

## 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

Vol. 9, No. 7

November 17, 2017

### APPLYING THE TEACHINGS

THE FALL of civilization is not due to lack of knowledge or lack of moral precepts, as the latter are preached by thousands of people and appear in thousands of books and magazines. It may be attributed to the lack of *application* of moral precepts. What we lack these days are examples. People feel that in the *present times*, at least, it is almost impossible to practice these virtues, which are no better than utopian ideas. Often, we hesitate because we are doubtful whether it is worthwhile being kind and gentle in this world, where might is right. Would not others take advantage of us? Is it practical? But if each one hesitates, who will set an example?

Theosophy must be made practical. Each one has to strive to make Theosophy a *living power* in one's life. What is the characteristic of something living? A living thing acts and moves of its own accord. A table, however sturdy and useful, cannot move by itself. So also, the theosophical teachings, read but not applied, will not be able to guide us in the time of need. When the teachings are applied, theosophy becomes a “living power” and takes us by the scruff of our neck, and makes us do something we may not desire. This may cause a continuous strife within, and whether we are aware of it or not, we are forced to constantly struggle against our lower nature.

“Remember, it is one thing for people to be enthusiastic—that is good; but it is altogether another thing to be earnest,” writes

Shri B. P. Wadia. The success of Theosophical Work depends upon how well-grounded the students are in the fundamental tenets of Theosophy; how willing are they to devote their time and energies to the Work, and to *assimilate* the teachings. One of the tests of a sincere and devoted student is his attitude towards the teachings. Many a sincere student may have taken to Theosophy like “duck to water,” but may be sorely lacking in application of the very teachings they love and are never tired of preaching. H.P.B. reminds us of Carlyle’s words: “The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest.” She says, “The more loudly virtue or duty is talked about instead of being acted upon, the more forcibly it will always remind one of the Dead Sea fruit. *Cant* is the most loathsome of all vices.” The Dead Sea is the highly saline lake in Palestine, into which the river Jordan ends. With almost 20 to 25 per cent of salt content, the lake is unable to sustain any life and the fishes brought by the river Jordan die. Even vegetation becomes impossible, then whence can come fruits? Fine words of some people are like non-existent fruits of the Dead Sea. *Cant* is insincere moral talk. People delude themselves and others into thinking that they are pious, virtuous and spiritual, just because they *talk* about it. Saki writes humourously in “The Story of St. Vespulus,” who is quoted as saying, “I don’t mind being revered, honoured and greeted; I don’t even mind being sainted in moderation, *as long as I am not expected to be saintly as well.*” People want to *appear* saintly without actually being so.

“The wish to know is almost solely intellectual, and the desire to *BE* is of the heart,” says W. Q. Judge. It should be noted that it was the application aspect of the study which W. Q. Judge practised in his solitary endeavour to keep the Light of Theosophy burning in the U.S.A. from 1878 to 1884, and which brought the magnificent harvest in the period from 1886 to 1896, when he actively propagated teachings of Theosophy. Application of the teachings not only aids effective promulgation, but also helps a sincere student to be true to the Higher Self and to the lines laid down by the Masters and to

Their programme.

Most of the time, we *think, plan* and *talk* about being brotherly, kind, charitable, and so on, but we soon discover that all that is in the air, a mere abstraction. We do not seem to realize what we mean by it, nor of the difficulties involved in actually practising them. We are a bit like Mr. Henry, the person who was very gentle and kind and who genuinely believed that he loved children. However, one day he saw a child, happily skipping on the pathway in his house, where fresh concrete had been spread, and making everything mushy. Mr. Henry lost his temper. A neighbour who was watching him, asked, “Why Henry, I thought you loved children”? And Mr. Henry replied, “I do love them in the *abstract*, not in the *concrete*.” How easy it is to deal with people and things in the *abstract* than in the *concrete*! We think and probably talk a ton, but practice only a millionth of what we have heard and inwardly found to be true. Every time we write or speak about the moral life, a voice from within must remind us, are we even *trying* to live up to it?

If we really wish to reach self-knowledge, to know who we really are, we must first understand and then learn to control our emotional nature. An emotion is a force, it is psychic energy. We can transmute the forces arising out of our emotional nature and channelize them. Sympathy, devotion, a sincere attempt to be in accord with others, are the channels through which this emotional force can be used in a constructive manner. Shri B. P. Wadia advises, “Your very first task is not to allow yourself to be disturbed within yourself, whatever others say and do....Remain cool, collected and calm—three C’s produce the fourth, Conquest. We conquer error, decay, disease and even death by the three C’s.”

In the Eighteenth Chapter of the *Gita* we are advised to perform three kinds of actions *every day*: deeds of sacrifice, of mortification and charity. Occasions for mortification, as also for sacrifice, come in our day to day living. We do not have to starve ourselves, but we should be able to do without food when the occasion arises. We must not get irritated or angry if the food has a little more or less

salt. We must not be disappointed if things do not go the way we wanted them, or others do not live up to our expectations. However, we should try to perform such actions with *full deliberation*, even if it is one such action a day. Every day we should deliberately perform an act of sacrifice, in which we give to another, our time, money or energy, even if we are likely to be inconvenienced. Through daily self-analysis we should try to become more aware of *ourselves*. We may try to find out during self-examination, what our thoughts are like, how we talk to others, what our desires and attachments are, and then, resolve to change or mortify ourselves in that direction. When these actions are deliberately performed every day, we will be able to take charge of our personality, and become well-balanced individuals. Our Movement needs more and more such individuals, who have begun the work of changing themselves, so that by their example they can bring about the change in the minds and hearts of others around.

Likewise, we have ample opportunities to apply the teachings about Karma and rebirth. It is easy to say that we have firm faith in the law of Karma, but when calamity befalls how many are able to resist the temptation of visiting temples to propitiate some god or goddess? One with firm faith in the Law of Karma will not quarrel with one's environment or blame others for all the adversities in one's life. Theosophical teachings must be applied to every situation in life. For instance, what is our attitude to ill-health? Are we ready to be cured by fair means or foul, and wish to prolong life of the body, at any cost, irrespective of what is done to Nature and to other beings? What is our attitude to frustrated desires? Do we remain calm and try to learn the lesson of frustration or do we sulk? What about our habits of eating, drinking, sleeping or recreation, are these in conformity with what Theosophy teaches? Do we perform every action cheerfully and carefully, as if our life depended upon it? Are we too aware of faults, mistakes, as also, sins of omission and commission of others, but quite unaware of our own weaknesses? As we answer these questions we become aware, to what extent

we have been able to apply the teachings of Theosophy in daily life.

As we apply the teachings, we want to see the results; we want to see tangible difference in our nature, and spectacular progress. Now and then, doubt ensues. Doubt, which is regarded as a sin, is the breeder of despair as faith is the creator of cheer. When we feel that it is impossible to practice, charity, honesty, integrity, truthfulness, amidst the moral darkness which surrounds us, we must tell ourselves, "Despair not and try again." When a student-aspirant works for the betterment of humanity he meets with despair, and feels it is no use, human nature cannot be changed. But application of the teachings of Karma at once reminds us that we affect others through our thoughts and actions, and others affect us, because we are connected on the inner planes of our being. Therefore, we cannot be apathetic to the conditions in the world. To say, "Nothing can be done," is to commit moral suicide. We should never cease trying to set an example of a good and pure life. We cannot change or purify the world, but we can change and purify ourselves, and then by virtue of the oneness of the universe, it will help in the purification of the whole.

Mr. Judge asks students to learn to make *universal application* of the theosophical doctrines. In his article, "Universal Applications of Doctrine," he advises theosophical students to apply these doctrines in all directions, by making use of the laws of analogy and correspondence. The human body may be regarded as a little universe, a microcosm. A correspondence exists between various organs in the body with the universe around. Thus, for instance, the human eye and retina may be taken to be a symbol of the astral light. Astral light is the invisible register of the universe in which all thoughts, feelings, actions are impressed and stored. How long are the pictures or impressions preserved in the astral light during one life or age of Brahma? We can find this out by going from the known to the unknown. We know that the impressions made on the retina remain for a certain period before fading away. Science tells us that

these impressions persist on the retina for 1/16th of a second. Now we can calculate the proportion thus: as the time of fading from the human retina is to the average life of a human being, which may be taken to be seventy years, say, so the time of fading of impressions from the astral light is to the length of the life of Brahma. Since we know the three factors in the given proportion, we can find the missing term.

The laws of Karma and Reincarnation are applicable to everything. Our thoughts and actions have an effect on all the lower kingdoms. As human beings have become more selfish, displaying hatred, envy and violence, the atoms impressed with these qualities are attracted by the lower kingdoms, making tigers and lions more ferocious, and serpents and scorpions more poisonous than before. Mr. Judge applies the law of reincarnation to thoughts. In the article, “The Application of Theosophical Theories,” he writes that a thought “springs into life and then dies; but it is at once reborn in the form of another thought. And thus the process goes on from moment to moment, from hour to hour, from day to day....Further than that, a number of these thoughts form themselves into a certain idea, and it dies to be reincarnated in its time. Thus on rolls this vast flood. Will it overwhelm us? It may; it often does. Let us then make our thoughts pure.” (*Theosophy*, Vol. XXII)

In man, a new personality is formed based on *skandhas* of the previous or older personalities, so also the new worlds are evolved in the likeness of old worlds. *The Secret Doctrine* teaches that our “Universe” is only one of an infinite number of Universes, all of them “Sons of Necessity,” because links in the great Cosmic chain of Universes, each one standing in relation of an effect as regards its predecessor, and being the cause as regards its successor. The sum total of causation of the previous universe must of necessity become the seed for the succeeding one. The *Upanishads*, says Mr. Judge, constantly insist upon identity of man with God and Nature, and to the universal application of all doctrines or laws.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT A STUDENT’S NOTES AND GUESSES

THE SERPENT symbol is a strange one. A cold, selfish creature, voiceless and limbless; capable only of spasmodic activity as it seeks to escape, to sting, or to gulp its living prey; its life is spent in sullenness and torpor; its sole ambition is to lie “untrodden in the sun.” With a minimum of brain capacity it exhibits correspondingly little intelligence, far less than that shown by many insects.

Yet the serpent has been chosen, among all races, as the symbol of intellectual power of every grade, from a subtle cunning to the wisdom of the gods. In the Jewish mythology, it is represented as tempting the first woman with a promise of divine wisdom and power; Hermes carries the Caduceus as a token that he is a messenger between gods and men; the serpent accompanying Aesculapius signifies the healing power; Jesus exhorts his disciples to be “wise as serpents.”

Mundane serpents have signified an all-sustaining and encompassing will and intelligence, both in India and the extreme north; and the serpent has been the symbol of the adept, from the Far East to ancient Peru and Mexico....Perhaps when St. Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland, he was the cause of its soil having ever since produced more wit than wisdom....

Look into the eyes of any living creature and you touch its soul. The dog seeks from yours something which he dimly feels and would fain comprehend. There is a look in his brown eyes as he fixes them upon yours, which is not there at any other time, which he fixes upon no creature except man, and which no animal but the dog is able to give.

As we look into the limpid fluorescent depths of a horse’s eye, our sympathies go out to the fellow-being which looks out through that window. Even when it sparkles with spirit, it is still tempered with timidity. We feel its pathetic patience, which is above that of the dull ox, an intelligence which is moral rather than intellectual,

and we receive the impress of an instinctive nobility and unselfishness.

The patient drudge is quick to respond to our wants rather than to his own; a harsh word sets his pulses bounding; a kindly look awakens instant recognition. Contrast this with the attentive, well-regulated selfishness which gleams from the yellow eyes of a cat, as she looks debating the chances of a morsel or the possible hospitalities of a comfortable lap. Watch the change from the receptive to the active, as she hears a mouse-like rustle, and the glare of the beast of prey shines out. Or, as she steps softly along, you are aware that she has in mind either a warm corner by the fire, an amatory interview on a back fence, or a raid on the canary bird or an unguarded pantry. Self, and self only, is the centre around which revolve the thoughts of this courtesan of the animal world.

The rat, has his little brain quickened, for untold generations, by contact with civilization, by its warfare against him, by the dangers and rewards of his predatory and pariah life. You can read the whole story in the mingled impudence, fear, and cunning of his beady eye as he faces you for a moment with his whiskers a-quiver, knowing as he does his exact distance from the nearest retreat. Compare the eye of a rat with that of his third cousin, the squirrel. In that softer little orb you read not only the alertness of his tribe, but a milder curiosity and timidity. You are to him rather a strange and possibly dangerous visitor, than a giant hereditary enemy.

Greed and limited shrewdness gleam from the small eyes of a pig, and when we see the like in a human being—we know what to expect.

What creature has the chilling, stony stare of the serpent? What can you read in those fixed eyeballs which suggests an emotion or a thought with which any human being ever had an instant sympathy? Their effect is different from that which can be produced by any fixed glassy ball. You feel the consciousness of the creature as it meets some sphere of your own, but it is an icy and utterly selfish consciousness; you recoil from the psychic touch of the snake

as you do from that of his body. A writer in the *Fortnightly Review*, in speaking of the serpent, says:

“The power of continuing motionless, with the lifted head projecting forward, for an indefinite time is one of the most wonderful of the serpent’s muscular feats, and it is of the highest importance to the animal both when fascinating its victim and when mimicking some inanimate object, as, for instance, the stem and bud of an aquatic plant; here it is only referred to on account of the effect it has on the human mind, as enhancing the serpent’s strangeness. In this attitude, with the round, unwinking eyes fixed on the beholder’s face, the effect may be very curious and uncanny.”

He goes on to quote the experience of an African traveller who discovered a snake at the bottom of a pool of water:

“Presently, without apparent motion, so softly and silently was it done, the snake reared its head above the surface and held it there erect and still, with gleaming eyes fixed on me in question of what I was. It flashed upon me then that it would be good opportunity to test the power of the human eye upon the snake, and I set myself the task of looking it down. It was foolish effort. The bronze head and the sinewy neck, about which the water flowed without a ripple, were as if carved in stone; and the cruel unwinking eyes, with the light coming and going in them, appeared to glow the brighter, the longer I looked. Gradually there came over me a sensation of sickening fear, which, if I had yielded to it, would have left me powerless to move; but with a cry I leaped up, and seizing a fallen willow branch, attacked the reptile with a species of fury...”

The fixity of the serpent’s eye is not the cause of the peculiar impression which it makes. The eyes of fishes, though not as a rule immovable, are moved but seldom and slightly. They have not that filmy blankness we see in the dead fish, from which the idea of the “fishy eye” has been derived. Study them in an aquarium (if you can do no better), and you find nothing unpleasant in the eyes of a fish; no matter how fixed they may be. They suggest rather a restful consciousness of existence, which hardly feels its own separateness;



they recall in no way the stony selfishness of the snake.

If we are fishermen, we grasp the slimy scales of a prize with eagerness, while we would shrink from the less defiling touch of the most harmless snake.

Fixity, then, is not the cause of the repellent fascination that lurks in a serpent's eye. Is it in the shape of his head?

Many lizards have heads closely resembling those of snakes, both in colour and shape, in fact often more calculated to inspire aversion, if critically examined. Their bodies are cold and scaly and tapering. The eyes of lizards vary in colour and shape, as do those of serpents, but the expression is wholly different. Take, for instance, one of the little lizards that scuttle through dry fallen leaves of our southern forests, or, squirrel-like, scamper up a tree and shift to the opposite side as we approach, or flatten themselves against the bark, with which they seem to blend. Fix the eye of one of these reptilian sprites, if you can, and you will find nothing repulsive in it. It is bright and inquisitive, what the women would call "cute," and you feel like feeding the little fellow with a fly, if you can convince him of your friendly intentions.

The toad is repulsive enough, even when impartially considered. Industry is not his forte, and there is a fixity in his freckled countenance as he waits patiently for what Providence may send in the shape of a fat bug, but no evil light shines from the little circular, golden-iris windows. They will but wink and roll if an occasional doubt crosses him as to the expediency of retaining on his stomach that strange-looking insect which just now he confidently swallowed, as it was rolled toward him by someone.

...The Egyptians derive their symbols from a period when men were in closer touch with the soul of the world than in these days of machinery. The manifold life which has built together the forms of dust looks out through many portals. In the ancient picture teachings we find the human form surmounted by the head of the hawk or the jackal, the ibis, the cat, or the crocodile. The bull and the beetle were sacred symbols, degraded in a later age.

In all of these we may read of an all-pervading power and intelligence, manifesting through a potential humanity, through different aspects of an evolving soul. Strength and swiftness, keenness and tenacity, intelligence working in earth, air, and water, were all recognized as parts of the whole, as co-ordinate psychic factors. Not one was despised as unworthy or contemptible.

The Miss Nancyism of the modern sectarian affects innocence and ignorance, and will have none of these things...except the lamb and the dove.

Yet in the elder and broader symbology we find the serpent erect, as the symbol of kingly power and occult wisdom.

Yet the serpent that crawls in the dust or glides through the tangled swamp is a thing apart and accursed; it raises itself but to threaten, or to sting, or to paralyze with the steely steadfastness of its will. It is shunned by all that lives, by all that flies or runs; hated in forest and field. The only sound it can make is a hiss, and that sound is the only one common to the language of bird and beast and man. All who can use it mean but one thing, when it is sent forth; malice, defiance, separateness.

And this reptile, with its cruel eye, its crushing fold or poison tooth; which rejects even the freshly slain as its food; which must have a living, struggling victim; is this creature, because of its sinuous path or some fancied grace, to be taken as the type of anything to which we would aspire? Instinct and common sense says No.

But, with one accord, the solemn picture-teachings of the ages, of Jew and Gentile, of India, Egypt, and America, point to some hidden mystery, to some occult combination of power and intelligence, of which, it may be, the serpent of the dust is but the degraded rudiment.

Who can read the riddle of the serpent?

X. R.

[Taken from *The Path*, Vol. IX, June 1894.]

## STUDIES IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

## THE TREE OF LIFE—II

IN VERSES 10 and 11 Krishna refers back to the three-fold classification of mankind that was stated earlier, in terms of the three *gunas* or qualities in nature, *Tamas*, *Rajas* and *Sattva*, which imprisons the reincarnating ego, which comes into the personality. He says that the beings who are centred in *tamas* are completely deluded and have no idea whatsoever of the existence of the Lord in the body, the Incarnating Ego. The beings, who are centred in *rajas*, or desire, may strive to find the Lord in the body, but they cannot succeed alone. The beings, who are centred in *sattva*, find the Lord in the body, and they find it in their own hearts, says Krishna. Yet there are higher beings than those centred in *sattva*, and they perceive Krishna everywhere in his true nature. Thus, there is a difference between the beings centred in *sattva*, who find the light of Krishna in their hearts, and those who go beyond the heart and find Krishna himself. The beings centred in truth or light mistake the *Daiviprakriti* nature of Krishna which is in their own hearts, for Krishna himself, and they take refuge in that light or splendour. The beings, who go beyond *sattva* are those who tread the path of Chelaship, and who find Krishna himself within.

Krishna continues to describe another aspect of his higher nature, which emanates in all the lower kingdoms of nature—the minerals, the vegetables and animals, which is also to be found in our own lower nature, in our very personality. The process of breathing, inbreathing and out-breathing, which is the entering of the ego into the physical body and his departing from that body, is the process of birth and death. It is principally through this process, this inbreathing and out-breathing of the ego into the personality that the ego gathers experience of four kinds, in terms of his four lower principles or vehicles, hence the significance of causing the four kinds of food to digest. It is this gathering of four-fold experience, because of the presence of the ego in the body which enables

memory and knowledge to spring up from these four lower vehicles. That knowledge and memory we call the lower memory, and the lower knowledge, belongs to the personality. When the ego going into the body gets entangled and deluded because of this lower memory and knowledge, the ego forgets the higher memory and knowledge, and that is how both Krishna in that aspect of Himself is the producer of memory and knowledge, and also the cause of the loss of both. And this is just one of the clues which might help students to understand that sentence in *The Ocean of Theosophy*, where Mr. Judge says that the ego is deluded on its way to incarnation in food, that he gets entangled in food. This also can explain to us better the second discourse which mentions, how the Lord in the body gets deluded by the existence of the lower personal man, and how loss of memory, and thereby loss of discrimination and loss of all occur.

The last part of this discourse gives us another three-fold classification of the Universe. Krishna says that there are two sorts of *Purusha*, one is made up of all creatures, *Sarvabhuti*, which are tangible and perishable, the other is called *Kutastha*, he who stands on high, unaffected, and is made up of the intangible *Purusha*. But higher than these two is a third kind of force that is the higher *Purusha*, also known as *Para-Purusha*, or *Purusha-atma*. In this threefold classification the divisible *Purusha* corresponds to *Mulaprakriti*, the lower nature of Krishna; the indivisible *Purusha* known as *Kutastha* corresponds to the higher nature of Krishna or *Daivi-Prakriti*, and then *Purusha-atma* is Krishna himself. This is the general outline of the subject treated of in this whole discourse. In verse 5 of this discourse we find the complete ethical application of the teachings. Thus:

They who are free from pride and delusion, who have conquered the fault of attachment, steadfastly dwelling in Atma, whose desires have departed from them and are liberated from the pair named pain and pleasure, they go undeluded to that place which endureth forever.

These qualifications alone enable a person to cut down with the strong axe of dispassion the branches and roots of this *Ashwattha* tree and thereby transcend the higher nature of the universe; these qualities must be dwelt upon and exemplified in our own life. First of all, we must liberate ourselves from pride, and then we must cease to estimate in our own minds how much people are estimating us. We must cease considering how much people love us, respect us or admire us, and thus become indifferent both to blame and to praise. The disciple must learn to appear as “nothing” in the eyes of men; to liberate oneself from this pride, it is necessary to entirely overcome the personality. We must no longer place our own evaluation on the personality, or expect other people to give any value whatsoever to that personality, but be centred entirely in our own individuality, realizing that the personality is only a necessary instrument or vehicle through which we must work. We must also liberate ourselves from delusion. Delusion can be known in us by one of the three causes. There is the delusion which is produced because of the senses; the delusion rooted in our own desire principle, the principle of *kama*, and there is a third sort of delusion which arises from the combination of *manas* and the principle of desire, that is rooted in *kama-manas*. The first delusion, that which is rooted in the senses, causes what we know of as *Avidya* or ignorance. Our senses mistake the appearance of things for the reality of things, and if we follow simply what our senses indicate we are sure to be ignorant people. Then there is that delusion centred in the *kamic* principle, from which springs the great sin of hypocrisy, the tendency to make-believe, to impose on the senses the very desire that is in our own nature, and try to see things as we want those things to be. The other type of delusion rooted in *kama-manas* makes man give a wrong evaluation to things, from which springs what we know as false discrimination. We put the wrong value on all things.

It is important for the student to understand the difference between delusion and illusion. Illusion is *Maya*, delusion is *Moha*; illusion is

that veil over nature, it is that very *Daivi-prakriti* nature, the higher nature of Krishna, which we must overcome—to go behind the shining veil and see Krishna. Delusion is something which pertains to *Mulaprakriti*. It is the triple veil of the senses, the desire nature, and the lower mind, and that triple veil must be entirely illuminated if man is to get true knowledge, and be able to perceive things as they really are. We must conquer the fault of attachment there, too. Attachment can arise from two things, from the tendency of *Ahankara*-egotism, the false idea of “I,” and delusion, or *Moha*. It is necessary for man to cease self-identifying himself with any of his lower principles, and to overcome the delusion which arises from that self-identifying attachment. We must dwell in *Adhi-Atma*, the Universal Spirit, and for that we must first begin by a meditation on the nature of *Atma*. We must exemplify, embody or incarnate in ourselves the qualities of Arjuna, *i.e.*, we must acquire the impersonal and universal point of view as distinguished from the personal view. When we do this, we really combine in our own nature both divinity and eternity, and become like unto a veritable god.

To reach the Supreme place, we must overcome the desires in our ordinary life. It is not only that we have overcome the attachment arising from these desires, but that these very desires are non-existent in our lower nature. If we take an ordinary example of everyday life, we can see how this is true. We can imagine, for instance, the young boy or girl, very eager to find a suitable profession in life, and full of all kinds of desires as to what he or she would like to do in the world. Until he has settled and really made his choice, naturally he has many and varied desires arising out of this very decision that has to be made, but once the choice is made, all the other desires are going to fall away, and no longer is he going to be troubled with that particular type of desire. The same is true, or should be true, of the girl or boy who chooses his companion of life before marriage. Many desires along that particular line may arise, but once that boy or girl has found the true person, then all these desires become non-existent, they fall away from the personality of that boy or girl. The



same thing should happen to all desires of the personal nature. All in course of time must depart from our lower nature.

We must liberate ourselves from the pair named pleasure and pain. Here again the same thing applies. At our present stage we have to fight with our personal nature, to try to do these things which bring sorrow to our lives, as well as to let go of the things which are really pleasurable. But at this stage, pleasure and pain do not work any more in our own personal nature, they too become absent. We have become truly un-expectant. We do not hope for pleasure, and we do not try to avoid pain, but we understand both pleasure and pain. When all these qualifications are really attained, we go undeluded to that Supreme abode.

We may delude ourselves into thinking that we have attained these qualifications, because we aspire towards them, but it is not as a deluded psychic or as a make-believe that we must embody these qualifications. We must really possess them. That is, they really exist in our own natures before we can reach to the Primeval Man, *Adhi-Purusha*. These qualifications, then, alone will enable man to make himself one with Krishna, *i.e.*, to become the Universal Man, a truly Immortal Self-conscious Being. All human beings, unfortunately, do not attain to this stage. There are beings who do not reach their individuality to complete this union of ultimate goal of human evolution. But there are those who do not even go through the natural process, from *tamas* to *rajas*, and from *rajas* to *sattva*, and then the struggle to overcome *sattva* itself, and tread the path of chelaship. There are those other beings, who do not evolve, but retrograde, because they deliberately persist in evil-doing, and the fate of these beings is discussed in the Sixteenth discourse. For, it is in an understanding as to what happens to the evil doers that we can get a true understanding of why there is pain and pleasure in the world. We must try to see the relationship between these evil doers and our own lower natures.

(Concluded)

## THE SEVEN SISTERS

THE LEGEND of “The Seven Sisters” can be found in every race and at every period of history. Pleiades is a cluster of seven stars that the Greeks called the Seven Sisters, but of which only six are clearly visible. They are also part of the Taurus or Bull constellation. According to Greek Mythology, the Pleiades were the seven daughters of the titan Atlas and the sea-nymph Pleione, born on Mount Cyllene. Greek sailors were said to consult the skies before setting sail. If the Pleiades were visible, all was well. Otherwise, storm conditions were likely. They are also mentioned in Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

They were the sisters of Calypso, Hyas, the Hyades, and the Hesperides. The Pleiades were nymphs during the time of Artemis, and together with the seven Hyades were called the Atlantides, Dodonides, or Nysiades, *i.e.*, nursemaids and teachers to the infant Dionysus. After Atlas was forced to carry the heavens on his shoulders, Orion began to pursue all of the Pleiades, and Zeus transformed them first into doves, and then into stars to comfort their father. The constellation of Orion is said to still pursue them across the night sky.

These seven daughters are said to typify the seven sub-races of the fourth root-race, that of the Atlanteans. “The Greek allegories give to Atlas, or Atlantis, seven daughters (seven sub-races), whose respective names are Maia, Electra, Taygeta, Asterope, Merope, Alcyone, and Celæno. This ethnologically, as they are credited with having married gods and with having become the mothers of famous heroes, the founders of many nations and cities. Astronomically, the Atlantides have become the seven Pleiades. In occult science the two are connected with the destinies of nations, those destinies being shaped by the past events of their early lives according to Karmic law.” (*S.D.*, II, 768)

One of the most memorable myths involving the Pleiades is the story of how these sisters literally became stars. According to some versions of the tale, all seven sisters committed suicide because they

were so saddened by either the fate of their father, Atlas, or the loss of their siblings, the Hyades. In turn Zeus, the ruler of the Greek gods, immortalized the sisters by placing them in the sky. There these seven stars formed the star cluster known thereafter as the Pleiades.

The Native Americans to date perform the ceremonial secret dance of the Pleiades (Ojibway) (Okt-kwa-tah). According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, the Talmud also regards Kesil as denoting Orion, stating: “The Babylonian scribe and physician Samuel (d. 257), who was celebrated also as an astronomer, said: ‘If a comet should pass over Orion the world would perish’” (Bab. Ber. 58b; Yer. Ber. 13c), and the same passage of the Babylonian Talmud further declares that “if it were not for the heat of Orion, the world could not exist on account of the cold of the Pleiades, and if it were not for the cold of Pleiades, the world could not exist on account of the heat of Orion.” Orion is a Greek name, the Arabs called it Al-gabbar, Egyptians Sahu, and old Indian myths Trisanku.

In the Bible, Pleiades are mentioned three times, twice by name, and once by reference, in *Job* 9:9, again in *Job* 38:31, and alluded to in *Amos* 5:8. In Hebrew it is called *Kimah*, a cluster. As per Egyptians the Pleiades represent the goddess Neith, the “divine mother and lady of heaven.” The Incas called the Pleiades “Seed Scatterer” or “Sower.” In Peru they are known as Verano which means summer and is associated with the Pleiades ritual at the summer solstice during the dry season.

The Pleiades are collectively known in India as *Krittika*, one of the twenty-seven *nakshatras* or constellations, and corresponds to the star cluster Pleiades. The name *Krittika* literally means “the cutters.” They are wives of *Saptarishis* (seven *Rishis* or sages) and also six mothers of the war god Karttikeya (Murugan) who developed six faces, one for each of them. According to the epic *Mahabharata* the stars of the Ursa Major or the Great Bear Constellation were these seven sages or *Rishis*. According to Indian mythology, originally the seven *rishis* lived together with their seven wives in the northern sky. But one day, the god of fire, Agni, emerged

from the flames of an offering performed by the seven *Rishis* and fell in love with the seven *Krittika*. Agni wandered in the forest, trying to forget his love for the *Krittika*. He met Svaha in the forest. Svaha wanted to win the love of Agni and so she disguised herself as six of the seven *Krittika*. Svaha could mimic only six of the *Krittika* because the seventh sister, Arundhati was too devoted to her husband to be imitated.

After a while, Svaha gave birth to a child that she named Skanda (Karttikeya). With his birth rumors began to spread that six of *Rishis*’ wives were his mother. Hence, six of the *Rishis* divorced their wives. Arundhati was the only one that remained with her husband. Arundhati, the wife of Vasishta accompanies him in the Great Bear constellation.

It is useful here to recall that *Agni Abhimanim* is the eldest son of Brahma, representing the first element or Force produced in the universe at its evolution. He represents the fire of creative desire. By his wife *Svaha*, *Abhimanim* had three sons (the fires) *Pavaka*, *Pavamana* and *Suchi*, and these had “forty-five sons.” These forty-five sons with their three fathers and their Father Agni, constitute the 49 fires of occultism. *Pavaka* is electric, or *Vaidyuta*, fire; *Pavamana*, the fire produced by friction, (or *Nirmathya*): and *Suchi* is solar fire. *Pavaka* is parent to *Kavyavahana*, the fire of the *Pitris*: *Suchi* is parent to *Havyavahana*—the fire of the gods; and *Pavamana*, to *Saharaksha*, the fire of the *Asuras*, mentions *Vayu Purana*. On the terrestrial planes these fires represent “Forces” of Science and their correlations. *Suchi* or solar fire is called “drinker of waters,” as solar heat causes water to evaporate.

The seven *Rishis* (*saptarishis*) or the *Prajapatis* (progenitors) are also known as “the mind-born sons” of Brahma. Their names are: Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulatsya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasishta. Vasishta is often replaced by Daksha, and Marichi by Bhṛigu. H.P.B. points out that these are called seven *rishis* of the *Third Manvantara*, which refers to Third Round as well as Third Root Race and its sub-races in the Fourth Round. They are the creators (*Prajapati*) of various beings on this earth (*S.D.*, II, 78). There are two kinds of

*Pitris*, *Barhishad* and *Agnishwatta*. The *Barhishad* or lunar *pitris* are responsible for giving form to humanity, and are considered to be sons of Atri. The *Agnishwatta* gave man the “light of mind.” They are said to be sons of Marichi and Sambhuti, daughter of Daksha. (*S.D.*, II, 89)

“The oldest MSS. [manuscripts] in Sanskrit on astronomy, begin their series of *Nakshatras* (the 27 lunar asterisms) with the sign of *Krittika*. The Pleiades are the central group of the system of sidereal symbology. They are situated in the neck of the constellation of *Taurus*, regarded by Mädler and others, in astronomy, as *the central group* of the system of The Milky Way.” (*S.D.*, II, 551)

Their names are given, and these are Amba, Dula, Nitatui, Abrayanti, Maghayanti, Varshayanti, and Chupunika. There are other sets of names which differ, however.

“When Karttikeya was delivered to them by the gods to be nursed, the *Krittika* were only six—whence Karttikeya is represented with *six heads*; but when the poetical fancy of the early Aryan symbologists made of them the consorts of the Seven Rishis, they *were seven*.” H.P.B. points out that before the disappearance of the seventh Pleiad there were seven *Krittika*, and that is why the Hindu astronomers speak of that which, without the help of the strongest telescopes, no one can see. (*S.D.*, II, 551)

The late Dr. Kenealy believed that, in India, Karttikeya is the secret symbol of the cycle of Naros, composed of 600, 666, and 777 years, according to whether it is solar or lunar, divine or mortal, years that are counted; and the six visible, or the seven actual sisters, the Pleiades, are needed for the completion of this most secret and mysterious of all the astronomical and religious symbols. Therefore, when made to commemorate one particular event, Karttikeya appeared, of old, as a *Kumara*, an ascetic, with *six heads*—one for each century of the Naros. When the symbolism was needed for another event, then, in conjunction with the seven sidereal sisters, Karttikeya is seen accompanied by *Kaumara* (or Sena) his female aspect. He is then riding on a peacock—the bird of Wisdom and

Occult Knowledge, and the Hindu Phoenix, whose Greek relation with the 600 years of Naros is well-known. (*S.D.*, II, 619)

The Peacock is a symbol of the hundred-eyed Wisdom. It is the vehicle of goddess Saraswati, as well as of Karttikeya, the *Kumara*, who is a virgin celibate associated with giving light of mind to men. The peacock’s tail represents the sidereal heavens; and the twelve signs of the Zodiac *are hidden on his body*; for which he is also called “*Dwâdasa Kara*,” (the “twelve-handed”), and *Dwâdas âksha*, “twelve-eyed” (*S.D.*, II, 619). The eyes upon the feathers of the bird’s tail, symbolize the sleepless eyes that see all things. To one who has the ambition of becoming an Adept of the “Secret doctrines,” these eyes upon the bird’s tail are a reminder that he must have the hundred eyes of Argus to see and comprehend all things. (*Isis*, II, 409)

Karttikeya is born, but in a still more miraculous manner—begotten by neither father nor mother, but out of a seed of Rudra Siva, *via Agni*, who dropped it into the Ganges. Thus he is born from *fire and water*—a “boy bright as the Sun and beautiful as the moon.” Hence he is called *Agnibhuva* (Agni’s son) and *Ganga-putra* (Son of Ganges). Add to this the fact that the *Krittika*, his nurses, as *Matsya Purana* shows, are presided over by Agni, or, in the authentic words—“The seven Rishis are on a line with the brilliant Agni,” and hence are called Agneya—and the connection is easy to follow (*S.D.*, II, 550). At another place H.P.B. writes that Mars is identical with *Karttikeya*, God of War, born without the intervention of a woman, and he is also called “Lohita,” the *red*, like Adam, and the other “first men.” Brahma, Mars, etc. are all symbols for primitive or initial *generative powers* for the purposes of human procreation. (*S.D.*, II, 43 fn.)

“It is they, the Seven *Rishis*, who mark the time and the duration of events in our septenary life cycle. They are as mysterious as their supposed wives, the Pleiades, of whom only one—she who hides—has proven virtuous.” Karttikeya, who is called the Commander of the celestial armies—or rather of the Siddhas (translated Yogis in heaven,

and holy sages on the earth)—“Siddha-sena,” which would make Kartikeya identical with Michael, the “leader of the celestial hosts” and, like himself, a virgin *Kumara*. Verily he is the “Guha,” the *mysterious one*, as much as are the *Saptarishis* and the *Krittika* (seven *Rishis* and the Pleiades), for the interpretation of all these combined, reveal to the adept the greatest mysteries of occult nature. (*S.D.*, II, 551)

H.P.B. goes on to state: “The Pleiades (Alcyone, especially), are thus considered, even in astronomy, as the central point around which *our Universe of fixed stars revolves*, the focus from which, and into which the *divine breath*, MOTION, works incessantly during the Manvantara. Hence—in the Occult philosophy and its sidereal symbols—it is this Circle and the starry cross on its face, which play the most prominent part” (*S.D.*, II, 551). *The Secret Doctrine* provides many more hints on the right interpretation of Pleiades, the Seven *Rishis* and Karttikeya, which encapsulate the greatest mysteries of the occult nature.

The ancient philosophy and the ancient astronomical knowledge may well be regarded as the missing soul of modern science. Countless observations through ever more powerful telescopes have revealed some physical truths, but not the metaphysical ones upon which these depend. Such observations alone have not enabled the observers to fathom either the true nature of the stars or their function and purpose in the Cosmos. Could they not be the dwelling places of living beings, of gods even, as the ancients affirmed? Neither true nature of the stars nor what they symbolize has been fathomed by modern science, but metaphysical truths in nature are explained in the Wisdom of the Ages, and restated in modern Theosophy. Everything in the material world is a shadow or a symbol of something in other spheres of being. The need for consulting ancient philosophy has been emphasized by Mr. Judge, thus: “It is only by an acceptance of this philosophy, that we will ever comprehend the facts of nature which our science is so laboriously noting and classifying.”

## WOMEN AND SOCIETY

FROM remote antiquity, Eve, the first woman, was created out of the rib of Adam, the first man, as his mate and companion, according to the biblical myth. From the time, going by the Upanishadic allegory, *Satarupa*, the first female, and *swayambhuva Manu*, the first man, were created by the creative ideation of the Self-existent, *Swayambhu*, as husband and wife, to people the world, the status of woman in society and a man and a woman’s mutual relationship, have been a much debated, weighty, secular and religious issue to the present day. The first woman became the victim of injustice way back in antiquity when the cowardly Adam pointed his finger of accusation at her for tempting him to his “fall” and exile from the Garden of Eden. Since that day, she continues to be haunted by the “curse” pronounced on her. Needless to say that this mythical narrative is an allegory, not to be taken in the dead-letter sense, containing in its symbolism an account of a transitional phase in the evolutionary history of humanity as a composite being—spiritual, intellectual and physical. Be that as it may, tracing the history of the status of women in society it is seen that at certain periods a woman is accorded exalted status and at other times she stands debased and abused.

Annals and the sacred literature of the prehistoric world point to the fact that in the ancient world, women enjoyed freedom, dignity and an equal status with men, and were accorded high status in society. Says the great historian and antiquarian scholar, Professor George Rawlinson: “*The mythical traditions of almost all nations place at the beginning of human history a time of happiness and perfection*, a ‘golden age’ which has no features of savagery or barbarism, but many of civilization and refinement” (*S.D.*, II, 722). Professor Max Muller concurs with his view, and shows that in the Vedic period woman enjoyed intellectual and social freedom, in contrast to the indignities their counterparts suffer in the modern-day civilized world. H.P.B. cites a number of learned authors, in her article, “Progress and Culture,” to show that while the ancient



pagan world exalted the woman, in Christendom she loses the high status (*H.P.B. Series No. 2*, p. 36). In ancient Egypt, women enjoyed a degree of freedom and independence which is not seen in the later times and modern days. Roman law conferred on women personal liberty and security, and women played a prominent role in Roman life. Woman's rights were preserved in ancient Greece. In contrast to the virtues of the pagan world, Professor Draper, in his work, *Intellectual Development of Europe*, shows that under the mandate of ecclesiastical Christianity women lost their freedom, independence and natural rights. Industrial revolution made her condition worse, with the violent transition from farm-based rural society to industrialized urban centres. Gandhiji, in his critique of modern civilization, observes in his deeply insightful essay, *Hind Swaraj*, after visiting industrialized England in the early 20th century, that women there toiled in factories from morning to evening for wages, while she should have been the queen of her household as she was before industrialization. It is only in the post war era in the West that women were enfranchised and accorded other civil rights. Though women have won and secured civil rights, strangely, discrimination and prejudice against women continue in more than one form in the predominantly patriarchal society, in almost all parts of the world.

In India freedom of women suffered a severe setback with the Moghul invasion, and spread of the influence of Moghul customs. Many an unsavoury custom arose in the society, such as, child marriage, seclusion of women, imposition of forced celibate life on young widows, and so on, leading to the subservient role she was forced to play in the male dominated social milieu. It is only in rare cases where matriarchal custom prevailed, such as, in the State of Kerala and with some tribes of the North-eastern India that women enjoyed a high status, and played a leading role in family life, though even these have eventually given place to patriarchal order. There are, however, numerous historical accounts of Indian women who have been able rulers of kingdoms and brave warriors, and at the same time mothered and groomed heroic sons who have left a mark

on the pages of history. This only goes to prove that a woman is in no way inferior to a man in abilities and talents. In India, it is only recently that the statute has been amended to give women an equal share in the paternal property. They have prominently taken part in the freedom struggle and are taking part in all fields of social and political life at the present time. Though according to secular laws women are empowered and accorded equal status with men, yet, they still suffer from discriminative treatment, sexual exploitation and other indignities, due entirely to the selfishness, prejudice, lust and undue air of superiority, among men-folk. Such is the abject materialism in the shape of lust and greed that prevails today in the male-dominated Indian society that female feticide and the evil of dowry system in matrimony have been plaguing the Indian society, despite prohibitive laws which have been enacted against them. It is the silent and self-sacrificing women of many a poor family in India who patiently bear the brunt of abuse and humiliation they are subjected to by their drunken, wife-beating husbands, and labour for the upkeep of their family and children under trying conditions.

The question before us is why are women discriminated against and abused, almost all over the world to this day, in spite of a general spread of democracy, education and constitutional guarantee of gender equality. H.P.B. is forthright in unveiling the mask of hypocrisy of the patriarchal society, and reveals the naked truth, in her essay, "The mote and the beam": "Simply to protect the animal passions and lust, the depravity of men—the masters and legislators" (*H.P.B. Series No. 33*, p. 23). In her extensive citation from the seminal writings of Leo Tolstoy, one of the greatest psychologists and humanists of the 19th century, we read: "At bottom her [woman's] slavery," observes the great author, "lies in the fact of her being regarded as a source of enjoyment....an instrument of pleasure...always the slave, humiliated and corrupted, and man remains still her pleasure-seeking master" (*H.P.B. Series No. 17*, p. 47). This undoubtedly is the general condition of women everywhere in the civilized world.



Strange is the perverted logic of men-folk in India, in prescribing for young women such dress code and conduct that do not tempt men to venture to violate her modesty, forgetting the bare fact—the beam in their own eyes—that it is not the woman who is his tempter but man’s own depravity and slavery to unbridled sensuality from which he is in the dire need of emancipating himself, if he is not to sink to a level below that of the beast.

A little unbiased and sincere reflection shows that in accusing the woman of being a tempter of man, as men often do, he is only putting on a mask to conceal his own unmanliness and cowardice. It is only when a woman is able to freely move in the society without fear, and is respected and honoured, that we can say that we have a civilization worthy of that name.

The modern feminist movement is a natural reaction of women against gender discrimination and injustice that she is subjected to. But for such movements of gender justice to truly bear good fruit, the initiative must come from men to first and foremost, reform themselves morally and elevate themselves spiritually so that they are able to see in every woman motherhood and sisterhood, type on earth of the heavenly archetype, *Daivi Prakriti*, the Divine Nature seated in the heart of all—the redeemer and liberator of man. The day this vision is consummated in man then the right relationship between man and woman will be struck with the realization on the part of man that a woman is his helpmate, a part of himself, and that in both of their collaborative labour of Love alone the destined movement of Humanity towards freedom and perfection can be consummated.

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How wise and grand, how far-seeing and morally beneficent are the laws of Manu on connubial life, when compared with the licence tacitly allowed to man in civilized countries....The Brahmin was a *grihasta*, a family man, till a certain period of his life, when, after begetting a son, he broke with married life and became a chaste Yogi.

—*The Secret Doctrine* (II, 411)

## 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:** A person suffering from Bipolar Disorder tends to lose control over what he or she speaks or does, when the cycle of manic depression comes over. Are such people karmically responsible for what they do during manic condition? Does the same apply to the cases of insanity?

**Answer:** Bipolar disorder is also known as manic depressive illness, and is characterised by unusual shifts in mood, energy and activity levels. The mood swings range from periods of extremely “up,” elated, and energized behaviour, known as manic episodes, to very sad, “down” or hopeless periods, known as depressive episodes. Research in this direction has shown that genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors can significantly increase a person’s chances of experiencing the disorder. Likewise, mental stress and traumatic life events may also contribute to or trigger bipolar disorder. These are immediate causes which in turn are rooted in thoughts, feelings and actions of past lives. What makes a person susceptible to one form of disease, physical or mental, is determined by the *skandhas*, *samskaras* or attributes of past lives, which H.P.B. describes as *karmic effects* or “germs.” It is based on these *skandhas*, generated by the Ego in the past lives that the new personality is built, with a particular kind of physical, mental and emotional constitution, in every new life.

Karma is the law of action and reaction; cause and effect. The law of Karma adjusts every effect to its cause and restores the disturbed equilibrium in the physical world and broken harmony in the moral world. Our every action, at the level of thoughts, words and deeds, brings to us appropriate reaction. Our concept of merciful law is the law that allows us to escape the consequences of our

actions. The “mercy” aspect of the law of Karma is that unlike man-made law, it gives us innumerable opportunities to improve. Karma is justice. We are able to appreciate mercy of Karma in that the reactions for our actions are not mechanical, but take into account the motive, the degree of knowledge, inner development and the inner state of the person, as also, the weight of his past Karma.

We incur a heavier karmic debt when we engage in a wrong action *knowingly*. In fact, the more aware we are—of right and wrong—heavier is the debt incurred. On the other hand, crimes committed in *Avidya* (ignorance), as by children, idiots, savages and people who know no better, involve physical but no moral responsibilities or karma. For instance, if a blind and helpless person accidentally hits another in the eye, causing hurt, it is usual for the hurt person to excuse the act and to feel no resentment, and to bear within no seed for future hate. But the same action done purposely, arouses hatred and resentment in the other person, and that person on dying carries with him the seed of hatred and in some other life it will sprout and bring the reaction, pain and also the opportunity to learn the lesson. In the first case there will be consequences on the physical plane but no moral suffering, which is involved in the latter case.

Mr. Judge tries to explain the *rationale* of the operation of the Moral Law of Compensation, in one particular case, of an idiot boy, born of wealthy parents, but with malicious nature. He mutilated flowers and killed insects, in his state of idiocy. The insects and flowers, not knowing his state of idiocy, turned their eyes upon him with pain, as he tortured them. In dying, his spiritual picture, together with that pain and the desire for revenge, were photographed, so to speak, upon their spirits (elementals). These elemental spirits being impressed with his image kept a link with him and when he was born again, these elementals precipitated down his glance, when he directed his glance on any thing or person. They saw what he looked upon and brought about disaster. But gradually the old impressions wore off and he found success in all that he did.

Our courts of law also give milder punishment for crimes

committed by children, adolescents, mentally affected or insane persons, as also, those committed in self-defense or in a state of emotional excitement. When an action is performed without paying much attention, which is not planned or done intentionally, the effect produced is not intense, and hence, less will be the severity of karmic consequences. On the other hand, when an act is performed intentionally, after much dwelling over in the mind, it will produce a thousand times greater effect and hence the severity of karmic consequences will also be proportionate to the intensity of thought. Karma is merely effect flowing from the cause, and there is an exact result for every thought and act.

In the light of the above explanation, we can see that a person suffering from Bipolar Disorder who has lost control over what he or she speaks or does, during the cycle of manic depression, is responsible for his actions, but as these are not intentional, the karmic consequences for the same will be less severe. The same holds good for the actions of an insane person, which are committed during the state of insanity. Broadly, we may define insanity as the condition in which the Ego loses all control over the psycho-physiological side of his body without losing the body itself. In case of incurable insanity, the connection of the lower and higher man is destroyed forever and the lower mind functions on the *astral plane*, and hence is not connected with the physical body. All such cases are of people who know no better, and hence their actions involve physical but no moral responsibilities or karma.

We may extend it to include many similar cases. A person who is possessed by an evil entity, and may commit wrong in the state of possession, is responsible for these actions and will reap the consequences of such actions. Just as we are responsible for the pollution created by our cars or scooters, so also, we are responsible for the psychic contamination from the *Kama Rupa*, that we leave in *Kama Loka* after death, and its ill effects on the living.

**Question:** In what sense can study be called *Yajna* or sacrifice?

**Answer:** Self-sacrifice has been defined as giving to others more

than to oneself. When one studies to be the better able to help and teach others, and not with the intention of gaining knowledge for one's own benefit, or to appear a scholar in the eyes of others, such a study becomes a sacrifice. There is a passage in the letter from a Master of Wisdom, which may throw a different sort of light on this: "The idea I wish to convey is that the result of the highest intellection in the scientifically occupied brain is the evolution of a sublimated form of spiritual energy, which, in the cosmic action, is productive of illimitable results; while the automatically acting brain holds, or stores up in itself, only a certain quantum of brute force that is unfruitful of benefit for the individual or humanity. The human brain is an exhaustless generator of the most refined quality of cosmic force out of the low, brute energy of Nature; and the complete adept has made himself a centre from which irradiate potentialities that beget correlations upon correlations through aeons of time to come."

To use the brain, then, consciously, not automatically, even in the performance of daily duties, is to make of us that generator, which serves evolution by converting brute energy into "the most refined quality of cosmic force." By so doing we add to the "sacrifice," the *Yajna* which exists as an invisible presence at all times. The connection between this and the exhortation to study is obvious. Even the poor efforts of the ordinary aspirant as he strives earnestly to understand the principles underlying life, gradually train the brain to work as such a transformer of brute energy. Thus understood, silent study and thoughtful silent repetition of sacred texts is clearly seen to be a form of sacrifice.

Also, sacrifice is that in which we do not give out of the *surplus*, but undergo mortification or self-denial at the level of time, money or energy, or when we mortify the mind. Study becomes sacrifice when we make time for it by denying ourselves certain legitimate pleasures. Study becomes sacrifice when we strive to train our mind to dwell on noble themes or abstruse metaphysics, and further train ourselves to put across these ideas in such a way that the listener is fully able to understand.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The World Health Organization has declared that the theme for the next one year would be, "Depression: Let's talk." There is a pressing need for all of us to engage in, not only the medical and psychological side, but also the social and spiritual dimensions of depression. Renowned psychiatrist, Avdesh Sharma, co-chair of the world Psychiatry Association's section on Spirituality in Mental Health, emphasizes the important role of spirituality in maintaining mental health. He observes that depression is the cause for highest number of suicides, and has strong linkages with psychosomatic illnesses like diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, cancer, peptic ulcers, and irritable bowel syndromes, as also with substance abuse and alcoholism, when a person seeks a high from the low of depression.

The condition of depression is characterized by sadness, lack of interest, feeling of worthlessness, helplessness and hopelessness, and these may be the result of acute or chronic stress caused by real or perceived loss of job, money or position, death of someone close, or even by reflection on the purpose of life, especially in old age. Depression can also be a cry for help in overcoming the emotional hurdles experienced in difficult relationships, unfulfilled desires and dissatisfaction with self or life. It is being increasingly recognized that in addition to medication or therapeutic intervention, spiritual management could help promote emotional and spiritual health as well as build resilience. Spirituality can create a connection with God as a source of strength, guide, and companion. Spirituality helps a person see that events in life are happening for a purpose, and that they are not the "end but a bend," taking us to a new experience. Spirituality helps to focus on gratitude for that which is still fine in life, and become aware of karmic patterns in life. Spiritually augmented Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) has been found to be very useful in the process of modifying the thinking, belief-systems and perceptions of a depressed person. A depressed person

is helped to learn to put behind the past, to “let go” of the negative thoughts, to be a “witness” to events, to remain detached, and in realizing that whatever the situation, “This too shall pass away.”

There is also research, indicating the positive role of hope, empathy, compassion, contentment, unconditional love and selfless service for overcoming depression. “A spiritual way of life can be very useful for family members and care-givers, including healers and medical professionals to overcome their own stress and compassion fatigue,” writes Avdesh Sharma. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, October 22, 2017)

Today, the majority of people going to a psychiatrist are not “sick” in a conventional sense. According to Dr. Erich Fromm, what they really suffer from “is an inner deadness. They live in the midst of plenty and are joyless.” Another psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, says, “Ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for.” Mr. Judge observes that the physical woes of the race are only skin-deep; the real cause of these woes is mental and moral. We have been drifting away from our spiritual roots, and neglecting to nourish the mind with right food.

When our mind listens to the voice of conscience, and is guided by our divine nature, it is the *creative* mind. The creative mind *responds*, instead of reacting. The creative mind loves *unconditionally*. The creative mind is always willing to see the brighter side of life, which enables a person to say, “With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams it is still a beautiful world.” The creative mind makes for an emotionally positive person. As Hugh Downs observes, “A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes.”

Our “blues” or depression comes in cycles. Mr. Judge suggests that if we maintained a diary we would observe that depression occurs at regular intervals of time. When the depressive cycle returns, we must compel ourselves to feel joyous, even against our will—or at least try to feel the joy of others. We may do this next day or even two days later. We would then have implanted joyous impressions,

so that when the depression returns, it brings along with it the impressions of joy and they would counteract each other’s momentum. Soon we would succeed in establishing a joyous cycle.

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Scientists say that bioelectricity is the body’s master control. A few aim to harness it to re-grow limbs, treat cancer and even to unlock immortality. In the 1780s, when the Italian physician Luigi Galvani connected severed frogs’ legs to a lightning rod, it was seen that they twitched whenever lightning struck. This was an indication that electricity controls the body. Later research revealed, for instance, that wound sites generate their own voltage. Min Zhao, who is at present, a professor at the University of California, Davis, sees bioelectricity as an orchestrator of complicated events, such as the healing of an injury. An experiment conducted by one of his graduate students revealed that electric current directs the movement of cells, and the effect is so powerful that it overrides all the physical and chemical signals that the body uses to heal. This insight was published in the year 2006, which boosted interest in an emerging field known as bioelectricity. Studies reveal that wounds on diabetic mice pack abnormally weak electrical currents. Zhao’s recent research has shown that such wounds heal faster after applying a corrective charge. Zhao’s recent research has focused on diabetics, who are often slow to heal.

A Tufts University biologist Michael Levin, who researched electricity’s role in tadpole tail generation, found that tadpoles possess, in the initial few days of their life, an ability to regenerate their severed tails, but they lose this ability as they mature. However, he found that he could chemically stimulate older tadpoles’ tail stumps and make them re-grow their tails. He electrically induced and suppressed tumors in tadpoles, leading him to believe that people’s cancers can eventually be reversed by re-patterning the abnormal electrical signals transmitted by cancerous cells. Levin is now determined to crack the body’s bioelectric code. Then, animals could



be made to take any conceivable shape. Humans could recover lost limbs and replace failing organs. “If you understood how to build all these structures, you could induce them to be constantly rebuilt,” he claims. Bioelectricity might just be the path to our immortality, writes Jonathon Keats. (*Discover*, November 2017)

All contains and is electricity, from the nettle that stings, and the lightning which kills, and the spark in the pebble or the blood in the body. We might say that electricity is latent in everything, just as it is latent in amber, and we can become aware of it when we provide the conditions necessary for its liberation (*Transactions*, p. 120 & 123). It is well-established that electricity is constantly produced in the tissues of living animal or man. If we consider the muscles, the longitudinal surface of the muscle acts like the positive pole of a galvanic battery, and the transverse surface acts like the negative pole of a galvanic battery. (*H.P.B. Series No. 24*, p. 21)

In Occult philosophy light, heat, electricity, magnetism, etc., are described as progeny of sons of Fohat (*Daiviprakriti*). Fohat is described as the synthesis of all electro-dynamic creative forces in manifestation. “...On the Cosmic plane [Fohat] is behind all such manifestations as light, heat, sound, adhesion, etc., etc., and is the ‘spirit’ of ELECTRICITY, which is the LIFE of the Universe” (*S.D.*, I, 139). “Electricity, the ONE Life at the upper rung of Being, and Astral Fluid...at its lowest.” (*S.D.*, I, 81)

Fohat is called the constructive Force of Cosmic Electricity, which may be regarded as the symbol of universal, unpolarized electricity, metamorphosed into male and female, *i.e.*, polarity, into positive and negative electricity (*S.D.*, I, 145). Fohat may be regarded as “Cosmic Electricity,” but to the commonly known properties of electricity must, in this case, be added others, including intelligence (*S.D.*, I, 85). On the Cosmic plane it is present in the constructive power which is present in the formation of the glow worm, or a simple daisy or even the whole planetary system, and which carries out the plan in the Divine Mind. (*S.D.*, I, 111)

The ancients used to use symbolic language to pass on their knowledge to the next generation. In earlier times wisdom was passed on in the form of folklore, stories and holy symbols. The Ying Yang, the Star of David or the *Ardhanareshwara* form of Shiva are symbols used to depict the fusion of polarities that exist in each one of us. When we know the symbolic meaning, *i.e.*, the consciousness behind the symbol or story, we connect to the source code of wisdom in its purest form. Indian mythology refers to many animals, associated with various deities, which symbolize various human “needs” and tendencies. This symbology helps to understand, what kind of tendencies must be transcended in order to acquire the qualities represented by a particular deity.

Thus, for instance, the mouse, the vehicle of Lord Ganesha, lives in a mouse hole and symbolizes insecurity, fear and vulnerability. In order to receive true prosperity and abundance, one has to master these inadequacies within oneself. Hanuman, the monkey god, symbolises the human mind. A human mind is often described as a “monkey mind” as it displays qualities of a monkey, such as playfulness, anger and lack of concentration. When a person transcends these negative aspects of his mind, the mind becomes sharp and focussed.

Lord Shiva carries many things on his person, like snakes around the neck, the bull as his vehicle, a trident in the hand, and a crescent moon in his locks. The bull symbolises negative traits like, anger, aggression, selfishness, crushing others to win, and excessive will power, which should be transcended, in order to acquire strength, adequate will power, motivation, balance and surrender to master. Another powerful symbol associated with Shiva is the snake, which denotes the Kundalini energy present within all of us. A snake is deaf and it finds its way by using its senses of smell and taste. This represents difficulty in being receptive and listening to the needs and advice of people close to us.

These symbols indicate that “while traversing the path of spirituality and self-actualisation, one must be aware of these instincts



within oneself. They can rear their head any time if we lose awareness of our inner world, and cease being watchful of our thoughts and negative habits and emotions,” writes Haritha Nayak. (*Life Positive*, October 2017)

A symbol is a visible representation of an idea. “To be a just and correct symbol, it should be such as that the moment it is seen by one versed in symbolism, its meaning and application become easily apparent” (*The Heart Doctrine*, p. 149). Every symbol must have a deeper meaning besides the obvious one. In fact, each symbol has at least seven keys to its interpretation—physical, astrological, geometrical, metaphysical, psychological, allegorical and cosmological, writes H.P.B.

In the *Theosophical Glossary*, *Vahan* is defined as a vehicle, the carrier of something immaterial and formless. All the gods and goddesses are, therefore, represented as using *vahanas* to manifest themselves, and these vehicles are symbolical. Our brain is vehicle or *vahan* of super-physical thought. *Buddhi*, the spiritual Soul, is the vehicle of *Atman*, the purely immaterial principle.

Ganesa’s vehicle is the rat, which represents desire nature. Rat is a tiny but the greediest of all the animals. With its sharp teeth it can cause widespread destruction. Similarly, one little desire entering man’s mind can destroy all his material and spiritual wealth, laboriously gathered over a long period. To reach wisdom one needs to purify and transform desire nature. Hanuman is one of the seven *Chiranjivis* or Immortal living beings, mentioned in Hinduism. Hanuman is also called *Vayuputra*, son of *Vayu* or air. The *Glossary* mentions that the trinity of mystic gods, *Agni* (fire), *Vayu* (air) and *Surya* (Sun), are the three cosmic principles, which in esoteric interpretation correspond with the three human principles, viz., *Kama* (desire), *Kama-Manas* (lower mind) and *Manas*, the sun of the intellect. “*Hanuman* was neither a human being nor a monkey: it is one of the powers of the 7th principle [*Atman*] of man (Rama),” writes H.P.B.