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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE FOUNDATION OF RELIGION

RELIGIONS could be based on the knowledge given by a person or they could be based on what was revealed by Supreme God when he created this world. The idea of what this God is, differs from one group of people to another, or even from person to person, and therefore there are as many Gods as persons. These many Gods are but mental ideas of human beings. Where does man get the power to imagine and endow “God” with human qualities? In a sense, man creates these various images and ideas of God with the help of something which is within him, and therefore, we need to get to the root of all ideas to find the *true* God and also the *true* Religion, writes Mr. Crosbie.

Mr. Crosbie gives us two definitions of a true religion. True religion must give us a basis for thinking and acting; it must give us an understanding of nature, of our own and of other beings. “Religion is a *bond* uniting men together—not a particular set of dogmas or beliefs—binding not only all Men, but also all Beings and all things in the entire Universe, into one grand whole.”

No Teacher comes to establish a new religion. Each one of them is a reformer, seeking to reform or purify an existing religion. Every teacher emphasizes the teaching which is necessary for humanity at that time and place. We find that the teachings of every 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 found to be conscious as well as unconscious corruption of the original teachings, with a gradual shift from the study and application of ethics to rites, 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 from whom favours could be asked.

Idle religious sentiments often destroy a true religion. Sentimentalism in religion arises from the false understanding, often perpetrated by the priests and *pundits*, who encourage superstitions and exploit the credulous followers by making them believe that in the end all will be well if they perform certain rituals or ceremonies. True religion is one that makes serious demands on one's life. It is only when the beliefs are actually practised in daily life that their inherent truth or falsehood stands revealed. For most of us the religion in which we were born is our religion. This religion or religious beliefs are influenced by our education and by scientific materialism of our age. As a result, modern man either follows his religion half-heartedly to please his elders or rejects it altogether. Then there are those who feel no need for seeking or questioning, but go through life waveringly, sometimes good and sometimes bad.

Knowledge *is* religion, says Mr. Crosbie. That knowledge is not a supposed "revelation" from some superior being, but an actual knowledge gained through myriads of lives, leading to perfection. True religion is knowledge of one's own self and living the life in accordance with that knowledge, and realizing that the powers of the Godhead, *i.e.*, the power to create, preserve and destroy, are within each one of us. We can say that true Religion is based on true ideas of God, Man and Nature.

These ideas are called the fundamental ideas. If they are wrong then our conclusions will also be wrong. We can see that false idea of God, such as a personal God idea, has given rise to many different gods, and that in turn creates division, because, as H.P.B. says, it gives rise to polytheism, where one will worship many gods, or he will have to worship one, taking him to be the highest, the "God of

gods,” although in reality each of these gods is finite. As against this, there is the idea of an Impersonal God, which is infinite, eternal, and omnipresent, which implies that each one of us is essentially and potentially divine, and which makes us depend upon our conscience, and seek the help and guidance from within instead of looking for the help from a god outside.

According to true or Spiritual Pantheism, it is the Spirit-Soul which pervades and animates all Nature, and there are various degrees of its expression. It is latent in a stone but manifests in man. Pantheism means all-divine or rather *all from divinity*. All is divine *in essence* but not in form. The article, “Morality and Pantheism” (*The Theosophist*, November 1883) mentions that exoteric religions base their morality on the hope of reward and fear of punishment at the hands of an Omnipotent Ruler of the Universe. The scientific basis of morality can be found in true pantheistic doctrine of the Buddha and Shankaracharya, which involves a clear perception of the unity of the one energy operating in the manifested Cosmos. The practice of morality is the most powerful means for the realization of the oneness of existence. What is required is that all our thoughts, feelings and actions must be in unison with nature and not in discord with it.

We may look upon earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes and tsunamis to be sickness of the earth. Mr. Judge describes physical illness as discharge of the inner sickness of the inner being on the physical plane. Similarly, “the ‘lives’ of the earth that have been impressed by the harmful thoughts—the selfish thoughts—of millions of men [and women] have reached a point of explosion, which comes about just as naturally in its own order and cycle, as day follows night. Those... who suffer most from such events have earned the suffering....Man *is* a part of Nature, and if he makes Nature suffer, he will suffer through Nature” (“*Because—*” *For the Children Who Ask Why*). The oneness on the inner plane implies interconnectedness and interdependence. What we do affects others and what others do affect us. “Help Nature and work on with her,

and Nature will regard thee as one of her creators and make obeisance,” says *The Voice of the Silence*.

Religion is a bond which unites all men, all beings and all things in the universe. How? We know that the *Gita*, the Upanishads and also all true religions teach that the personality we cling to is perishable, but there is that in us which is immortal. Religion can become a bond uniting all beings and things provided we learn to internalize the teaching that “I am not my personality but I am That,” and that divine essence is in the dog, in the Brahmin and in the one who eats the flesh of that dog. There is the famous story of “Shankaracharya and the Outcaste” in which one summer afternoon at Varanasi, Shri Shankaracharya, after taking bath in the holy Ganga was proceeding towards the temple of Lord Viswanath along with his disciples. He saw an outcaste coming along with his dogs in his way. He told him, “Get away, get away—move away, move away.” A *chandala* or an “outcaste” was traditionally regarded to be from the lowest rungs of society. In those days, Brahmins were supposed to be “defiled” by the very presence of someone from this lower caste. However, the story goes that the outcaste retorted by asking the question: “How do differences such as ‘This is *chandala* and this is Brahmin’ arise in the Advaita doctrine? After all, it is the same *Atman* that is present in all bodies, irrespective of their castes. You expound non-dualism, but then your actions make no sense. You think that contact with my body will make you impure. But both these bodies, yours and mine, are composed of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and space. The *Atman* in me is identical with the *Atman* in you. So, I do not understand what you are shrinking from.” Shankaracharya was stunned by this response and said that anyone who sees *Brahman* (God) as the sole reality and recognizes the *Atman* as the same in all is worthy of respect. All other distinctions are false. Since the *chandala* has realized the unity of the supreme consciousness, he is akin to my guru. Shri Shankaracharya has expressed these thoughts in *Manishapanchakam*, a composition consisting of five stanzas.

Religion can help us to differentiate between permanent and impermanent. The significance of life consists in realizing the relationship between the fleeting and the permanent aspects of us. Only then are we able to see that there is a meaning to all that happens. *The Voice of the Silence* says: “The branches of a tree are shaken by the wind the trunk remains unmoved.” The “trunk” represents the Perceiver, or the real “I,”—the unchanging and the eternal aspect in a man. The “branches,” represent the personal “I,” emotions and the evanescent aspects of life. When we are too elated or too dejected, we are only looking at the “branches.” Both in happy and sad times it is good to remember, “This too, shall pass away.” We have to get beyond the personal “I.” Are we aware of that aspect in us which is unaffected by praise or blame, adversity or prosperity? Prof. C. S. Lewis writes that if you could only see the person as he really is then you would want to fall at his feet and worship him. In *Letters That Have Helped Me*, Mr. Judge recommends a meditation in which he asks us to *identify* ourselves with the poor, ignorant, wicked and those who dislike us. In such a meditation, we must try to *feel* that *we are that person*, with all his idiosyncrasies and weaknesses. We could get some insight into human nature.

It is good karma which brings a person to the Esoteric Philosophy, or Esoteric Wisdom, which helps one to lose sight of personalities, dogmatic beliefs and special religions. It helps one to separate grain from the chaff, the true religion from the purely human constructions with which it is overlaid, and thus enables one to appreciate that all religions are true at the base and false on the surface. It helps to bring home the truth that the religion into which his body was born is not his real religion. The real religion of every person consists of beliefs or ideas which he holds after investigating why he holds them and how far they are true in the light of accurate knowledge. These ideas along with an effort to put them into practice constitutes for each one of us an “inner religion,” which expresses itself in one’s character, words and deeds. This inner religion must be distinguished from the creed of organized religion. Pure thoughts

and desires result in true faith and true devotion. There is *apara bhakti* or inferior devotion and *para bhakti* or supreme devotion. It appears that *apara bhakti* is for a beginner, who has a need for an idol or image for focusing of his faith and consciousness. Gradually, one has to learn to give up fasts, prayers, pilgrimages, ablutions, rites, ceremonies, etc., which are termed as Practical Worship, and take up Spiritual Worship, which consists in seeking communion with the Divine, which enables one to see the divinity everywhere and in all things. It is not easy to cultivate true and supreme devotion. These two, true Knowledge and true Devotion are the foundation for living the Higher Life, and they should be the foundation of a true Religion. Theosophy combines knowledge with devotion and hence offers a scientific religion and a religious science.

“Religion is the best armour that a man can have, but is the worst cloak,” wrote John Banyan. A religion which encourages a spirit of enquiry and quest for truth can become an armour against evil. A religious creed which is an intellectual extinguisher and does not encourage its adherents to question the beliefs they hold, the customs and traditions they follow, and the rituals and ceremonies they perform, can only become a cloak, which helps one to hide their hypocrisy and ignorance. Every sincere aspirant should ask himself, “Is my religion a cloak to hide my ignorance or my weakness or my fanaticism or my sectarian unbrotherliness, or is it an armour against the foes of ignorance, of vice and above all of the spirit of intolerance and of exclusiveness?” The one who has committed the wrong action repents before his own conscience and resolves not to repeat such an action, and prays to God for knowledge that will reveal why he committed it and how in future it can be averted, he is using prayer as a true power. Then, in spite of his blunder such a religious person uses his religion as an armour. Theosophy gives that knowledge which helps us to discard the cloak of religion and teaches us to use its armour. The Foundation of all true religions is the accurate knowledge that everything is divine in its essential nature and to act for and as the Self of all creatures—practising sincere altruism.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT A SOUND OF THUNDER—I

A SOUND OF THUNDER is a short story by Ray Bradbury, first published in Collier's magazine in 1952 and later in his 1953 collection, *The Golden Apples of the Sun*. It is considered to be one of the best-known time-travel stories in all of science fiction, in which changing the past could bring about significant and catastrophic changes to the future. In the year 2055, time travel has become a practical reality. The signboard on the wall of the time-travel safari company in the United States, Time Safari Inc., reads: "Safaris to any year in the past. You name the animal. We take you there. You shoot it." The company offers wealthy adventurers the chance to travel back in time, in a Time Machine, and hunt a long-extinct animal such as a dinosaur. A hunter named Eckels pays ten thousand dollars to join a hunting party that will travel back nearly 60 million years to the late Cretaceous period, on a guided safari to kill a Tyrannosaurus rex. He asks whether his survival during the journey is guaranteed. The official answer is that nothing is guaranteed. He is introduced to his Safari Guide, Mr. Travis, whose instructions as to what, where and when to shoot or not shoot must be strictly obeyed. Eckels remembers every word in the advertisements, which tend to focus on the reversal of life and death: "Out of chars and ashes, out of dust and coals, like golden salamanders, the old years, the green years, might leap... white hair turn Irish black, wrinkles vanish; all, everything fly back to seed, flee death, rush down to their beginnings.... A touch of hand might do it, the merest touch of hand."

As the party of hunters waits to depart, they discuss the recent presidential elections in which an apparently fascist candidate, Deutscher, has been defeated by his opponent Keith. Everyone is relieved that "Keith" won, rather than his opponent, Deutscher, an anti-intellectual who would have made America into a dictatorship. Many feel that Deutscher's victory would have been a disaster and

describe him as “anti-everything.” The party consists of Eckels, Travis, the safari leader, his assistant, Lesperance, and two other hunters named Billings and Kramer. They enter the time machine with guns, helmets, and oxygen masks. The Machine kicks into operation and the nights, days, weeks, months, years, centuries and millennia whiz by. When the Machine slows and then stops, they are in an old time. “Christ is not born yet, Moses has not gone to the mountains to talk with the God...Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler—none of them exists.” Leaving A.D. 2055, they arrive in the midst of a jungle that existed nearly sixty million two thousand and fifty-five years before. Travis shows them the Path laid by Time Safari, which floats six inches above the earth, and is made up of anti-gravity metal. “Its purpose is to keep you from touching this world of the past in any way. Stay on the Path. Don’t go off it...If you fall off, there is a penalty.” In other words, they should stay on the metal Path and thus avoid stepping on any important plant or animal and disturbing the natural environment. When Eckels asks about this rule, Travis explains that interruption of any natural processes occurring in the past could have devastating impacts on the course of future events.

For instance, if one were to destroy a flower, a mouse or an insect or any other living thing, it could cause potentially massive unforeseen consequences in the future. Thus, accidentally killing one mouse in that jungle would mean all the future families of that particular mouse are destroyed— “all the families of the families of the families of that one mouse!” Since foxes survive on these mice, for want of ten mice, a fox dies and then for want of ten foxes a lion starves, and so on, throwing billions of life forms into chaos and destruction. The result of killing anything in the jungle is literally unpredictable. Thus, effectively, by killing one mouse, one has brought about the destruction of future tigers and lions, and so when a caveman goes hunting tigers or lions for food, he finds none, and so starves. And the non-survival of that caveman could considerably change human history, because the destruction of one man means

destroying a race, a people and an entire history of life.

“A little error here would multiply in sixty million years, all out of proportion. Of course, maybe our theory is wrong. Maybe Time can’t be changed by us. Or maybe it can be changed only in little subtle ways. A dead mouse here makes an insect imbalance there, a population disproportion later, a bad harvest further on, a depression, mass starvation, and finally, a change in social temperament in far-flung countries,” explains Travis. Therefore, no one should kill anything except an animal designated by the company. Before the party of hunters set off, Mr. Travis’ assistant was sent to this jungle, in the Machine to study those animals. He had studied and noted which of the animals lived longest and how many times they mate. Thus, studying the animals in the precise location of the hunt, he observed which animals will accidentally die in any case on the day of the scheduled hunt and marks them with red paint. Those are the animals, in particular the dinosaurs, that the hunters are allowed to shoot—the animals whose death would not change anything. When the hunting party arrives, it stations itself where the animal was scheduled to die by accident in any case, and waits a few minutes for the animal to arrive at the spot, and then tries to kill the animal with guns.

The animal that they are going to kill is a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, specially chosen and marked by Travis’ assistant—an animal that would have died just a few minutes later in any case, by a falling tree branch, so that in killing him they would not be interfering with the past. When the animal suddenly appears, he makes a “sound of thunder.” He is huge and ferocious, much larger and more terrifying than Eckels had ever imagined. As the monstrous animal dashes forward, in his panic, Eckels goes off the path on which they have been instructed to remain and moves towards the Time Machine. While other men fire their guns directly at the monster’s head, which drops to the ground. Just then a massive tree branch falls on the dinosaur—the branch that would have fallen on and killed him anyway. Hence, his death has not affected the future in any way.

When the guides and the other two hunters return to the Time Machine they see Eckels. Realizing that Eckels has fallen off the path, which would mean that the Company will be financially penalized, Travis threatens to leave him in the past unless he removes the bullets from the dinosaur's body as they cannot be left behind in the past. Eckels obeys him.

As the time machine brings them back to the future, to 2055, though everything looks almost the same Eckels notices that things have changed subtly. The most noticeable difference is a sign hanging in the office, which now looks badly misspelt. The sign in the Time Safaris, Inc. office, now reads "Tyme Safari Inc." When Eckels looks at the mud on his boots, he finds a crushed gold and black butterfly, embedded in the mud. He cannot believe that a dead butterfly could have changed anything. He finds out from the clerk at the office that the presidential election of the day before was won by Deutscher, and the clerk who had earlier admired Keith now praises the victory of Deutscher, whom he describes as an iron man, a man with guts. He pleads with Travis to take him back into the past to undo the damage, but Travis had previously explained that the time machine cannot return to any point in time that it has already visited. Travis raises his gun, and "a sound of thunder" is heard, as Travis kills Eckels.

The title of the story, "A Sound of Thunder," is significant. Just as the sound of thunder is frightening and signifies danger, so also the title warns us about dangers and even death in the story. This "sound" is heard twice in the story. It is heard on the arrival of the giant beast and again heard at the end of the story when Travis shoots Eckels. It is taken to symbolise the inevitability of death and also a warning for those who meddle with time. Some critics have drawn attention to Mr. Travis' admission, "Maybe Time *can't* be changed by us... We don't know. We are guessing." Thus, it is clear that although Time Safaris, Inc. has taken precautions, they are based on an incomplete understanding of what time travel technology can do. It is indicative of carelessness with which human beings often

meddle with powers they do not fully understand.

It is a science fiction story that revolves around the concept of “time travel.” Time travel is the concept of movement between certain points in time, similar to movement between different points in space by an object or a person, typically with the use of a hypothetical device known as a Time Machine. There have been several ancient myths and science fiction stories dealing with the same theme, depicting a character moving forward in time. In Hindu mythology the *Vishnu Purana* mentions the story of King Raivata Kakudmi who travels to heaven to meet the creator *Brahma*. When he returns to Earth he is surprised to learn that many ages have passed. This has been explained on the basis of the relativity of time. Time in the heavens passes differently than on Earth. There is the Japanese story of a young fisherman who visits an undersea palace. After three days, he returns home to his village and finds himself three hundred years in the future. He finds that his house has been in ruins, and his family has died.

Without a watch or a clock, we do not have an accurate perception of the passage of time. When one dozes off while travelling, judgment of the time interval becomes erratic. So also, our judgment of time interval is warped during the dream state. In a dream sent by a guru to the disciple, a tiger was pursuing him. The disciple had the feeling that he had run many miles and for hours together. But when he was woken up from the dream, he realized that the actual time elapsed was only a few minutes. It is very intriguing that a drowning man should see his whole life pass before his mind’s eye in a flash. For the Ego there is no past, present and future, but an Eternal Now, so that the soul in *Devachan* (*swarga* or paradise) experiences no passage of time, as it is experienced during earth life. Mr. Judge writes: “Any man can see that after many years have slipped away, he has no direct perception of time just passed, but is able to pick out some of the incidents which marked its passage, and as to some poignant or happy instants or hours he seems to feel them as but of yesterday. And for the being in *Devachan* it is the

same. No time is there. The soul has all the benefit of what goes on within itself in that state, but it indulges in no speculation as to the lapse of moments” (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 95). We take no cognizance of time when we are completely engrossed in a task, or during periods of unalloyed happiness, just as the *Devachanee* loses all sense of time because his cup of happiness is full to the brim.

A Master of Wisdom says that “past, present and future” are clumsy words. The subdivisions, which seem natural, are man-made and purely subjective. It is impossible to point out the dividing line between the past and present, or the present and future. Even as we say, “now,” it has moved into the past. Our divisions of time are relative to the observer.

Time, as we understand it, is dependent on our consciousness, and it is an illusion. Time is but a by-product of consciousness. In science fiction stories either prolonged sleep or a time machine is used as a means of time travel. H. G. Wells popularized the idea of time travel by using a vehicle or device to travel selectively forward or backwards through time. His novel, *The Time Machine*, (1895) deals with a trip to the future rather than the past.

In “A Sound of Thunder,” wealthy adventurers get a chance to travel back in time and hunt dinosaurs. It is interesting to consider if travelling back in time is possible. If it were possible, can the past be changed? There are those who fear the consequences of changing the past. The grandfather paradox is a paradox of time travel, in which discrepancies emerge through changing the past. Thus, for instance, someone going back in time to kill his father or maybe his grandfather is known as the grandfather paradox. If one goes back in time to kill one’s grandfather, before his father or mother is born, then he will never be born, and he will never grow up and decide to go back in time to kill his grandfather. In other words, the relation of any action that changes the past, in which the past will be different from the way it was before, will give rise to contradiction.

(To be concluded)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS THE CENTRE IN THE WHIRLWIND

NOW remember that you are earnest, serious, devoted and sincere; and all aspirants of that nature suffer from what in Occultism is called the Great Sifter. Let me quote just one sentence from H.P.B.'s great article on "The Theosophical Mahatmas": "As soon as one steps on the Path leading to the Ashrum of the blessed Masters—the last and only custodians of primitive Wisdom and Truth—his Karma, instead of having to be distributed throughout his long life, falls upon him in a block and crushes him with the whole weight." This is equally true, though not to the same measure, and equally applies, though not to the same extent, to every earnest and devoted Soul who studies and practices the tenets of the Wisdom-Religion, in the company of his co-pupils and co-workers and under the direct influence of the Masters' Life and Vitality.

All chelas, regular and accepted, begin in Lay-chelaship; the ranks of disciples are always gaining recruits from the bulk of probationers, and the latter begin by a process of self-energization. Any earnest student by a right resolve puts himself on the first rung of the ladder of probation. Just as in our schools we have trial examinations by our own teachers, which, if passed, enable us to enter the lists of regular examinations, so also by our own sincere earnestness and right resolve we enter the lists. Not only on our determination to go on, but on how actually we do get on, depends the next stage, when, having drawn the attention of a Master, we come under His observation. But this second stage grows out of the first, as naturally as the bud blossoms into the flower.

That being so, apply the operations of this law to yourself. Your very earnestness and sincerity, your very resolve to act rightly and in terms of the great laws whose nature and activities you are studying in our books and literature, have brought you into the atmosphere of probation. You may not be aware of this, or you may not recognize it, but the fact remains. Study and service of Theosophy is a Force which is productive of results. Your service of your fellow men, spiritually rendered in terms of Theosophic truths, has produced the result which may appear to you manifold but it is a unit and it is referred to in the above quotation.

Well, then, take it that your Karma has begun to precipitate; and as

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

the movement proceeds from within without, the psychical nature is stirred first. Physical or actional changes are not touched, save as they are *directly* affected by the psychical. It is the psychical nature of the Astral man on whom the attack is first delivered. Our mental habits, our emotional outlook, our feelings and sentiments, our pride and prejudices, our predilections and preconceptions are for the first time perceived by us as objective things—however vague, dim and shadowy, that vision is. For the first time the Inner Ruler, answering to the unspoken invocation of the Right Resolve comes unto his own—and is in a position to survey the armies in the midst of which he stands. Before his advent we *were* our habits, outlooks, feelings, etc.; now all these are not we, but ours. A thing by itself cannot cause war; it takes two to make a quarrel; and the power of the Fiery Inner Ruler begins to consume our psychical nature; all the juice and moisture of the emotional nature begins to change, vapour results, evaporation sets in and we begin to dry up. What is here described in our sentence takes quite a long term of years. The very first signs of the transforming psychical nature are of the nature of resentment of the lower self towards and against the readjustment which has begun to take place within itself. Our own pet theories, favourite view-points, confirmed opinions, conventional habits and even what are termed our convictions—all undergo a change and during the process there is a roaring ocean, stormy, wherein waves rise mountain high. But, as in all great storms at sea, there is a centre in the whirlwind to which the wise and experienced Captain steers his ship. Our Inner Ruler is that Centre of Peace and Strength.

Well, this has been a long talk, but, my friend, you will find therein something of practical value and utility. Try to *apply* what you study in your Theosophical books; read that article of H.P.B.'s from which I have quoted; apply its contents to your own case and above all be happy in the realization that the Soul which is you has begun to shed his luster on his outer representative. We will soon be in the June and there is a June for the Soul as there are many Junes for the body, Do you remember what Robert Browning said in his tender "Pippa Passes":—

June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing,
May it be very soon for you the June of the Ego!

METAPHYSICS—SOME REFLECTIONS

I

THE WORD “metaphysics” is derived from the Greek words “*meta*” which means “after,” and “*physika*” which means “physics.” This term was first used to designate those works of Aristotle which followed his works on physics. The prefix “meta” indicates that these works came “after” the chapters on physics. However, Aristotle referred to these works as “first philosophy,” and not metaphysics. The editor of Aristotle’s works is considered to have placed the books on first philosophy right after the works on “Physics,” and called them “metaphysics,” or “the books that come after the books on physics.” The physics books discussed things that change; the metaphysics books discussed things that do not change. In general, metaphysics is considered to be the branch of philosophy that studies the fundamental nature of reality, the first principles of being, identity, change, space and time, the nature of consciousness, and the relationship between mind and matter. Thus, metaphysics denotes that science which is based upon a knowledge of powers and things which are beyond the grasp of the external senses. Consequently, it refers to an understanding of the finer vibrations or forces of nature, which constitute the soul of all things, whether animate or inanimate.

In a sense, metaphysics is behind not just physics, but all the natural sciences. Both natural sciences and metaphysics deal with the “what” and “how” of things. The natural sciences obtain their answers by observation, experiment, measurement, calculation, classification, analysis, rationalisation, and so on. Metaphysics, on the other hand, depends upon that which goes beyond reason and mere book study. It is the knowledge which is the product of the spiritual illumination of the mind, owing to the capacity to directly perceive and realise the truth. A true metaphysician should be acquainted with the fundamental laws of existence, and must possess the faculty of intuition. In fact, a metaphysician must be in possession of both kinds of knowledge—obtained through observation and reason, and through intuition.

Let us consider, for example, the question: What is Man? We see that the natural sciences, philosophy and theology hold many and varied viewpoints concerning man. “Man is a different entity for different classes of people: to the modern scientist he is a bundle of atoms which combine in definite ways to disintegrate in course of time; to the modern psychologist and so-called philosopher man is a collection of sensation impressions and their reflexes which combine to give birth to mind which also may be named soul; to the psychoanalyst he is a bundle of complexes; to the spiritualist and the psychical researcher he is a ghost or spirit, embodied or disembodied; to the theologian he is a soul fashioned by God to be saved by prayer, as to the surgeon he is a body made by Nature to be saved by the lancet,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia. The metaphysical view describes man to be a microcosm or a little universe inseparable from the macrocosm or the larger universe, and therefore if we study man by separating him from the Universal Whole, variously designated as “Heavenly Man,” “Adam-Kadmon,” “*Purushottama*,” etc., we will fail to understand what man is in reality. Metaphysically, “Man is a correlation of chemical physical forces, as well as a correlation of spiritual powers,” (*Isis*, I, 309). All these factors which combine to make up a Man are but aspects of ONE LIFE. The great axiomatic truth is that the “ONE LIFE” is the only eternal and living reality, which the Hindus call *Paramatma* and *Parabrahmam*.

Aristotle believed that there must be a science which investigates the first principles of all reality. Other fields of science investigate a small portion of reality. Metaphysics and theology, according to him, investigate the possibility of transcendent and divine things. We must start with the beliefs or ideas that are known to us and then work backwards to find the underlying truths on which those beliefs are built. Through such a process we can reach the discovery of first principles. We may regard first principles as self-evident truths that form the foundation of what we know to be true. It is a basic assumption which cannot be deduced from any other proposition or assumption.

At a simple level, we might say that the first principles or basic assumptions are those Universal Ideas which form the *noumenal* world based on which is built our world of phenomena. Aristotle, the pupil of Plato, proposed that there must be propositions that do not need to be proved, and he called such propositions, the *first principles of demonstration*. He believed that “first principles” could be discovered through *induction*. Aristotle is spoken of as the Father of Modern Science because he refused to recognize super-sensible cognition as the source of knowledge. He considered that first principles or universal truths could be discovered by careful observation of the many *particular* instances of these truths, which process is known as *induction* or *inductive* method. The inductive method is the scientific method, often described as “bottom-up” approach. In this method, one begins with specific observations and then develops general theories, or draws a conclusion leading to a general principle or law.

For instance, if observation of many species of the land turtle shows that these turtles have shells, lay eggs and eat plants and insects, then it could be induced that all land turtles have shells, lay eggs and eat plants and insects. Thus, in the inductive method a general rule or principle is formulated based on the observation of a few particulars.

Aristotle believed that the first principles or the universals (or forms) are real entities, but their existence is dependent on the particulars that exemplify them. Consider, for example, a particular oak tree, which is a member of a species, and it has much in common with other oak trees. Its universal, or “oakness,” is a part of it. A biologist can study oak trees and learn about oakness. “Oakness” cannot exist apart from the oak tree. Hence, Aristotle observed that no universals exist separated from individual objects, *i.e.*, there are no “uninstantiated universals.” According to Aristotle, if a universal exists, then there must have been, must be currently, or must be in the future, something on which the universal can be predicated. So, according to Aristotle, the form of an apple exists within each apple,

rather than in the world of the forms. He found the *universal in particular things*, which he called the *essence of things*. While admitting that knowledge must be in terms of concepts or universals, he held that we become aware of universals only by abstracting them from the phenomena of the senses.

Aristotle believed that real knowledge could be obtained through the senses. Mind discerns the principles of things in the objects perceived by the senses and knowledge is the result of this abstraction. He considered the knowledge obtained through the senses as more reliable than any *a priori* concept of an ideal reality.

Plato's method is known as the *deductive* method, or a "top-down," approach, where one reasons from "general principles" to "specific cases," as when we apply a mathematical theorem to a particular problem. "All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Hence Socrates is mortal," is an example of deductive reasoning; the premise of the logic may be taken to be the keynote, or universal principle, which is then applied to particulars. Thus, in the deductive method, we may begin with a theory, and then narrow it down to a hypothesis, which may be tested. Through observations, the hypothesis can be accepted or rejected. Through acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis we confirm or reject the theory.

Plato taught that "beyond all finite existences and secondary causes, all laws, ideas and principles, there is an Intelligence, Mind, the first principles of all principles, the Supreme Idea upon which all other ideas are grounded. . . .the ultimate substance from which all things derive their being and essence, the first efficient Cause of all the order and harmony and beauty which pervades the Universe" (*Isis*, p. xii). This he called the "World of Ideas." *Ideas* are the *archetypes* or *models* of which particular objects, properties and relations are copies.

Plato said that there is One Reality behind the differentiations in the phenomenal world. True philosophy deals with Ideas or *noumena*, rather than the *phenomena*. "He considered those only to be genuine philosophers, or students of truth, who possess the knowledge of the really-existing, in opposition to the mere seeing;

of the *always-existing*, in opposition to the transitory; and of that which exists *permanently*, in opposition to that which waxes, wanes, and is developed and destroyed alternately” (*Isis*, pp. xi-xii). We cannot obtain true knowledge by merely observing changing things, but they can be understood in terms of the “key” provided by the permanent. He laid emphasis on intuition or direct perception, which is above the reasoning faculty. It is through intuition, which is the faculty of the soul, that Reality is perceived. Patanjali also says that if one wants to have wisdom, or knowledge without error, it cannot be through inference or testimony, in which we deal with many particulars and not with the general field of knowledge itself. Parmenides the Greek philosopher, pointed out that nothing that exists can simply vanish out of existence, *i.e.*, if there is no permanence, you cannot deal with Reality. Plato made a lucid statement that anything that we see, which keeps changing, in a sense does not have total reality. We cannot *know* it, because to *know* something is to be aware of it in all its aspects. Any such awareness that we form becomes invalid the next day if the thing itself changes. Hence Plato states that about such things you can have *opinions*, but you cannot have *knowledge*. Hence the need to go to Universals. It is not enough to know about all types of triangles, we must know about “triangularity.”

In understanding the nature of the soul, the Platonic and Aristotelian approach and hence, conclusion differs. “Plato, starting with universal principles, declared that the soul of man is derived from the Universal World-Soul, and is identical in essence with that which is a radiation of the ever-unknown Absolute. Aristotle, starting from below, approached the subject of the soul by eliminating one by one those things, which the soul is not. The conclusion he finally reached was that the soul is the form of the body. This soul, however, is plainly the astral or psychic principle.” (*Theosophy*, September 1939)

We may commence our study of man by considering various details pertaining to him, *i.e.*, by going from particulars to universals,

but we must not lose sight of the Platonic method, *i.e.*, going from Universals to the particulars. Metaphysical ideas, because they are not based on direct experience with material reality, are often in conflict with the modern sciences. Attempts to scientifically prove the existence of a “soul” or “spirit” in man, or to prove the existence of God and other non-objective realities are futile. The difficulty arises because an attempt is made to objectify something which, by its very nature, cannot become an object of scientific studies. The knowledge of modern scientists is limited, not only due to imperfections of instruments used but also because of their unwillingness to probe beyond the material. As a result, science tends to reject all that cannot be observed, classified or analysed as fraud and superstition. In the article, “The Mind in Nature,” H.P.B. sums up the attitude of modern science towards knowledge of the ancients as: “The field of scientific investigation is bounded by physical nature on every side; hence, once the limits of matter are reached, enquiry must stop and work recommenced.... Great is the self-satisfaction of modern science, and unexampled its achievements... they declare that the genuine, real knowledge of the nature of the Kosmos and of man is all of recent growth. The luxuriant modern plant has sprung from the dead weeds of ancient superstition.”

Man is a unity and we speak of that unity as the “Self.” This unity is made up of different constituents contained in one. We have a visible, physical, objective body, which is an instrument of the Self. Man has a mind which enables him to perceive ideas, form them into thoughts and images, analyse and recombine ideas, etc. But above the realm of physical matter and the region of intellect there is a still higher state of consciousness, the seat of self-consciousness, where the real Self or Ego resides and controls mental as well as physical actions. What is this real Self which remains immutable while matter and mind are subject to continual change?

(To be continued)

NON-VIOLENT ECONOMY

EVERY subject worthy of study must somehow connect back to the amelioration of the human condition as its stated end goal. What is socially irrelevant is entirely pointless. Furthermore, from our own lived experience, human life and condition is a whole and not simply the sum of its parts. However, when we apply modern inductive analytical tools for its study, we naturally decompose it into various aspects and study them in isolation. And researchers go so far down the rabbit hole in their chosen field, that they lose connection with the very purpose of their endeavour.

In such a reductionist environment, depending on the mental disposition of the cycle, one or more aspects tend to take on outsized importance. And as it stands, the zeitgeist of our times is Economy. This is likely a self-evident fact for most people but to show its universality, we can use the following simple illustration.

The year 1918 saw the last pandemic of Spanish Flu which was very similar to our present day COVID crisis. It took a similar toll on human life, disrupted the functioning of society and also caused economic damage. However, the newspaper headlines of the time read, “Churches, schools, shows closed,” “Epidemic of Influenza Threatens Whole World.” They tried to objectively capture the subjective human misery wreaked by Spanish Flu. In modern times, newspaper headlines for COVID read, “China market falls on COVID woes,” “COVID-19 Economic Impact Could Reach \$8.8 Trillion Globally,” and so on.

Economics has taken on such importance that we even measure human misery or happiness using dollars. In fact, there is such a thing as the Human Misery Index which only takes into account the economic indicators of unemployment and inflation. While, the World Happiness Index gives the largest weightage to real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, so countries such as Bhutan do not even figure on the list. Economics is verily the ruling aspect of the post-industrial human condition!

NON-VIOLENT ECONOMY

Since the aim of Theosophy and that of the Masters behind it, is to “*work for the liberation or salvation of mankind,*” an examination of the ruling aspect of current social condition, namely Economics, is a relevant subject for discussion.

The underlying philosophy of economics is based on the fact that all sentient beings pursue happiness. But being materialists, they define happiness as the consumption of goods and services, leading to an increase in material comforts. In this system, one can define the worst possible state as that which causes misery for everyone involved with no silver-lining. And the best possible state is that which creates the greatest good for everyone without any collateral damage or ill side-effects. An action is judged as good, if it incrementally moves the current state in the direction of the utopian good state and away from the dystopian bad state. Some people are equipped with skills to move the current state more towards the good state than others. These people are economically rewarded and those who act in a way that moves towards the bad state are punished. Those that are consistently good, get consistently rewarded and move up the social ranks. Thus, the formation of deep social hierarchies is inevitable in this system of meritocracy. The desire of individuals to move up the ladder manifests as greed and that which is coeval with it, the fear of moving down the ladder. This greed and fear manifests at the macro-economic scale as cycles of Boom and Bust.

A rather disingenuous argument is put forth in popular thought that the current fragile, interdependent, debt-fuelled economies of nations help maintain the prevailing uneasy peace on earth. It is claimed that since World War II, which saw the birth of the new world economic order, there have not been any large-scale wars. But a sober analysis shows that the current economic order is imbued with violence.

At the individual level, almost every one of us as kids have been shown a destitute person on the streets and warned that if we do not study and make something of our life then we would end up like

him on the street. As such, the rat-race in schools is the first manifestation of violence inflicted by our economic order.

Workplaces of today are factories of exploitation. Workers commute through noxious traffic and spend all of their life energy at work. We hear people talk about work-life integration, but the truth is, life is work and work is life. At the end of the day, it leaves them no time or energy for higher inclinations or pursuits. Stuck between the *greed* of a better life and the *fear* of a destitute one, workers willingly sacrifice themselves on the altar of social mobility.

At the community level, urbanization is driving before our very eyes the largest displacement of population in Indian history. Rural communities are being destroyed. There are many cases where the only inhabitants of the village are elderly people whose children are all in urban centers or abroad. At the government level, there is heavy taxation and even corruption. Those in power prey on the common man and benefit from that exploitation. Law only exists for those without money or power. At the global level, more advanced countries use debt-traps to undermine the sovereignty of smaller countries to gain access to their resources or for geo-political advantages.

As Leo Tolstoy puts it, “Money is a new form of slavery, and distinguishable from the old simply by the fact that it is impersonal—that there is no human relation between master and slave.” At every level, the current economic order wreaks violence. Alternatives such as communism and socialism have both monumentally failed as an experiment. In democracies, neo-liberal thought processes purport to solve the ills of the current economic order by taxing the rich and re-distributing the wealth to the poor. But ultimately, there appears to be no political solution to immorality.

To find a solution to the violent system of economics, we can look no further than the father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi, for inspiration and guidance. For him, life was one-whole and so he based all of it on two simple ideals: Truth and Non-violence. Everything else followed from these two simple ideals.

J. C. Kumarappa who was associated with Gandhiji for almost all his life, imbibed these ideals and gave expression to them under Gandhian Economic Thought.

In this system, there are five classes of economies based on their moral disposition. At the lowest is the Predatory economy. Like the tiger of a forest, it lives at the expense of another's life. Colonialism is an expression of such an economy which consumes sovereign countries for its survival. At the human level, it is represented by assassins and mercenaries.

One level above is the Parasitic economy. Unlike a predator, a parasite does not kill its host but lives at its expense while adding no benefit. Neo-colonialism would fall into this category because it sucks the life-blood of countries without undermining their sovereignty and existence. Thieves and bureaucrats under a license-raj seem to represent this state in society.

The next higher level is the Enterprising economy which is a balance of taking and giving or producing and consuming. Most nations and individuals belong to this economic moral quality. In this case, there is both an assertion of individual rights and an assumption of responsibility to various degrees. Some birds are said to embody this ethos in the forest. They give back to the jungle economy by building nests that other birds can use but they defend against other birds while they themselves are nesting.

The economic category of the next higher moral quality is called the Gregarious economy. This category is characterized by bees which work for the sole benefit of their respective colony. They produce in abundance as compared to their consumption and as a result the benefits of their industry overflow to those even outside their community. A bee asserts very little of its own individual rights and is almost entirely subservient to the needs of the larger colony or its responsibility. At the human stage, a well-functioning and co-operative joint family operates in this way.

The economic order of the highest moral quality is called the "Mother" economy. It is characterized by the selfless, unconditional,

self-effacing service and sacrifice of a mother for her child. The only expression of this ideal in nature is of mammalian mothers for their children. There are no examples of countries that embody this economic system and it was Gandhiji's dream that India be the example to the world that such a system was indeed efficacious.

Gandhiji believed that it is only in such a system that Swaraj or true independence was ever achievable where one system of tyranny when defeated will not be immediately replaced by another of a slightly different disposition. Such an ideal society would be a stateless democracy or an enlightened anarchy, where social life has become so perfect that it is self-regulated or self-ruled.

The preamble of the American Declaration of Independence holds an echo of this sentiment: "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*" Theosophists posit that the Masters of Wisdom have been working behind the scene to aid humanity since its childhood and that their unseen influence is behind every major milestone of humanity. The declaration of American independence is one such event which laid the keynote for the formation of a nation where a newer and higher race of men is set to evolve. As such, the word "liberty" in the declaration, meaning a state of being liberated, should be taken to mean Swaraj. However, the zeitgeist of modern America gives this word a connotation rather of *sweccha* or to do as one pleases. This is diametrically opposite to the true meaning of Swaraj as we will see later. Hence, the correct understanding of the word Swaraj is the key that unlocks the expression of the Mother economy.

Swaraj means self-rule, "swa" means self and "raj" means rule. The depth one finds in the meaning of this compound word will be proportional to the depth of one's understanding of the word "self". Freedom fighters alongside Gandhiji took "self" to mean the nation state of India. That if a democratically elected, local government ruled India instead of the British that Swaraj would be achieved.

This is a noble but a narrow, political understanding of the term. In today's materialistic times, "self" has popularly been taken to mean one's personality that is bestowed with a name and form, leading to the American conception of personal liberty or *sweccha*.

However, in Theosophy, we make the distinction between the illusory or personal self and the real or Higher Self. The former is physical, thinking and acting nature while the latter is the recording, non-acting and spiritual nature. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, these are referred to as *Kshetra* and *Kshetrajna* and also as *Deha*—the physical body with its corresponding principles and *Dehi*—the indwelling spirit. In *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 109) H.P.B. says that "It is a strange law of Nature that, on this plane, the higher (Spiritual) Nature should be, so to say, in bondage to the lower. Unless the Ego takes refuge in the Atman, the ALL-SPIRIT, and merges entirely into the essence thereof, the personal Ego may goad it to the bitter end." We see a similar metaphor in the *Voice of the Silence*: "Yea, ignorance is like unto a closed and airless vessel; the soul a bird shut up within. It warbles not, nor can it stir a feather; but the songster mute and torpid sits, and of exhaustion dies."

On this plane, our real self is in bondage to the illusory self but in a pathological case of Stockholm syndrome, we ignorantly identify ourselves with our captor and do his bidding. From the Theosophical perspective it becomes clear that true Swaraj is only attained when the Ego has freed itself from such false identification, thus bringing the lower entirely under the influence of the higher, to the point where all actions of the lower are completely guided by the higher. As *Light on the Path* says, this is only accomplished when the Ego willingly "puts the bit into his own mouth" where the reins connected to it are held by the Higher Self. Such is also the hidden meaning of the prayer in *Matthew* (VI:9-13), "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." This calls for an appreciation of our true nature and striving to live as the Higher Self and not as our personal ephemeral self.

Since the Higher Self is in essence the Universal Self, one who

identifies with it, identifies with ALL and will strive for others as men now strive for themselves. When many units of a community embody this ideal, it unlocks the Mother economy. It is an economy in which people have given up greed and hence eliminated its twin—fear. No child fears that its mother may not feed it the next day and hoards food. Similarly, such a community would see no need of ownership and would embrace trusteeship as a natural corollary of the Mother economy. It is not that a Mother economy results in Swaraj but rather that true Swaraj unlocks the Mother economy.

Similarly, we read in *The Key to Theosophy*: “To seek to achieve political reforms before we have effected a reform in human nature, is like putting new wine into old bottles. Make men feel and recognize in their innermost hearts what is their real, true duty to all men, and every old abuse of power, every iniquitous law in the national policy, based on human, social or political selfishness, will disappear of itself. Foolish is the gardener who seeks to weed his flower-bed of poisonous plants by cutting them off from the surface of the soil, instead of tearing them out by the roots. No lasting political reform can be ever achieved with the same selfish men at the head of affairs as of old.”

The only true and lasting solution to human misery is to change the hearts of men. That change must come from within. The aim and purpose of Theosophy is to work on the moral and causal planes to bring about true Swaraj, first at an individual level and then collectively as a society. It is only then will we live to enjoy a truly non-violent economy.

A NATIVE American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said, “I feel, as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one.” The grandson asked him, “Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?” The grandfather answered: “The one I feed.”

—*Native American Story*

ON ESTABLISHING CONTROL

MR. CROSBIE wrote to a correspondent: “Control is the power of direction, and when exercised in one way, leads to its exercise in other ways until it covers the whole field of operation...If in any one thing control is difficult, begin with the purpose of control in the mind, and *stop* at the first indication that control is being lost.” (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 17)

Control demands awareness; and awareness, concentration on the duty or the task in hand, deliberateness in thought, speech and action. It is beneath the dignity of thinking man to drift from idle thought to fantasy, as the butterfly flits from flower to flower, to act on every passing impulse, supported by no guiding principle.

Control requires not only a controller but also the acceptance by the personal man of his authority. No submission to dictation from without is called for, but the subordination, willing and conscious, by the personality to the Inner Ruler, and obedience to Its behests. In how many, even among earnest students of our great philosophy, is there established the habit of subjecting the inclinations and impulses of the personal man to the judgment of the Soul, the verdict of conscience, before acting on them? Yet he who does not, makes himself too often but a slave to others’ promptings and to outer things.

Uncontrolled speech, for example, may be mere babbling or it may cause pain to others. Surely the gibe that shows perhaps a superficial cleverness but cuts its victim and may rankle long would hardly pass the lips of the aspirant who had established “the attitude of purposive speech.”

In the *Gospel According to St. Mark* (III, 27), appears the warning: “No man can enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil the house.”

How often, alas, is the “strong man,” the lawful ruler of the personality, bound hand and foot by those traitors within the gates, his uncontrolled feelings and thoughts, and rendered by them almost

impotent to repulse temptation from without!

In the letter from Mr. Crosbie quoted above he gave the valuable suggestion that a detailed piecemeal effort to control, for instance, our reactions to others' words and actions, or our impulses, or a habit of mind or body, may be less effective than beginning with "the idea, attitude, and purpose of control in all things that concern the vassals of our house. The advance would then be all along the line, and the habit of control established, the *balance preserved*. It sums itself up in my mind as the *establishment of the control itself*, irrespective of things controlled.

"Patience is needed in order that the passage of time required for the bodily instrument to be altered or controlled is complete. Violent control is not so good as gentle control, continuous and firmly unrelaxed," writes Mr. Judge. Our body cells are made up of very tiny units of energy, or "lives" or elementals. All our habits leave a deep impress upon these elementals because we have been doing it for many years and many lives. Breaking a habit amounts to washing the concerned elementals clean of their first impressions and giving them reverse kind of impressions. The whole struggle could be physically and psychologically draining.

There is a mantram quality to the verse in *The Voice of the Silence* that could be very helpful in the effort to raise the consciousness to a higher level and to subject the personal to the control of the higher nature: "Both action and inaction may find room in thee; thy body agitated, thy mind tranquil, thy Soul as limpid as a mountain lake."

The close connection between control and calmness is well brought out in the Second discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, where Krishna tells Arjuna that one who, "free from attachment or repulsion for objects, experienceth them through the senses and organs, with his heart obedient to his will, attains to tranquillity of thought...and his mind being thus at ease, fixed upon one object, it embraceth wisdom from all sides."

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

We need to ban animal testing. Jezebel, a US-based website featuring news and cultural commentary, recently reported that from 1989 to 2010, research by Dr. Mehmet Oz inflicted suffering on and killed over 300 dogs, 31 pigs and 661 rabbits and rodents. Ironically, this report comes just after the passing of FDA (Food and Drug Administration) Modernization Act 2.0 which would eliminate a federal mandate in the 1938 Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act requiring animal testing for new drugs. Although this mandate, if it becomes a law, would permit Drug developers to use alternative methods for testing; what is required is a bill that ends animal testing altogether.

Those who defend animal testing argue that testing drugs on animals is our only option for advancing human medicine, ignoring the fact that differences in the bodies of species can lead to misleading information. According to the Humane Society nearly fifty million animals are used in laboratory experiments every year in the United States. “In these experiments, animals are exposed to toxic chemicals or diseases and imprisoned in barren cages. They are usually killed after experiments are completed.” Advocates of testing on animals draw attention to important discoveries involving animal research. For instance, in 1921 it was demonstrated that we could treat diabetes with insulin by performing experiments on laboratory dogs who had their pancreatic ducts tied. Those supporting animal experimentations are of the opinion that drugs that have not been thoroughly tested on animals pose threats to humans. An example is given of thalidomide, which had not been tested on pregnant animals, and though it was not approved by the Food and Drug Administration, nearly twenty thousand people in the United States were given the drug as part of a clinical trial. When the drug was reported to lead to the birth of thousands of malformed babies as well as still-births and miscarriages, it was withdrawn from the market. A scientist remarked that such a disaster could have been

averted if the drug was tested on laboratory animals before it was launched.

It should be noted that a lot of these animal experiments are poorly designed and hence their results are meaningless. According to a 2004 FDA report 92% of drugs that pass the animal testing stage are ultimately abandoned because the results usually do not bear out with humans. Though animal experimentation has been a default approach for decades, it has not been demonstrated that such animal use has been essential or even reliable for medical advancement.

Some of the alternatives to animal testing include using a large database of known chemicals to predict a new chemical's toxic properties. Another alternative is the use of "organoids," miniature organs and tissues in-vitro that enable modelling of human physiology and disease. "Other viable in-vitro methods include the use of... biological samples often left over from clinical procedures, such as surgery, or from dead bodies; technologies that use stem cells; and even 3D printing." It would prove beneficial to both animal and human life if billions of dollars were spent in exploring the alternatives instead of animal testing, writes Brian Kateman, a co-founder and the president of the Reducetarian Foundation. (*NBC News*, October 4, 2022)

To a student of Theosophy futility of vivisection is obvious not only because it involves horrible cruelties inflicted on animals, but because of the fact that although man is like an animal in the constituents of which his physical form is composed, he is more than an animal. He is an animal *plus a living god* within his physical body. In other words, the "intrinsically paramount power of psychic over physical nature" has to be taken into account.

A very interesting line of argument was given by Jolyon Jenkins in an article entitled "Beast in Man" (*New Statesman and Society*, May 3, 1991). He says: "The argument is not about utility, but morality. Some people would claim moral discourse is simply inapplicable to animals....Looked at from the perspective of the suffering subject, an animal's pain is as real to it as a human's pain

is to him or her. The vivisectioners rarely deny this, but they seem to say that it is simply *less important*—that its interests require less consideration....Why is animal suffering unimportant? It can hardly be because of intelligence, or language, or ‘dignity,’ or any of the other things that are supposed to distinguish humans from animals.”

We justify vivisection and animal experiments, saying that they are for the benefit of humanity. Prof. C. S. Lewis argues that it is not right that one species should suffer for the happiness or comfort of another. If human beings claim their right to torment animals, just because they are higher than animals, by that very superiority they should be better than the beasts and abstain from inflicting pain. If we must torture them in order to improve human life or relieve human pain, it is our grave responsibility to live a life of such superior order as to justify the sacrifice of those animals. If we use medicines which are directly made from animal extracts or take advantage of techniques, which are evolved as a result of torturing or killing animals, we are party to it and are giving indirect consent to the killing of animals. Hence, Buddha says, “One should neither slay nor *cause to slay*.”

Ashley Montagu, speaking on “Religion, Science and Animals,” in 1984, said that belief in animals as animated automata occurs largely among the so-called civilized societies. The so-called “primitives” consider animals as part of nature, where no one form is considered superior to the other or superior to nature, unlike those of us in the West who consider all other forms as “inferior” to ourselves.

Do animals have souls? Theosophically, an animal has a “soul,” but does not have a conscious surviving *Ego-soul*, as in case of man, which survives after death and reincarnates as a man. “The animal has an astral body that survives the physical form for a short period; but its (animal) Monad does not reincarnate in the same, but in a higher species, and has no ‘Devachan’ of course. It has the *seeds* of all the human principles in itself, but they are *latent*.” (*S.D.*, II, 196 fn.)

A soul takes on a tough life in order to learn the learnings of a hundred lifetimes, says Ajay Kalra. The author says that he imagines that before he was born, God made him sit in his heavenly drawing room and asked him to choose between two plans or designs that God had prepared for his next life. The first was the design of life that began with a loving family and an easy career and ended with caring children and a comfortable retirement. However, he was warned that if he chose this design, he will not learn much. The second option will be an unpredicted life, full of all kinds of challenges with ups and downs, addictive behaviour, spiritual pursuit and alienation from mainstream society. However, this second life would give him learning of a hundred lifetimes. The choice was between an easy life with not much to be learnt, and a difficult life with the possibility of tremendous growth. The author says he was intrigued at having to make the choice even before birth. The mind craved for an easy, comfortable conventional life. But the soul hungered for learning and growth. However, before making the choice he demanded to know what was the ultimate purpose of all learning and growth. God answered, “It is to realise that you and me, are One.” Once he made the choice of a difficult life, he was conceived in a womb that ensured all challenges of life and he found himself moving on and learnt at every step new lessons of life.

What could be the nature of that life in which is packed the learning of a hundred lifetimes? The author writes from his own experience that the first learning is that nothing is constant, when one moves from an unpleasant to a pleasant life and back again to a difficult life. Whenever a good chapter of life ended and a bad one began, he found himself in despair. But what kept him going was the thought that just as winter is followed by spring, so also good times follow bad times. “Often we mistakenly believe that our problems and sufferings are because of our life situations. A heartbreak, a financial crisis, a health scare, a death of a near one, a job loss, a divorce. Whatever be the situation, the problem is not the situation. It is our mind interpreting the situation.” We would find it

easier to deal with life, once we learn to trust life, with the thought that there are laws that govern nature. He says in times of dire need he remembers receiving help in the most unexpected way. Our universe does not operate randomly. It is an intelligent universe. Life has a plan, but we will not know it all at once. If we trust life and go on patiently, we will know one day that we are one with God, writes Ajay Kalra, a life coach, psychologist, yoga teacher, and author. (*Life Positive*, October 2022)

Theosophy teaches that just as at the moment of death, the dying man has a retrospective insight into the life just ended, so also, before rebirth, the Ego has a pre-view or prospective vision of the life that awaits him. When the time comes for the Ego to take birth, there is a preview of *all the lives* lived up to that point. From among the storehouse of *skandhas* generated in past lives, are chosen a few which determine, the kind of physical body, emotional and mental nature, etc., for the next birth. Also, at that point, from all the affinities formed by that Ego in the previous lives, from among the strongest affinities, are chosen the parents. The Ego chooses also the surroundings, *i.e.*, the nation, condition of poverty or riches, etc. We cannot possibly have a preview of every event that will take place, because our life is not predetermined, though we may see the major events that are likely to take place in an outline, because some of the karma with which the Ego is born are so powerful that their precipitation cannot be averted.

We tend to judge karma as “good” or “bad” from the point of view of the personality. A person who suffers the misery of deprivation and humiliation due to lack of wealth regards poverty as “bad Karma.” But from the larger point of view, from the point of view of the Ego, which gathers experience from every circumstance of life for the purpose of development, poverty is not “bad Karma.” Tests and trials are necessary for gaining moral strength and depth of character. Thus, it is quite possible for the Ego to voluntarily choose to take birth in poor surroundings instead of choosing the life of pleasures and comfort. The Ego sees the

necessity for discipline and hence chooses to take birth in poor surroundings where endurance, patience and strength may be acquired by experience.

Though it is the Ego that chooses life full of challenges for the purpose of eliminating defects or acquiring fortitude and sympathy, and learning certain lessons, the outcome will ultimately depend upon the *attitude* of the personal man. If the personal man only strives to dodge the circumstances, then no conscious learning happens. The attitude should be, “This is what I not only deserved, but in fact desired,” and then strive to give the best response to whatever life brings.

Awareness of impermanence brings us wisdom. We see this in the story of Padmasambhav, commonly known as Guru Rinpoche. He was a young eighth-century Indian mystic, who spent most of his adulthood in Tibet. He was given a permanent place to live in the King’s palace. He was well-loved by almost all people except a few who envied him. Once while dancing, holding in his hands, a trident and a bell, in ecstatic condition, he hurled them into the air from the rooftop. The same fell on the head of a passer-by, killing him on the spot. His opponents aroused common people who demanded that Rinpoche must be banished from the community. He spent the rest of his life in the wilderness. That incident was enough to awaken Rinpoche and bring him face to face with the reality of this world, namely, impermanence.

Often, we realise the value of things only when we lose them. While reflecting on impermanence one meditates on death, one finds this life very beautiful. So, we must enjoy every moment of it. It is very important for us to learn to focus on both positive as well as negative experiences of life. The awareness of impermanence of all things and situations can help us to relish and savour all wonderful parts of life, and also help us to cope better with change. The lesson learnt by Emma Louise, founder of a website on kindness, was that

“if we endure the impermanence of all things and appreciate what we have while we have it, without clinging, it makes life easier and more satisfying.” Awareness of impermanence makes us better able to balance our existence both in times of happiness and in times of sorrow, because we know that both happy and sad times will not last forever, writes Janina Gomes. (*The Speaking Tree*, October 10, 2022)

The Buddha said: “Impermanent are all conditioned beings.” All composite things, which have been put together, formed or compounded have a beginning or birth, and that which is born must one day die. Thus, every compound form in the universe is impermanent, and therefore subject to change. That alone is eternal which is un compounded; only the unborn can never die.

Next, the Buddha says: “Full of pain are all conditioned beings.” Something that is a source of pleasure may be tied up with anxiety, because we are afraid of losing it. It could be a person, a thing, or a position or power. Being composite, all things and beings, however dear or precious, must sooner or later disintegrate and perish, causing pain and suffering due to their loss. But the root cause of our pain is our desire and attachment. “The ocean of life washes to our feet and away again, things that are both hard to lose and unpleasant to welcome, yet they all belong to life; all come from the Great Self that is never moved. So lean back on the Self—be like the great bed of the ocean that is never moved though storms may ruffle its surface,” writes Mr. Judge. Finally, the Buddha proclaims: “Unsubstantial are all conditioned beings.” This is because things have no permanent identity or unchanging selfhood. The Buddha then teaches the Noble Eightfold Path, a cure for all suffering.

The first step in the Noble Eightfold path is “Perfect Vision,” or the initial spiritual insight and experience. Spiritual insight involves an understanding of the true nature of conditioned existence as discussed above. However, to achieve any concrete results, this must be followed by “Perfect Emotion,” *i.e.*, one needs to transform one’s emotional nature in accordance with that insight and understanding.