 1775. There is a very valuable introduction to that first translation of the *Gita* by Warren Hastings, who evidently realized the profound value of this work. He calls himself an unlettered man, and begins by apologizing, and yet he gives us very great advice as to how to approach the teachings. Thus:

“Might I, an unlettered man, venture to prescribe bounds to the latitude of criticism, I should exclude, in estimating the merit of such a production, all rules drawn from the ancient or modern literature of Europe, all references to such sentiments or manners as are become the standards of propriety for opinion and action in our own modes of life, and equally all appeals to our revealed tenets of religion and moral duty.”

In other words, it is the same advice as we are giving to our students today: When we try to understand the message contained in a book, put aside the prejudices and conventionalities which you have in your own minds, due to the bringing up which you have had, and from the civilization in which you live, and try to get at the meaning itself. Further, Hastings writes:

“Many passages will be found obscure, many will seem

redundant; others will be found clothed with ornaments or fancy unsuited to our taste, and some elevated to a track of sublimity into which our habits of judgment will find it difficult to pursue them; but few which will either shock our religious faith or moral sentiments. Something too must be allowed to the subject itself, which is highly metaphysical, to the extreme difficulty of rendering abstract terms by others exactly corresponding with them in another language, to the arbitrary combination of ideas, in words expressing unsubstantial qualities, and more, to the errors of interpretation.

With the deductions, or rather, qualifications, which I have thus premised, I hesitate not to pronounce the *Geeta* a performance of great originality; of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction, almost unequalled; and a single exception among all the known religions of mankind, of a theology accurately corresponding with that of the Christian dispensation, and most powerfully illustrating its fundamental doctrines.

I should not fear to place, in opposition to the best French versions of the most admired passages of the *Illiad* or *Odyssey*, or of the 1st and 6th books of our Milton, highly as I venerate the latter, the English translation of the *Mahabharat*.”

We can see that the great magnificence of the poem was realized from the beginning, and when it was presented to the western world the fact was pointed out that it would not contradict the Christian faith but would help one to understand the teachings of Jesus. We can also see that anything that was obscure in the book, was not because of the author, but because of lack of adjustment in ourselves, because the subject is so metaphysical, so spiritual, and our life has gone so much round the personality, forgetful of the Soul, or the Self, that we find it difficult to change ourselves and begin to think in terms of metaphysical and universal principles, leaving aside the mean, petty and personal view point.

(To be concluded)

“THERE IS NO RELIGION HIGHER THAN TRUTH”

THE THEOSOPHICAL Movement for our era and generation was launched in 1875 in the city of New York by H. P. Blavatsky. The Theosophical Movement of our era was launched at a very critical juncture in human history, when scientific materialism and religious dogmatism had made truth unwelcome. The Master writes: “It is time that Theosophy should enter the arena.” This is a trumpet-call and makes one visualize the wrestler entering the wrestling ring. Theosophy entered the arena and challenged, not just Science and Religion, but its challenge was and is to the whole of humanity. The time was ripe for the public proclamation of Truth to enlighten the mind of the race, by giving correct concepts of God, Law, Evolution; of Reincarnation and Karma; of Universal Unity and the Brotherhood of Humanity; of the Sevenfold Constitution of Man and States after Death, etc. The motto adopted for the Theosophical Society was: “There is no Religion Higher than Truth.”

What is Truth? It is that which does not change but remains the same at all times, in all places, for all people. Mr. Crosbie says, “Truth is not a man, nor a book, nor a statement.... Truth, as we ought to know, always explains. When we have the explanation, we have found the truth.” However, belief in a Personal God, in heaven and hell as actual localities, in vicarious atonement and such other concepts act as barriers in the way to reaching Truth. Instead of believing in One Divine Power or God and striving to achieve union with It, human beings worship many outside powers; ideals are changed into idols giving rise to many different religions. All of them are true in essence but differ in outer forms.

The Sanskrit word for religion is *dharma*, which means the ultimate order of the universe. The word *dharma* comes from the root, *dhr*, which means to sustain, to unite or to protect. Religion must unite and protect the people. The English word religion means “to bind back,” as it is made up of the root, *re* (again) and *ligare*

(bind or connect). A truly religious person must be aware of his myriad connections, with deity, with other human beings, with all the creatures on the earth. However, today, institutionalized religion and religious fundamentalism divides man from man, so that more atrocities are committed in the name of religion than otherwise. It is the aim of Theosophy to show that all the world’s religions are based on one and the same truth, called the WISDOM RELIGION.

Damodar Mavalankar, well known in Theosophical history as a successful Chela (disciple) of one of the two Masters who are the Real Founders of the Theosophical Movement, was born in the family of the Karhada Maharashtra caste of Brahmins. In his article, “Castes in India” he writes that from the age of ten till he was fourteen years old he had devoted himself to orthodox religious practices. It was only when he came in contact with Theosophy that he experienced happiness and peace of mind, having been able to appreciate for the first time, the nature and powers of a human being and his duties and possibilities in life. He admits that before contacting Theosophy he had practised his religion without understanding it. Study of Theosophy enabled him, and others belonging to different faiths, to pierce through the dead letter and see clearly the underlying spirit in their religious books. Thus:

If we view all the religions in their popular sense, they appear strongly antagonistic to each other in various details. None agrees with the other. And the representatives of those faiths say that the study of Theosophy explains to them all that has been said in their religion and makes them feel a great respect for it. There must, therefore, be one common ground, on which all the religious systems are built. And this ground which lies at the bottom of all, is truth. There can be but one absolute truth, but different persons have different perceptions of that truth. And this truth is morality. If we separate the dogmas that cling to the principles set forth in any religion, we shall find that morality is preached in every one of them.... It is, therefore, proper for every person to abide by the principles of morality. And according to them, I consider it every man’s duty to do

what he can to make the world better and happier. This can proceed from a love for humanity.

He found that being born in Brahmin caste he was forced to observe caste distinctions which led to hatred for people of other castes, just because they were born in a different caste. The truth is that a person must be respected for his qualities and not for his birth. He says that the ancestors who originally instituted the caste system based it on the inner qualities of a person, and not on heredity. There are several instances in the ancient sacred books in which not only *Kshatriyas* but even Mahars and Chambhars, who are now treated as the lowest people, were made and regarded as Brahmins, and almost worshipped as demi-gods, based on their inner qualities. To regard all human beings as brothers, irrespective of their caste, colour, creed, sex and nationality, is an essential part of religion. In adhering to caste distinctions he felt that he was acting immorally, and so he stepped out of his caste, almost living up to the precept, “There is no religion higher than Truth!”

So much of terrorism is in the name of religion and arises from false and literal interpretation of lofty spiritual concepts. One of the most prominent causes of violence is moral idealism. Once a person believes that his violence is a means to a moral end, the floodgates of brutality are opened, and such a person displays no feeling of guilt or shame for his murderous actions. But the religion that sanctions such behaviour acts against the very *essence of religion* and the Fundamental Truth of the essential unity of humanity. The whole of humanity is an emanation from one source, which is divine. And having come from the same source, we are children of one family. Human solidarity is the corollary to Universal Unity.

Besides bringing about unity and harmony, a true religion must give “a basis for thinking, and consequently, a basis for acting; it must give us an understanding of nature, of ourselves and of other beings,” writes Mr. Crosbie. But, today we find that religions as a general rule discourage intellectual study of belief. Somehow there

is a feeling that to question the scriptures or religious authority is to be irreverent towards your religion. Religions and religious creeds with their rituals and dogmas are intellectual extinguishers. There has been religious orthodoxy with emphasis on conformity to the authority. As a result, those who interpret the teachings differently from the religious authority are labelled heretics. History is replete with instances of heretics being burnt at stake, and of religious persecutions.

However, history of every religion shows that a religion remained pure as long as the prophet-reformer or the Teacher was on the scene. In most cases, these teachings were transmitted orally and were reduced to writing only after the death of the Teacher. It is at this stage that there is conscious as well as unconscious corruption of the original teachings, with gradual shift from the study and application of ethics to rites, rituals and ceremonies. Brahmins, priests and *purohits*, instead of being true interpreters of the scriptures, not only misinterpreted and interpolated them but gained prominence only in relation to the performance of rituals and ceremonies. God, instead of being the Omnipresent, Omniscient, Immutable and Impersonal Principle, came to be regarded as a person, who must be propitiated and worshipped and from whom favours could be asked. To appease God and Gods, rites and rituals had to be performed through the agency of priests.

Besides emphasizing rituals and ceremonies, the priest-class began to present the ethical principles as commandments and dictates, instead of self-evident truths. To continue their hold over the masses, doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation were rejected and a series of dogmas were introduced in certain religions. As a result, today religion plays a major role in dividing man from man. But it is not the priestly class alone that is to be blamed. How many people want the truth? How many of us are ready to suffer the consequences of our actions? Do we not look for a quick and easy solution to our problems, and are only too happy to offer a scapegoat for our sins? We look for ceremonies to dodge the Law

of Karma.

It is evident that all that is advocated by the religious head and all that is written in the scriptures is not sacrosanct. Scriptures are only pointers—means of reaching the truth. “As many benefits as there are in a tank stretching free on all sides, so many are there for a truth-realizing Brahman in all the Vedic rites” (*Gita*, II). One who follows the dead-letter form of Religion only falls into a rut. To arrive at the truth it is necessary to analyze and question the philosophy underlying a religion. It is out of moral cowardice, out of fear of public opinion that we are afraid to step out of the circle of wrong religious ideas, and continue to follow the beaten track. It is necessary to exercise spiritual intuition to discriminate between good and evil, as also, true and false.

How and why did the tradition of *Sati* or “widow burning” take such a firm hold? It is because people *blindly* follow the traditions. The woman dying on the funeral pyre of her husband is made to understand that she will get “freedom” if she becomes a *Sati*. The rite of “widow burning” is nowhere sanctioned in the Hindu scriptures. Prof. Wilson was the first to point out that by changing “*yonim agre*” to “*yonim Agne*” (womb of fire) the practice of *Sati* was introduced. According to the hymns of the *Rig Veda* and Vaidic ceremonials contained in the “*Grihya Sutras*,” the wife accompanes the corpse of her husband to the funeral pyre, but she is addressed with verses taken from the *Rig Veda* and ordered to leave and go back to the world of the living (*Isis*, I, 541 and fn.). One of the ways to distinguish between good and bad or true and false traditions is to use our reason and discrimination. We have to follow the intuitive feeling or the voice within, which says, “This must be true.” We may go wrong in our judgment, but the important thing is to learn self-reliance and self-rule. When the church authorities asked Joan of Arc: “Do you dare to set your judgment against that of the church?” her reply was, “By what other judgment could I Judge?”

Says Shri Krishna in the *Gita*, “I am he who is the author of the

Vedanta, and I alone am the interpreter of the *Vedas*.” Keeping in mind Krishna’s words, Mr. Judge advises us to read the *Gita* [also applicable to other scriptures] by the light of the spiritual lamp, *i.e.*, by the light of the divine nature within. This spiritual lamp will shed brighter light if we live the life according to the dictates of our divine nature and diligently inquire after the meaning.

When we take “truth” in its highest sense, we find that the teachings of all the scriptures put together do not contain the whole truth. It is described as direct perception or *aparokshanubhuti* by Shakaracharya. A different mode of spiritual experience is required to grasp the full truth. There has to be direct intuitive apprehension of Spiritual facts. So the claim of any religion that it alone possesses the whole truth is absurd. It is like the story of six blind men. When they came across an elephant, one of them felt its trunk and said that the elephant was like a thick rope. Another touched the legs and concluded the elephant was like a pillar, and so on. All of them were right, but each had only a partial truth. So also, each religion gives out only partial truth; each needs to cultivate tolerance towards other religions. Hence, Jainism points out that various systems of philosophy that give different accounts of the universe, present only different aspects of the many-sided universe. So, too, no person can give complete knowledge of an object—because of limited understanding, imperfection of speech, etc. Hence, they say that every judgment should be qualified by the word “*syad*,” *i.e.*, “in a way,” or “somehow”—in one sense and from one point of view. Theosophy or ancient wisdom says, “There is no Religion higher than Truth.”

DO NOT let anyone tell you that you cannot know the truth for yourself...without being tied to a temple or church. You were not born a spiritual slave. You are the authority who distinguishes, what is true and untrue, spiritual and unspiritual.

—HUA-CHING NI

COMMUNICATING WITH THE DEAD

THERE IS a universal belief among people from ancient times that the spirits of the dead can be communicated with by the living. There are practitioners who specialize in the art of invoking the so-called spirits of the dead. They are known as Mediums, as they personally lend themselves to act as the channels of communication between, what they believe to be, the souls or the spirits who have departed to the other world, and the living people in this, who wish to communicate with the former. The supposed spirit so invoked may manifest itself in various ways. It may manifest in tangible form for a short time, resembling in physical appearance the dead person when alive. It may converse with the medium and the assembled people, and answer their questions. Manifestation may be only a voice communication, or in the form of written messages on paper, which is precipitated through the air, and in the known handwriting of the dead person. Communication may be by means of audible raps and taps. The most common means of communication, which is widely in use, is by means of what is called Ouija board or slate writing, by which messages are obtained from the so-called spirits. In all these modes of communication passivity of the medium is a crucial factor.

The belief of the practitioners of this art is that spirits of the people who have died on earth survive and continue to live in another invisible realm; that such disembodied souls or spirits are aware of the happenings in this world, and in the lives of their loved ones they have left behind; and that they can be communicated with by the living, and obtain messages and knowledge from them. They termed the phenomenon as Spiritualism. But it is known these days also as, spirit communication, trance mediumship, spiritism, spirit channelling, etc.

The phenomenon of communication with the dead challenged the assumptions of science that man was a creature of matter and

no more, and that death meant extinction. Such is the human prejudice that instead of squarely facing the phenomenon and unravelling the mysterious laws which underlie it in a fearless, and in the true spirit of scientific inquiry, the scientific fraternity of the time shut the door in its face, and thus lost a great opportunity of advancing human knowledge of some of the recondite psychical laws of life. Though the Spiritualistic phenomenon died out in the West as quickly as it had appeared, yet the practice of communicating with the “Spirits” of the dead is in vogue even today. Therefore, the truths pertaining to the phenomenon, as explained by H.P.B., in her extensive Theosophical expositions, is of great importance and relevance.

For materialization of so-called spirits of the dead to occur three conditions are requisite. There should be a medium present—the one of an abnormal nervous and psychic constitution—acting as a passive conduit for invisible potencies in the unseen realms to operate through him or her in visible phenomena; one or more persons with a strong desire to invoke the so-called spirit of the dead; and a dimly lighted ambience. Such an assembly is called séance. It is the thoughts of the assembled intent on their object which attract to the séance what are mistakenly called Spirits. The “spirit” of the deceased who is invoked makes a hazy and cloudy appearance at first and then takes on a concrete form for a while, resembling the personal appearance of the dead person, talks to the invokers, answers questions put by them on various subjects, recalls incidents of its past personal life on earth, and so on.

As already mentioned, the practitioners of this art take this phenomenon to be a valid proof of their claim that there is life after death and that the spirits of the dead live on in invisible realms, and that they can be invoked and interacted with. Theosophy, however, points out that the spiritualists would not have arrived at such conclusions had they been acquainted with the principles of the inner, invisible part of man’s nature, and of the post-mortem states of human consciousness, and that they would have realized

the harm to which they are exposed in indulging in such practices. Though it is out of place to discuss in detail in a short article these principles and laws, suffice it to say that, firstly, the Spirit of the dead person can never appear, except in very rare circumstances, immediately after the death of the person, for the purpose of accomplishing a specific task of importance, which again cannot be gone into now; and, secondly, what makes appearance in séances, mistaken to be the spirit of the dead, is nothing but a fictitious phantom-like form, consisting of animal desires of the person who has died, which he cast away in the subjective post-mortem state of consciousness called *Kama Loka*, just as he cast away the physical body at death on the physical plane earlier, before the noblest part of the consciousness of the deceased falls into a highly spiritual state of consciousness, called *Devachan* or *swarga* or paradise. This latter is the noblest portion of the dead person's thinking-self, which is drawn by affinity to the immortal and divine part of man—*Atma-Buddhi-Manas*—in which the disembodied thinking self enjoys rest and heavenly bliss. This, in reality, is the Spirit of man. It cannot under any circumstance be communicated with by mediums, or called down into the polluted atmosphere of the earth from its inviolable sphere of purity and spiritual bliss.

What readily make appearance on being invoked by necromancers are the phantom-like forms, called *Kama Rupas*. These latter are mere shells devoid of mind and conscience, retaining in the atoms of their Astral forms memory, impressions of gross physical life of the man that was. Left to itself the *Kamarupa*, the invisible Astral corpse, gradually disintegrates and disappears in the realm of *Kama Loka*, as the physical body left behind by the deceased does on the physical plane. They are mere wraiths, called *Bhuts*, *Pretas* and *Pisachas* in India, and by other names in our literature as Elementaries, spooks, shells, etc. Elementaries are the shells left behind after death by vicious and wicked people, and are the leading stars in séances, and these are very harmful to those who bring themselves under their attraction

and influence, through such mediumistic practices.

Theosophy explains that there are several ways by which they materialize, masquerading as “spirit” of the deceased. Elementaries which are attracted to the séance gather together in a mass from the surrounding atmosphere the electrical magnetic particles, coat it with the vital magnetism and material particles sucked out of the bodies of sitters, thus prepare a semblance of a human form. One of the Elementary shells steps into the mould and visibly masquerades as the deceased person. Another mode is the Astral body of the living medium himself, exuding from the side of his body, collects upon itself the electrical particles from the air and vital magnetism from the sitters present till it becomes visible, taking on appearances of various forms. Thus materializations are nothing but invisible images in the Astral Light of the forms of the deceased persons, and making them appear in concrete shape.

In the mediumistic séances written messages purported from the dead is common. In the Astral Light are the imprints of thoughts and deeds of men in minutest detail. Following the intent and thoughts of the Mediums and the sitters the elemental forces of various kinds, which are, so to speak, nerves of nature, produce an exact imitation of the writing of those who have died, precipitate the same into visibility, making use of the pigments which are present in vapourized form in the atmosphere. The medium is only a controlled and ignorant instrument in this process. Voice communication from the materialized shells is produced by some of the gross entities living in *Kama Loka* by means of certain other sorts of nature spirits which aid in this process. In the so-called spirit communications by means of Ouija board or slate writing, it is the astral hand of the medium which is moved by *Kamarupic* entities aided by a certain class of nature spirits.

The shades of the dead invoked in séances seem to answer questions put to them and give out knowledge. But all such communications are invariably found to be no more than mere commonplace chatter, contradictory and worthless. This is so even

in so-called slate writings. As these Spooks, devoid of mind and conscience—soulless—retain only automatic instinctual memory of the gross physical life they had lived on earth as living men and women before death. They can give nothing more than that.

Such evocation of shades of the dead is no more than worship of the dead—necromancy—the worship of the ghosts of dead men, warned against by Sri Krishna (*Gita*, xvii/sloka 4 and ix/sloka 25). The gross psychic dregs left behind as *Kama-rupa* should be left alone to disintegrate and dissolve in the astral light in the natural course, because by establishing contact with them by mediumistic practices the dabblers not only contract moral and psychic diseases, but come under the power and influence of some of the vicious and wicked *Kama-lokic* entities. The shades so evoked feed on the vitality of the medium and the sitters, and thus obtain a new lease of life and a renewal of their animal passions, delaying indefinitely thereby their natural course of disintegration. Strengthened by feeding on vitality of living men who attract them, they vicariously gratify their lusts through sensitive people who are prone in that direction, and incite them to crime and immorality. Dabbling with these entities, mediums lose their physical, psychic and moral health and become nervous wrecks. Sitters in séances suffer loss of vitality due to physical and nervous elements taken from their bodies by *Kama Lokic* entities for the purpose of materialization. When one attends a séance, or consults a medium, he becomes a focus for these deleterious forces, and attracts to himself the astral remains of persons he may think of, and thus opens himself to their insidious polluting influence, which, once contracted, is difficult to get rid of. It is, therefore, folly to try to obtain knowledge, or guidance, prophecy, as many do, by consulting mediumistic soothsayers with “familiar spirits.” The only true Guide and Teacher is one’s Higher Self, Krishna-Christos, in one’s heart, and in the hearts of all beings, to whom one should look up to, aspire for, and seek communion with.

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: Does the kind of food we eat affect our character? How do we know what is the best food for us, as an individual? Another member in the family may choose food items different from us. Is it due to his/her temperament (*gunas*)? In Islamic countries most are non-vegetarians, and yet they have produced saints, sages and mystics. Does it mean that food-items did not affect their character?

Answer: Our bodily health depends upon the nourishment we provide to the body and mind. To acquire a body that enables us to live normal healthy life, free of diseases is one thing, and to improve the health of the body such that it would enable us to live the spiritual life, is quite another. In the *Gita*, the link between the nature of the person and type of food preferred by him is clearly explained. A person of *Sattvic* nature likes the food that is pure and savoury, and tends to enhance age, vitality, strength, health and cheerfulness. A *Rajasic* or passionate person naturally desires food that is sour, saline, pungent, dry, burning and excessively hot. A *Tamasic* person prefers impure food, described as stale, tasteless and rotting. Our inner nature is, to some extent, conditioned by the type of food we eat, but it is also true that as we change inwardly, our taste also changes. As thoughts and desires become pure, the person may find himself attracted to less spicy food, and at times, having natural dislike for *rajasic* food with onion and garlic.

It is true that animal food imparts to the eater the qualities of the animal, and tends to make physical body grosser and denser. One of the great German scientists has shown that every kind of animal tissue, however you may cook it, still retains certain marked

characteristics of the animal that it belonged to. H.P.B. observes that when the flesh of animals is assimilated by human beings as food, *it imparts to them*, physiologically, some of the characteristics of the animal it came from. The “coarsening” or “animalizing” effect on a person is greatest from the flesh of the larger animals, less for birds, still less for fish and other cold-blooded animals, and least of all when he eats only vegetables. Spiritual life calls for etherealizing of the physical body.

There is also the other fact to be borne in mind and that is, suitability or fitness of the food for each person. *Each body extracts from any kind of food only that which conforms to the nature of the possessor of the body and that nature is subject to change from within.* In the Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali the disciple is not asked to refrain from eating meat. It is not because all people were vegetarians at that time. The warriors were allowed to eat meat and out of the warrior caste arose many that attained to the supreme heights of adeptship. We have these very suggestive words from H.P.B.: “If from illness or long habit a man cannot go without meat, why, by all means let him eat it. It is no crime; it will only retard his progress a little; for after all is said and done, the purely bodily actions and functions are of far less importance than what a man *thinks* and *feels*, what desires he encourages in his mind, and allows to take root and grow there.” Two important points are made. Meat-eating or for that matter, eating of *rajasic* or *tamasic* food would contribute *a little* in retarding the spiritual progress, and in coarsening the magnetism, whereas our thoughts, feelings and desires affect much more our progress and magnetism. Certain meats, like beef, as also certain vegetables, like beans, have always been interdicted to students of occultism. It is not because either of them were more or less holy than others, but because while perhaps highly nutritious and supporting to the body, their magnetism was deadening and obstructive to the “psychic man,” writes H.P.B. (*The Theosophist*, Vol. IV, January 1883)

Moderation in eating is important as much as the quality of

food. Fasts were instituted simply for the purpose of correcting the evils of overeating. The article, “The Elixir of Life,” mentions that instead of fasting one must begin with the diet of milk and fruits. Then gradually, very gradually, one must decrease the *quantity* of food consumed. It is possible to survive on little quantity of food.

What then is the true theosophic diet? It is that which best agrees with you. “We advise really earnest students to eat such food as will least clog and weight their brains and bodies, and will have the smallest effect in hampering and retarding the development of their intuition, their inner faculties and powers,” writes H.P.B. Ultimately, each individual should find out from experience what kind of food is the most suitable for his constitution, carefully avoiding the food items that are not conducive to healthy living, even though they may be agreeable to the palate.

Question: What are theosophical views on vegetarianism?

Answer: We can see from the classification of food given in the *Gita* that vegetarian diet is neither emphasized nor insisted upon. We must not dogmatise that vegetarianism is the only right thing. One cannot claim to be spiritual, only because he is a strict vegetarian—cows and elephants are also vegetarians! Wicked and gross thoughts are more harmful than the eating of a ton of flesh. Vegetarianism must be practised with right motive. If one refrains from meat in order to develop psychic powers and continues same sort of thoughts, neither cultivating nor practicing the highest altruism, then that vegetarianism is in vain. “Remember once for all that in all such questions we take a rational, and never a fanatical, view of things.” writes H.P.B.

Mr. Judge tried for nine years to leave meat eating but found it injurious, because the western man has no heredity of vegetarianism behind him. Many students of theosophy found it impossible to switch over to vegetarian diet, because of imperfect digestion causing disease. It is held by many physiologists that stomach is an organ for the digestion of animal food only. As a result, in a vegetarian person the pyloric valve between the stomach and the

small intestine is almost paralyzed from want of use, so that the food passes almost directly from stomach to small intestine. On the other hand, in the case of a non-vegetarian, the animal food remains in the stomach for a long time. Hence, when a meat-eater turns vegetarian, the stomach cells that have got accustomed to keeping the food for longer time in the stomach—because it takes longer to digest meat—keep also the vegetable matter for a long time. Though vegetarian food is digested quickly, the pyloric valve does not open, and the stomach retains it for long, causing it to ferment and turn toxic. As a result, yeast and other growths are thrown into circulation, which may cause tuberculosis, nervous diseases and other manifold derangements. Sometimes it is inevitable for people to eat meat, in the absence of any vegetation, as is true of places like Tibet, Alaska and North Pole.

It is true that eating of meat may give us diseases of the animal, and that we have no right to take life, as we did not give them life. However, it is not true that we take life when we eat meat, but vegetables have no life. Life is everywhere, and expresses itself in myriad ways. The consciousness in plants and in the animals is at different levels. Mr. Judge settles the question of killing more or less evolved organisms by stating that life depends upon life, *Jivo jivasya jivanam*. Thus, in certain environments, at certain stages of evolution, a certain amount of injury to others is unavoidable. Both vegetarians and meat-eaters are destroying life. Neither class is wholly right or wrong. It becomes actual wrong when we deliberately, without actual need, destroy lives of animals, insects or even plant. An epicure who relishes many dishes of meat, just to satisfy his palate and not necessary for sustenance, is as guilty as someone who kills animals for making fur cap or leather boots. Jainas divide living things depending upon development of two, three or more sense-faculties. They are advised to begin with the partial observance of non-injury by abstaining from injuring or killing moving beings with development of higher sense-faculties.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

All spirituality is about rediscovering the purity and the innocence we were born with, and which we lost in the trauma of growing up. Innocence should not be confused with naivety, which is weakness, while innocence is strength. Godliness brings forth the state of innocence, which is a state of purity, of no ego, no expectations, no manipulation and no urge to prove anything to the world. Cleverness and craftiness often comes at the cost of losing our inner purity. Judgmentalism and cunningness disconnect and separate, whereas innocence joins and connects people, says Guru Mohanji, the author of the book, *Power of Purity*.

Innocence is power. The spiritually advanced people choose to remain innocent despite the distrust and hostility of the world, thus disarming the attackers. According to Sanjiv Ranjan, healer and psychotherapist, innocence is self-protective. Scriptures testify that gods have often intervened to protect the innocent. Even today, we have examples to show that the universe conspires to protect the innocent, the pure and those with no ulterior motive. When Malala Yousafzai spoke with innocence of conviction and justice about a girl's right to gain an education, she was opposed and attacked. But violence against the unarmed child drew attention to the issue and triggered a wave of support, prayer and compassion, leading to her triumph.

Peer and parental pressure, rejections and judgments all divorce us from our inner child. As we grow and face responsibilities and struggles, innocence either appears foolish, or dangerous. Innocence is killed with the burden of knowledge, and with the death of innocence dies everything beautiful in the world. When one is willing to let go of the baggage of self-important achievements, to renounce knowledge or rather, knowledge-fed-ego, and surrender to the Divine, one's walk back to purity begins. When we become aware of our divine origin and inherent purity, when our heart is filled with gratitude, and when we are able to forgive ourselves

and others, innocence returns. The choice of staying innocent must be armed with awareness and self-responsibility. An innocent person is intelligent enough to gauge the intentions of those who approach him, but his choice to act differently is powered by the desire for a higher good, or moved by the possibility of transformation in the other person. People who choose to embrace innocence may find that events of all magnitude come and pass leaving their pure core untouched, writes Shivi Verma. (*Life Positive*, October 2014)

To be innocent is to be child-like, and the more impersonal we are the easier it is to develop child-heart. The early humanity is described as “infant” humanity. Even when the light of mind was given to man by Divine Beings, making him a thinking, choosing and self-conscious being, capable of saying “I am I,” to begin with, there was sense of solidarity and oneness with these spiritual beings. But as Mr. Judge points out, this self-consciousness which was beginning of perfection became, in the course of time, perfection of selfishness and the curse of separateness, because we have come to associate our body, feelings or our possessions with “I.”

To be innocent is to be vulnerable—being susceptible to manipulation, persuasion, temptation, etc. *Light on the Path* asks the disciple to learn to be completely vulnerable. He has to recognize and realize that the very thought of individual rights is the result of selfishness and self-centredness. A disciple has to undergo a yearly ceremony in which he has to give up all weapons of offence and defense. He has to learn never to raise his voice in self-defense or excuse, or in condemning or criticizing another person. From this ceremony he returns to the world as helpless and as unprotected as a new-born child. It is only when one develops the power of vulnerability does he become fit to acquire *spiritual* powers. At the root of such vulnerability lies the realization of the unity of all that lives and breathes. Jesus chose to suffer helplessly, though he was given a chance to escape the torture of the cross by performing certain phenomena. In a sense, to be willing to be

vulnerable is to have complete faith in the law of Karma—allowing the impartial and just law to make all adjustments.

Was Darwin right to say that we have evolved due to chance mutation and natural selection? asks Mukul Sharma. Could it not be that an utterly simple one-celled organism developed into an amazingly complex creature called *Homo sapiens*, simply due to blind evolution relying solely on chance mutations and natural selection? It is rather difficult to accept that an intricately engineered bio-system could have come about merely as a result of random modifications, unless a definite direction was given to it by some intelligent external agency, *i.e.*, by some sort of guiding spirit. Darwin himself had admitted that his theory would fall if it could be demonstrated that there existed a single complex organ which was not the result of numerous successive, slight modifications. The proponents of Intelligent Design speak of “irreducible complexity,” which is described by Michael Behe, one of the leading ID proponents, as “a single system which is composed of several interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, and where the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning.”

The supporters of ID claim that the eye is a perfect example of an irreducibly complex structure. Darwin himself could not believe that eye could have been formed by natural selection. But he proposed that eye could have initially begun as a simple photo-sensitive patch, which allowed the organism to differentiate between light and dark, and then after a lot of variations, mutations and modifications become the advanced eye as it is today. But where did the original photo-sensitive patch come from, or how?

British philosopher Antony Flew who was an atheist for most part of his life declared in 2004, in a publicly released video called *Has Science Discovered God?* that investigation of human DNA “has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the

arrangements which are needed to produce (life) that intelligence must have been involved.” (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, October 5, 2014)

The ID theory is the revival of an argument made by British Philosopher William Paley in 1802, that unlike the stone, a watch appears purposely assembled and would not function without its precise combination of parts. Hence, “the watch must have a maker.” Paley argued that along similar lines, the complexity of certain biological structures implies *design*. Darwin’s answer to Paley’s argument was that natural selection could create the *appearance* of design.

The evolutionary theory put forward by Theosophy admits of both intelligence and pattern. The whole Kosmos is guided, controlled and animated by an endless series of Hierarchies of sentient beings or conscious Divine Powers, who are agents of Karmic and Cosmic Laws and they are “intelligent Beings who adjust and control evolution.”

In the article, “Which is Vague, Theosophy or Science?” Mr. Judge quotes Haeckel, who explains that Darwin replaced a conscious creative force working in accordance with a designed plan, by a series of natural forces working blindly—without aim and without design. Mr. Judge says that there is not a single proof in the present life, of blind forces beginning to work without design and finally producing a beautiful design, which design is visible in the smallest form we see.

Darwin’s theory of evolution postulates that various types of animals and plants have their origin in other preexisting types and that the distinguishable differences are due to modifications in successive generations, by “Natural selection,” *i.e.*, by selectively reproducing useful variations or changes, in its genetic constitution. Darwinian theory of natural selection is a pure myth when resorted to as an explanation of the origin of species. The law of “Natural selection” will perpetuate “useful variations” *once they are produced*, but the question is: What caused such “useful variations”

in the first place? The causes may be physical, climatic, dietary, etc., which are only *secondary* causes. From where comes the intelligence in working of the law of Natural Selection and other secondary causes? Surely, this is not the work of blind forces of nature. “The true solution of the mystery is to be found in the impersonal Divine Wisdom, in its IDEATION—reflected through matter.” (*S.D.*, II, 299 fn.)

It seems shaming is the latest online trend gaining momentum. This involves disgracing people with pictures on any social media platform. With internet’s snowballing power, pictorial humiliation is fast becoming sharpest weapon of emotional destruction, writes Purvaja Sawant. For instance, there is *phone shaming* for shaming people who have the habit of being engaged with their phones, ignoring people who are physically present with them. *Passenger shaming* is to expose the travellers with less than desirable habits on a plane. These two forms of shaming are to punish bad behaviour. *Fat shaming* is body shaming which targets overweight/obese people, and is meant to motivate people to reduce weight. *Slut shaming* is attacking women for being sexual, or for having one or more sexual partners. *Teen shaming* is teenagers taunting and teasing peers for their behaviour. These two forms of shaming involve sadistic pleasure, an ego boost to see the downfall of people and watch them in a negative light. Smartphone makers have come up with “humiliation Apps.” If the person hits the snooze button instead of waking up when the alarm goes, then BetterMe and ShameAlarm will post a message to his Facebook or Twitter, showing that he is too weak to get out of bed!

Social commentator Santosh Desai says that earlier, shaming was topographically limited, while online shaming has become viral, and can be re-circulated and shared at the mere click of a button. This form of shaming can turn into worst form of bullying. There are innumerable cases in United Kingdom and United States

of America where teenagers have been bullied and shamed to the extent that they have taken their own life. According to a new British study published in the journal *Obesity*, “fat shaming” does not help people lose weight. In fact they gain more weight because stress responses to discrimination can increase appetite. Online shaming can be a positive thing when used for a good cause, such as, for gender bias, bad behaviour or racism, says actress Celina Jaitley. Giving practical advice, filmmaker Vikram Bhatt says that the only way to combat shaming is to not give a damn, when it is for silly issues, and let the trend die out a natural death. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, October 5, 2014)

Many of us are sensitive to public opinion about our dress, behaviour and other personal choices in life. It is necessary to ask, “What constitutes public opinion?” Generally, it is not made up of the views of spiritually enlightened people. Often, it does not have any moral basis but only reflects customs and traditions. Hence H.P.B. writes: “In our day, *vox populi* [voice of the people, or public opinion]...is no longer *vox dei* [voice of God], but ever that of prejudice, of selfish motives, and often simply that of unpopularity” (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 239). It is the difficulty of having to swim against the stream and being ridiculed or persecuted as an odd one that prompts most of us to conform to public opinion, without rationalizing. However, we need not be self-opinionated, either. The attitude to be adopted—whether it is dress, behaviour or any life style involving moral principles—is very well described by a Master of Wisdom: “Do not despise the opinion of the world, nor provoke it uselessly to unjust criticism. Remain rather as indifferent to the abuse as to the praise of those who can never know you as you really are, and who ought, therefore, to find you unmoved by either, and ever placing the approval or condemnation of your own *Inner Self* higher than that of the multitudes.” (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*, pp. 10-11)