

The United Lodge of Theosophists

DECLARATION

THE policy of this Lodge is independent devotion to the cause of Theosophy, without professing attachment to any Theosophical organization. It is loyal to the great Founders of the Theosophical Movement, but does not concern itself with dissensions or differences of individual opinion.

The work it has on hand and the end it keeps in view are too absorbing and too lofty to leave it the time or inclination to take part in side issues. That work and that end is the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of Theosophy, and the exemplification in practice of those principles, through a truer realization of the SELF, a profounder conviction of Universal Brotherhood.

It holds that the unassailable *Basis for Union* among Theosophists, wherever and however situated, is "*similarity of aim, purpose and teaching*" and therefore has neither Constitution, By-Laws nor Officers, the sole bond between its Associates being that *basis*. And it aims to disseminate this idea among Theosophists in the furtherance of Unity.

It regards as Theosophists all who are engaged in the true service of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, condition or organization, and

It welcomes to its association all those who are in accord with its declared purposes and who desire to fit themselves, by study and otherwise, to be the better able to help and teach others.

"The true Theosophist belongs to no cult or sect, yet belongs to each and all."

Being in sympathy with the purposes of this Lodge, as set forth in its "Declaration," I hereby record my desire to be enrolled as an Associate, it being understood that such association calls for no obligation on my part, other than that which I, myself, determine.

The foregoing is the form signed by Associates of the United Lodge of Theosophists. Inquiries are invited from all persons to whom this Movement may appeal. Cards for signature will be sent upon request, and every possible assistance furnished Associates in their studies and in efforts to form local Lodges. There are no fees of any kind, and no formalities to be complied with.

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THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

A Magazine Devoted to
The Living of the Higher Life

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- (a) To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour;
- (b) The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and
- (c) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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THE THEOSOPHICAL CONCEPT OF GOD

GENERALLY, a person's idea of God is what he has learnt from the religion in which he is born. Monotheistic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam speak of one God. As against this, there are polytheistic religions, which believe in many Gods. For some people, God is a gigantic being—kind, merciful, just, loving, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. But, if God is kind and merciful, whence came evil? To say that "evil" is the work of Devil is to say that there are two Gods, or at any rate, devil is an equally powerful being who is able to work against the will of God himself. And if Devil is an independent entity then that God cannot be omnipresent; and if that God has been unable to deal a death-blow to Devil, he cannot be omnipotent. Some people believe that God created this world and all the creatures of the world. If he creates a new soul for every new baby, including the children of adultery, does it not make him an accomplice in the crime? Also, if there is a new soul for every baby which is born, one wonders why some are born rich, healthy and in favourable circumstances while others are born in poor families, or with deformity or congenital disease? Some people say that it is the "will" of God and that we must not question his wisdom. Some religious sects declare that some men are foreordained by God to go to heaven, while all the others would go to hell after their death, no matter what they do in this life. Others believe that there is only one life and unless we live that life in a righteous manner, God

will cast us in eternal hell. They then live in the fear of God. They observe all the customs and rituals enjoined upon them in their scriptures, lest their God should get angry and curse them! Others give away millions in charity or construe! temples for their God for his blessings. All these things make their God no better than a mighty tyrant or a despot who conducts the affairs of the world as per his whims and fancy.

Many people believe that God is someone to whom they can pray and get desired objects in return. In *The Key to Theosophy* H.P.B. asks, is it not blasphemous to say that an Omniscient and Omnipotent God needs uttered prayers to know what he has to do? Petitionary prayer kills self-reliance. Theosophy recommends "will prayer," which is the ardent turning of the soul towards the divine. If we think it is God who gives us strength and power to overcome our passions and weaknesses by prayer, then where is our merit and why should we be rewarded for overcoming our weaknesses that cost us nothing but prayer? "This idea of passing one's whole life in moral idleness, and having one's hardest work and duty done by another, whether God or man, is most revolting to us, as it is most degrading to human dignity," writes H.P.B.

Some people think that God can forgive us our sins if we sincerely repent. Others think that if only we declare our belief in the blood of Christ as a price already paid in advance for the sins of the whole world, we would be forgiven, no matter what crime is committed. Such a belief will make us commit the sins with impunity, again and again, and then ask for forgiveness. Could we allow the wrongdoer to go scot-free while those who suffered at his hands and those related to them continue to suffer the ill-effects? Such forgiveness would only encourage cruelty and hypocrisy.

Theosophy does not believe in a personal God. However, theosophists are not atheists. God is described variously as "One Reality," "Absolute Principle" or *Parabrahm*, which is the source and substratum of the manifested worlds. It is the Rootless Root and Causeless Cause. It is without attributes. Hence, it is considered

to be unthinkable and unspeakable. It is beyond the range and reach of finite mind. Any concept of One Reality can only dwarf the idea of God. Hence the *Mandukya* Upanishad speaks of it in terms of negations, "not this, not this." It is both, absolute being and absolute non-being; it may be termed as BENESS, the *essence* that underlies every being. God, in theosophy, is symbolized by Absolute Abstract Space. Space is really the container of everything — itself limitless, without beginning or an end. It remains unchanged by presence or absence of objects contained within it. Coming into existence of the Solar systems and Galaxies or their destruction has no effect on Space. There is nothing, which is outside of One Reality with which It can have any relationship. Hence, to think of It as a person with whom we can have any relationship or to whom we can pray for obtaining our desired objects or ask for forgiveness, is absurd.

Yet, the fact is that in the history of humanity, sages and seers, saints and devotees have spoken of the existence of God. Some claim to have even *seen* God. Pagans and ancient Egyptians had numerous Gods whom they worshipped. Hindu scriptures speak of the existence of thirty-three crores of Gods and Goddesses who symbolize powers and forces of nature. They have god of water called *Varuna*, the god of fire called *Agni* and so on. Then there are Gods who perform certain functions, or rule over certain regions of the universe. Thus, *Yama* is called the God of death. *Ganesa* is called the God of wisdom. Most religious traditions speak of recording Angels or *Chitragupta* or *Lipikas* or the scribe who meticulously keeps the record of doings of men, based on which they are judged after their death and sent to heaven or hell. In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna speaks of His *transcendental* and *immanent* aspects. Having enumerated his divine excellencies, drawing our attention to his presence in the manifested world, he then describes his transcendental nature, thus:

My divine manifestations, O harasser of thy foes, are without end, the many which I have mentioned are by way of example. Whatever creature is permanent, of good of

fortune or mighty, also know it to be sprung from a portion of my energy. But what, O Arjuna, hast thou to do with so much knowledge as this? I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself, and remain separate. (*Gita*, X)

Theosophy speaks of One Reality periodically manifesting numberless universes like ours, only to reabsorb the same after a period. The plan for the Universe to-be, exists in the Divine Mind, which finds its expression through the collectivity of seven hierarchies of divine beings headed by Archangels, *Amesha Spentas*, Dhyani Chohans, Aeons or Sephiroths, in various spiritual traditions. These beings are god-like in their nature and power. They were also ordinary beings like us who had, through the process of evolution, reached the highest stage of spiritual development by their own effort and merit in prior periods of evolution, in prior worlds and chose to help humanity by renouncing the peace and bliss of *Nirvana*. When a new Universe has to take birth, they interpret the ideas in the Divine Mind and impress them on matter as laws of nature. They are the architects who draw the blue print as per the plan in the Divine Mind. Collectively, they form the Cosmic Mind. It is then up to the "builders" or the "*Cosmocratores*" to execute the plan, just as a mason works on the blueprint prepared by the architect. The "builders" are divine beings on the lower rungs and emanate from the higher ones. Making clear the distinction between the higher and lower beings, H.P.B. writes:

The gods and rulers of our Earth are cosmic Rulers; that is to say, they form into shape and fashion cosmic matter, for which they were called *Cosmocratores*. They never had any concern with spirit; the Dhyani-Buddhas, belonging to quite a different hierarchy, are especially concerned with the latter. (*Transactions*, p. 48)

The universe is thus governed from within by the divine intelligences. There is order and plan behind seemingly blind forces

nature. Nature's forces are presided over and governed by the divine beings. In that sense, the Hindus, Greeks and the Egyptians are not wrong in saying that there is a God of fire, God of rain, God of wind, God of ocean, and so on. At our stage of development, they appear to us like Gods, just as we might appear as Gods to the intellect of an ant or a black beetle. There are Dhyani Chohans who preside over the evolution of various kingdoms of nature, the elemental, the vegetable and the animal. The most complex and powerful instrument of man—his physical body—is the gift of Lunar *Pitris*. The Solar *Pitris* gave us our mind which makes us self-conscious and free-willed beings, with power of choice and self-reflection. They assist humanity in its evolution when the law of cycles or karma permits them. We know this as a "cycle of *Avatars*." Part or full *Logioic* consciousness then incarnates and works among people to re-establish *dharma*. Entire *Logioic* consciousness is said to have incarnated in Krishna and hence he is considered to be a *purna-avatar*. Rama was only a partial avatar. The tenth avatar is mentioned by various names in Brahmanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity. Shri Krishna explains the mission or purpose of *Avatar* by saying:

I produce myself among creatures, O son of Bharata, whenever there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world; and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness. (*Gita*, IV)

Having come from the same source, each one of us is like a ray of the Sun. "Every man has a god within, a direct ray from the Absolute, the celestial ray from the One; that he has his 'god' within, not outside, of himself" (*Transactions*, p. 53). Hence, within us are the god-like powers and potentialities—power to make, unmake and remake. There is One Life, One Consciousness, which shines in all beings, though it does not *shine forth equally* due to limitations

of mind-body instrument and ignorance. Adepts and sages are those who have worked upon themselves, disciplined themselves to express "That" which lies latent in other beings. The grand purpose of life is to re-become the God. Thus, God is not separate from us. He is the very highest or *Atman* in each and every being. "Look inward, thou art Buddha," says *The Voice of the Silence*.

If we worship the "gods" for obtaining objects of our desire or for a long stay in heaven-world by performance of various sacrifices and rituals, enumerated in sacred books, we do get the reward. But once the stock of merit is exhausted, we have to be reborn again in this world. Study of the Vedas, performance of sacrifices, mortification, alms-giving, etc., take us only thus far and no further. These things in themselves do not entitle man to see God. It is only those whose actions are for Him alone, who consider no other goal superior to Krishna, who are free from attachment to the results of actions and free from enmity towards any creature, seeing the presence of same God in all creatures, go to Krishna, the highest— from which there is no return. Jesus said, "Pure in heart, see God."

God-like beings, such as, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Shankara, Mahavira, and many others are those who had reached the enlightenment or the perfect union with the immortal spirit. The perfected being utters, "*Aham Brahmosmi*," or "I am verily the Brahman." We are unable to say this because the Spirit within is obscured, veiled, limited by our physical nature. Spirit when invested with matter experiences the qualities that proceed from matter, and with which it gets identified, teaches the *Gita*. But through discipline, constant practice and meditation, through the highest altruism, one can attain to enlightenment. In the state of *Samadhi* the ascetic loses all sense of individuality, including his own. He becomes—the ALL.

You must not call anything void, without saying what the thing in question is void of.

—HERMES

IMPORTANT NOTICE

We apologize for the confusion caused due to sudden change in numbering of the Volume and issue numbers of THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT. Our magazine was originally registered (with the Registrar of Newspapers for India) in Karnataka, as it was then printed in Bangalore. Later it was published and printed in Mumbai and hence it was required to be registered at Mumbai. The procedure of obtaining a fresh Registration Number required our magazine to be treated as a fresh publication. Being a legal requirement, we had no choice but to introduce the change with immediate effect. Subsequently, for technical statutory reason we were required to treat May 2009 issue as Volume 1, issue 1, and number the subsequent issues accordingly. Hence Volume 1 will cover the period from May 2009 to April 2010 and subsequent volumes will be counted from May to April (next year).

However, for the purpose of subscription we have decided to adhere to the old pattern, i.e., reckoning a volume from November to October (next year).

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IS LIFE JOYFUL?

THE DESIRE to enjoy life is universal, but for how few is life a continuous song of joy! There are many for whom life is full of misery and suffering, but always there is hope in the human heart. The ancient Indian philosophers symbolized cosmic manifestation itself as a dance, *Lila*, and they saw in bliss, *Ananda*, the highest aspect of Divinity. *Ananda* is not to be judged in terms of the fleeting and ephemeral joys of ordinary life. Ordinary joy goes to the head like champagne, and we become incapable of extracting the lesson of the experience.

Life itself is joyful, but it is so only when we bring together pleasure and pain and get the inner meaning of both. The purpose of life is to educate us, and for that education both joyful and sorrowful experiences are necessary. Most people try to have only the happy ones; and misery increases, because they have not learned the meaning of life and the impossibility of enjoying happiness if they shun all suffering. Social reformers nobly seek to banish all suffering, but it cannot be done completely if pleasure is to be retained; the contrast is necessary to appreciate joy. A mood of elation is inevitably followed by its reaction in a mood of depression. Most serious of all, the mad desire to cultivate pleasures at all costs and to shun all unpleasant and painful experiences stifles the voice of conscience, and diseases of character and of mind are bound to result.

Sooner or later, the person who has followed pleasure blindly will find himself in the darkness of a broken conscience, with a confused mind and a heart cold and unresponsive to the needs of others. The trouble with most people is not deliberate wickedness, but folly. Wickedness, however, can spring from folly if we do not free ourselves from it. How to make our lives joyful? Three steps are necessary. First, there must be the attitude of gracious acceptance of whatever comes. True graciousness of heart and equanimity of mind, are the inner qualities necessary to extract the joy of living.

Next, we must learn from everything so accepted, the lesson that

it has to teach us, and for that we require silence and study. Noise and idle talk are characteristic of our civilization. People are so busy talking and listening to chatter that they cannot hear the voice of their Inner God or even the voice of their own conscience. If a beautiful experience comes to us and we prattle about it to all our friends and acquaintances we cheapen it and lose half of its beauty. When trouble comes, instead of increasing it by rushing about and talking of it and seeking advice from everyone we know, we should compose ourselves by keeping silent, reading some devotional scripture, and then thinking quietly over our problem, to see if we cannot find the solution ourselves. No difficulty is unique. Other human beings have met the same difficulties as those that now confront us and we can observe how they have met them, thus profiting by their experiences. But, for that we have to study. It is generally recognized that study is necessary for any profession we want to enter, for everything we desire to do in the world; and yet in the most important sphere of life people brush aside the idea of study and consider it as unnecessary.

Then, having accepted experience in the right manner, having learned its lesson by silence and study, we must take the third and last step: we must use the lesson to create joy out of the experience, not for a selfish reason, but in order that we may spread that joy and happiness in the lives of other human souls.

The Enjoyer within ourselves is the Soul. "The spirit in the body is called *Maheshwara*, the Great Lord, the spectator, the admonisher, the sustainer, the enjoyer, and also the *Paramatma*, the highest soul" (*Bhagavad-Gita*, XIII, 22). But there are some pleasures and pleasurable sensations in which the Soul within will have no part. Just as the composer needs a responsive instrument; just as the writer, no matter how beautiful his ideas, cannot express them without pen and paper, so the Soul with a broken conscience is incapable of making itself heard in terms of its own nature. It cannot make its music heard without pure, faithful instruments—a pure mind and an unselfish heart. Exaggerated asceticism is as foolish as sense

indulgence. The body must be used properly, or we shall lose the capacity to enjoy the happy experiences of life, and so miss their lesson. Nor is passive resignation the right attitude. Those who profess to be resigned to the "Will of God" too often go about with long faces and frequently become positively embittered and morose. Certainly they are anything but happy.

If we can master our inner attitude and look upon all experience as a lesson through which we can learn and grow, the outer difficulties which confront us would not make us sad. The strong heart and the virile mind find joy in overcoming difficulties. When that position is taken, our attitude to all can be one of gratitude. If people injure us, let us bear in mind that we too have injured others in the past, and we can be grateful to our hostile critics and our enemies for the opportunity they afford us to learn a lesson. We must be equipped like the village woman who can step forward briskly, a vessel full of water on her head and another on her hip, with such perfect balance that not a drop is spilt.

As we accept experience in the right way, as we learn from it, we shall gain the true sense of humour without which life becomes irksome. Silence and study will give it to us. When we have gained it we shall laugh at ourselves for having rejoiced over soap-bubbles and for having felt sad and upset because someone said something unkind about us. Then we can look at our joys and sorrows with a true sense of humour, playing with them as a mother plays with her children.

When we enjoy all experiences, even those that give sorrow, because their purpose is understood, the creative faculty in us will be aroused. Creation is always joyful. It can be applied in small matters as well as in great. In dealing with the little affairs of life we can create joy. We can make others happy by the way we say "good morning." We can help others by the way we talk, the way we behave. We can spread nobility when we receive our friends or go to visit them. Then each day will bring its own joy and all our life will be a song of joy.

STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA

THE FOOL—I

THE CHAPTER is called *Balavaggo* or The Fool. The term *Bala* means "the fool" or "a child." In this chapter, the term is applied to someone who is ignorant of the law or has little understanding or limited insight as to the purpose of life. In that sense, we are all fools to some extent. "The title...is clearly meant to indicate the man of inner confusion, the self-deceived, the hypocritical, and has less to do with intellectual attainment than with quality of motivation. Elsewhere, Buddha makes it clear that even the humble may be 'thoughtful,' and the thoughtful person is certainly never entirely a 'fool'" (*Theosophy*, Vol. 44, April 1956). The term "*bala*" signifies spiritual immaturity. But just as the normal child has potential to grow up into a mature person, each human being has potential to become spiritually wise. Theosophy says that the perfectibility is inherent in man. If it were not so, we could not somehow acquire it. There is one Life, one Consciousness, one *Atman* shining in all beings, although it does not shine forth equally because of ignorance, because of imperfect instrument through which it works. Mr. Judge points out that each human being has a definite character, different from every other human being. But all these differences, such as those shown by babes from birth and by adults as *character*, are due to long experience gained during many lives on earth. They are the outcome of the soul's own evolution.

1. *Long is the night for him who cannot sleep. Long is the yojana (a ten mile distance) for him who is weary. Long the chain of birth and death for the foolish who do not know the true law. (60)*

2. *If a wayfarer does not meet his better or his equal, let him resolutely proceed alone on his journey. There is no companionship with a fool. (61)*

Just as the night appears very long to a person who is unable to

sleep, just as a distance of ten miles is too long for a person who is exhausted, so is the chain of births and deaths very long for a fool who knows not the true law. Thus, a fool is a person who knows not the true Law—the Law, which moves to righteousness, the Law of Karma, the Law of evolution and the Law of cycles. The one who knows that in this world the Law works, that there are divine intelligences which govern the laws of nature, and that this "Law" is really the "Deity in Action," knows the existence of One God behind the whole of the manifested world. One who has realized this truth sees the unity of all beings and their identity with the God. He realizes that the purpose of life is to attain union with the divine within. However, the self-realization requires a discipline of many life-times. "Humanity is an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto," writes H.P.B. Each one of us is a pilgrim soul and we are all on the holy pilgrimage. In this journey, we meet other souls or co-pilgrims. But we are told that if we do not find our better or equal, it is better to proceed alone on the journey. Companionship with a fool is not advisable. Coming from Buddha, this might sound very harsh. But the fact is that many a good people have strayed away from the true path as a result of wrong company. Until we have reached *samadana* stage wherein the *yogi* becomes constitutionally incapable of doing wrong, there is always a risk that we might fall.

For soul evolution, we need to be in the company of the wise, someone better or equal. If we do not find such a companion, it is better to walk alone. The reason is that if we are not *firmly established* then such foolish people, who care not for the spiritual life, tend to dampen our spirit and even drag us down. There is a natural tendency to compare oneself with others, and if we find ourselves in the company of someone who is intellectually or morally inferior, chances are that we would begin to feel superior. Such a feeling of superiority would also engender complacency. Therefore, we must be careful. Mutual compatibility is important. The person who is not serious about spiritual progress may exercise undesirable

influence on us, quite unknowingly. Hence, the need to be watchful and discerning. People are of mixed nature—good and bad. Take what is good and reject unwholesome traits. However, if we find ourselves swaying under the influence of another in an undesirable way, it is better to part ways. A strong male elephant does not move with the herd, he moves alone and charts his own path.

Here, the fool is simply a person who is incompatible. This can happen even in close relationship such as marriage. "Inequality as to level of aspiration leaves such unfortunates separated by a psychological gap, in turn productive of emotional lesions in both parties....Therefore, from the standpoint of soul, submissiveness and constant explicit agreement in marriage is far less important than a sharing of the qualities of self-reliance....This inescapable fact of human existence, so tragically demonstrated in misalliances between men and women of widely differing motives and capacities is reflected in every other direction as well. Political parties and programs, perhaps first inspired by the clear vision of a powerful thinker, often become merely receptacles for dilution of the original inspiration. 'Foolish' men, seeking application of principles never fully understood, inevitably distort and pervert them; so that 'liberal' programs become 'reactionary' in a manner so gradual that only the very wise are able to observe the transition. In matters of religion, the symbolic utterance, the doctrine containing esoteric meaning, undergoes a similar disastrous transformation." (*Theosophy*, Vol. 44, April 1956)

As expressed in a different context by Mr. Judge, "the converging lines of Karma bring us together." If we pay attention to the occult hint by Mr. Judge, in *Notes on the Bhagavad Gita*, we realize that if the process of Karmic settlement is interfered with by performance of *karmakanda* or "special ceremonies," laid down in the Vedas for obtaining long stay in the heaven world, we face the risk of "delayed Karma" and "unspent affinities," which necessarily have to wait while the Ego lives for a prolonged period in the "illusory" heaven world and then returns to earth—none the wiser, none the better.

Had it abstained from the performance of "special ceremonies," the Ego would have quickly returned to earth to exhaust the unexpended karma and affinities over many births, rather than having accumulated karma and unspent affinities precipitate in a manner that would make karmic settlement more difficult and unspent affinities a hindrance instead of an aid in the spiritual progress. Mr. Judge calls it the "mysterious power of meditation," or the power of unspent karmic affinities, which brings together two or more individuals who had in the past engendered strong affinities through deep love or hatred. When they cross path again, in some future incarnation, they have a strange power to touch one another. They influence one another. Their influence cannot be calculated. It may be good or bad. When the affinities do not ripen at the same time in two individuals, the effect can be bad. Giving an example of incompatible couple, in the article "Living the Higher Life," the author writes:

The affinities might not develop *at the same time* in both him and her, who was once his wife; if they did at the same time, the account could be easily settled—otherwise, woe to him and to her! Supposing that the attractions for him are developed in her, while the attractions for her are not developed in him at the same time; the result might be, that she pines and languishes for him, sends her poisonous darts consciously or "unconsciously" against him; if these arrows do not kindle the corresponding nature in him, for the time being they frustrate his achievements in other directions. Supposing by the time the affinities in him are developed, he becomes an initiate and she becomes, (let us suppose) his pupil (male or female). If at the time the pupil's affinities have become converted into devotion for the initiate, the latter becomes blinded in his philanthropic work and noble duties of a sage, and commits, through the infatuation of a love for the pupil, serious blunders, which result in a catastrophe to both of them and to humanity: and both the

pupil and initiate fall down and have to mount their rugged pathway again with increased difficulties in their way. (p. 8)

But such affinities may also become a means whereby nature saves men often from damnation. Mr. Judge writes:

Suppose in some life long past I had a dear friend, or wife, or relative, with whom my intimacy was interior and deep. Death separates us, and in subsequent lives he devotes himself to truth, to wisdom, to the highest in him, while I go on careless of all but pleasure in the present. After many lives we meet again as either friends or acquaintances. At once the old intimacy asserts itself, and my former friend, although maybe neither of us knows it, has a strange power to touch my inward life, and wakes me up to search for truth and my own soul. It is the unexpended affinity, and by its aid nature works my salvation. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 68)

Hence it is necessary to choose our companions well. Because "karmic ties needlessly engendered will continue, perhaps for a long time in the future, to hamper clarity of vision and future progress for the soul. True understanding between people, whether in personal or intellectual life, often springs fully blown at first meeting, and we might take this to be an indication that no true 'sharing' can be bullied into existence, however diligent and well meaning the efforts. Between those who are true 'equals' there will be discussion and hot argument in plenty, but never the inward tightening which reveals basic lack of communication. Between true companions there can be no hostility and there are no barriers, but for all make-believe comparisons there is the danger of lapse into hostility when discrepancies in temperament are finally realized." (*Theosophy*, Vol. 44, April 1956)

(To be continued)

THE DEBT WE OWE

II

OUR first duty is to acquire spiritual knowledge because we can only realize our true duty to all when we realize the truth of Universal Brotherhood of Humanity by realizing our true Self to be inseparable from the Universal Self. This knowledge has been imparted to us by countless generations of great *Rishis* or the Masters of Wisdom, by their unremitting sacrifices for the happiness and progress of all on the path to perfection. It is through a regular study of immortal teachings of the Mahatmas and a constant effort to exemplify the same in our lives towards self-improvement that we pay our debt to the great Teachers. This is *Rishi-yajna*.

Progenitors (*Pitris*) are not the ancestors of the present living men but of the human kind, called Lunar Ancestors (*Somapa Pitris*) in *Manu Smriti*, who evolved, over long ages, in the beginning of our planetary evolution, the ethereal model for the formation of our Astral bodies on which the physical is built by terrestrial forces. They were evolved for the purpose of incarnation of the Real Man, in order to come in touch with nature for his experience and emancipation. The high and pure Astral forms evolved by the Progenitors in the beginning of human evolution on earth have now become impure, having to be formed at every new incarnation of the Ego on earth by his past Karma or *Vasanas* tending in the material direction. We are, therefore, duty-bound to so think and live on the basis of a knowledge of our spiritual nature as to purify the Astral body, and thereby purify the life-force (*Prana*) which moves in it, so as to make our physical vehicle fit for the Higher Self to shine through and illuminate the lower man. Theosophy shows that this was well known in India, in the days of old. It was considered a duty of the householder to live a life of purity, devoted to the highest ideal of life, so as to maintain the purity of the family line, to which highly evolved Egos could be attracted to incarnate for benefiting humanity. Thus we pay our debt to *Pitris*. This is *Pitri-yajna*.

Gods (*Devas*) are the hierarchies of evolving sentient beings of many classes who animate, control and guide the cosmos, as the agents of Karmic and Cosmic laws. They are also the presiding deities of the various faculties of knowledge and of action in man. Theosophy teaches that these gods are not to be worshipped as they are also slaves and creatures of immutable cosmic and Karmic laws, and man, being higher in evolution than they, can rise higher to any of these classes of *Devas* and control them. "Angels aspire to become men; for the perfect man, the man-god, is above even the angels." (*S.D.*, II, 377). Hence, Shri Krishna teaches us not to worship the gods but to aspire for union with Him, the Supreme Spirit. But these gods are to be honoured. "All are entitled to the grateful reverence of Humanity" (*S.D.*, I, 280). This is *Deva-yajna*.

If man is the Microcosm of the Macrocosm, he in turn is Macrocosm to the lower kingdoms of nature (*Bhutas*) which have an inherent evolutionary tendency to progress towards man stage, and they look up to and depend on man for their progress. It is the duty of man to aid this process by a responsible use of the atoms of the Elements which come in his charge. Mr. Judge writes:

Each man has a duty not only to himself but also to the atoms in use. He is the great, the highest educator of them. Being each instant in possession of some, and likewise ever throwing them off, he should so live that they gain a fresh impulse to the higher life of man as compared with the brute.
(*The Heart Doctrine*, p. 131)

Responsible use of the atoms of the five elements which come into and flow out of us in ceaseless streams during our lives carry the impress of our thoughts, feelings and acts—our character, in short. If they are selfish, gross and brutish they are condemned to fly to animal, plant and mineral kingdoms, retarding their progress, as well as fellow humans who are also affected. Whole nature groans and travails under such irresponsible acts of man. Once we think and act responsibly we will be aiding not only the kingdoms of

nature in their evolution to higher life but also influence mankind as a whole, for good. This is sacrifice to the Elements (*Bhuta-yajna*).

As humanity is one in essence, actions of each unit affect, for good or ill, the whole human family. Karma of each person is interwoven with the karma of mankind as a whole. Hence, it is only when each individual, as well as families and nations, live for the highest good of all that the individual and collective progress of all towards perfection and emancipation can take place with least disturbance.

It is, therefore, the obligatory duty of every individual to live the Higher Life, ever trying to purify and elevate his motives, thoughts, emotions, desires and aspirations through right performance of duties of life which have come to his lot under Karma. By renouncing the illusions of the personal self, offering up lower tendencies and impulses and selfish motives in the Fire of Discriminative Knowledge of the True Self and conviction of Universal Brotherhood, we fulfil our duty and obligation to the human family. This is sacrifice to mankind (*Nara-yajna*).

The universe comes into existence by sacrifice, is sustained by sacrifice and beings evolve through sacrifice. The spirit of sacrifice (*Adhi-yajna*) is seated in the heart of every human being, by which alone he can raise himself to his destined universal divine perfection. Duty of man has the basis in this law of his being.

In *The Key to Theosophy*, H.P.B. points out that *duty* is, in fact, a conscientious acquittal on our part of the debt we owe to our fellow-men, near and far. Failure on our part to fulfil this sacred obligation of life leads us to spiritual and moral bankruptcy, than which there is no worse misfortune that can befall man. The moral and spiritual decline which characterizes our civilization can be clearly seen to be attributable to general ignorance of these vital truths. In the place of the true ideal of life towards which high civilizations of the past aspired, such as the ancient *Aryavarta*, we have today its very antithesis.

Now we rarely find aspirations toward the eternal ideal in the human heart, but instead of it every thought tending toward the one central idea of our century, the great "I," *self* being for each the one mighty centre around which the whole Universe is made to revolve and turn. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 27*, p. 3)

This is the prolific source of all the terrible iniquities, injustice, exploitation and degradation of masses we have been witnessing in the world today. The appalling conditions rouse the conscience of philanthropists and a few statesmen who seek to remedy the situation in all sincerity on the external plane by rearrangement of social, political and economic equations, but all this is of little avail. This is because the rife moral cause rooted in the human heart, which needs to be addressed for true reform, is overlooked.

To seek to achieve political reform 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. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 229)

The Soul stirring inspiration of Theosophy—the essence or concentrated virtue of every religion—is needed to be spread abroad, popularized and exemplified more now at the present hour than at any other time if the crash of the civilization is to be averted. It is given to Theosophists of sincerity, devoted to the great Orphan Humanity, through their concerted action to spread broadcast the fundamental truths of Theosophy by themselves ever trying to live the Higher Life that change in the consciousness of the race can be effected. What Mr. Judge, in the concluding part of his address to the Parliament of religions in Chicago in 1893, said sums up the subject under consideration. Thus:

He [one of the Adepts of the great Brotherhood] said all the troubles of the world would disappear in a moment if men would only do one-quarter of what they could and what they ought. It is not God who is to damn you to death, to misery. It is yourself.

The Theosophical Society desires above all things, not that you should understand spiritualism, not that wonderful occult works should be performed, but to understand the constitution of matter and of Life as they are, which we can never understand but by practising right ethics. Live with each other as brothers; for the misery and the trouble of the world are of more importance than all the scientific progress that may be imagined. I conclude by calling upon you by all that humanity holds dear to remember what I say, and whether Christians, Atheists, Jews, Pagans, Heathen, or Theosophists, try to practise Universal Brotherhood, which is the Universal Duty of all men. (*The Heart Doctrine*, pp. 68-69)

(Concluded)

A (METAL) mirror that has been stained with rust by some passing incident can be made bright again by rubbing and polishing; but when a mirror has been rusted...so that the mirror takes on the character of a different mirror, with a nature that is fixed and ingrained—then the polisher's skill is of no avail, then the mirror cannot be cleansed from rust except by submitting it again to the refining fire. And even so, souls stained by some passing incident can be made bright again by warnings and reproofs—so that they recall to memory the state of life in which they were before; but souls (that have become) foul and unclean in their very nature can be made bright again only by being plunged in misery, and remaining long in that condition, and undergoing it again and again.

—HERMES

AFTER DEATH—WHAT?

THE SANSKRIT equivalent of the word *Devachan* is *Devasthan*, or the place where *Devas* or Gods reside. It is a state of consciousness where the Reincarnating Ego or Real Man, called *Sutratma* enjoys unalloyed bliss and happiness. This is the *swarga* of the Hindus, and paradise or heaven of the Christians. It is said that the *devas* (or demi-gods) do not have a body like ours. So too, the Ego does not have our kind of body in *devachan*, but is wrapped in a clothing or vesture, which is very ethereal, suitable to that state of consciousness. It is called Causal body or *Karana Sarira*. After death, the permanent ideals like kindness, love, truth, beauty and inclination towards goodness—the aroma of the last personality—attach themselves to the Ego on its way to *devachan*. Remaining in this vesture the Ego works totally on the mental plane. "The *Devachanee* [the one in *devachan*] lives its intermediate cycle between two incarnations, surrounded by everything it had aspired to in vain, and in companionship of everyone it loved on earth" (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 146). This *devachanic* condition can be compared with that of a poet who is busy writing his poem or a painter lost in selecting and applying colour, oblivious of their surroundings or the passage of time. The Real Man is almost in a similar condition in *devachan*.

The state of *devachan* is subjective and mental. The state of *devachan* is described as the subjective continuation of the last personality on earth, as the personal idea persists, and the person continues to think that he is still Mr. X or Miss Y, he was on earth. Thus, if a mother dies, leaving behind her children and husband, then in *devachan*, she will experience as if she is surrounded by her children, and living a happy life. A person in *devachan* is surrounded by his high aspirations and high ideals, living in complete happiness and bliss. In a way, the state of *devachan* is an illusion but this illusion is not meaningless. In fact, it is necessary for the rest of the

tired soul. As the body needs rest after the day's work, so the Ego needs the *devachanic* rest.

During life we have many high aspirations, ideals and thoughts, but we are not able to live them all out, and hence these get stored as mental energy or force. Our physical body, astral body and the brain do not permit the full development of this force. As a result, this energy remains latent and after the death when the bondage of lower principles is absent, the thought-force expands and develops. For instance, an artist who aspired to achieve and advance much in the field of art but could not achieve it during life, carries the force of aspirations to *devachan*. In *devachan* it would fully blossom like a flower, and also get assimilated into his higher nature (Ego). In *devachan* we do not get any *new* knowledge but there is an assimilation and expansion of all the nobler qualities—sympathy, love for beauty, art, and the abstract things of life—and whatever good we aspired to do, so that the Ego comes back enriched on earth.

The Ego remains in *devachan* for a time exactly proportionate to the psychic impulses generated during life. It depends on the degree of spirituality and the merit or demerit of the last incarnation. In *The Ocean of Theosophy*, Mr. Judge says that it being a matter which deals with the mathematics of the soul, no one but a Master can tell about *average* time spent in *devachan*. The Master says that a person can be in *devachan* for an average of 1500 years. We eat our meal in 15-20 minutes, but it takes three to four hours to get transformed into blood or physical energy. So too, the time needed for assimilation in *devachan* is longer. However, the time of stay in *devachan* varies from person to person. For instance, persons with materialistic bent of mind, who have not created the mental force to keep their higher principles in *devachan*, are born quickly. The thirst for earthly life (*tanha*) draws them quickly back to earth. Those who are totally materialistic, not believing in soul, God or in rebirth and those who are selfish and unsympathetic, who have never shed a tear for others, may emerge out of *devachan* and are reborn in a month. But, for

the good materialists, who do not believe in soul and God but are kind and helpful to others—their condition in *devachan* is like that of a traveller, sleeping in train and having no awareness of the passage of many stations on the way.

Are those in *devachan* able to see or communicate with those they left behind on earth? The *devachanee* does not see those that are left behind on earth, though he surrounds himself subjectively and in imagination, with his near and dear ones, and sees them in an ideal condition. A mother who has left behind her drunkard son sees him in *devachan* as one who is reformed. H.P.B. points out that a mother's Ego in *devachan* is filled with love for imaginary children it sees near itself, that love will be felt by her children in flesh. "Love beyond the grave, illusion though you may call it, has a magic and divine potency which reacts on the living. It will manifest in their dreams." Such love of the mother often saves the child from dangers and difficulties.

We say that after death, the "Real Man" never communicates with those on earth. However, there are two exceptions. First, a person who has died having a strong desire to return for some specific purpose will not immediately enter the *devachan*. He forces his higher consciousness to remain awake and hence the "Real Man" makes the contact. The second exception is that of the *Nirmanakayas*, who come in contact with the selected noble persons, but not the seance room operators. Thus, apart from these exceptional cases, theosophy does not agree with the claim of the spiritualists that the "Real Man" comes in contact with the people on earth. It is only logical, because, if the Ego in *devachan* were to be in contact with the sorrow or unhappiness on earth and especially his own sorrowing loved ones, then how can there be unalloyed bliss for the Ego?

Likewise, we on earth can neither reach nor influence those in *devachan*. And yet, during sleep, almost each one of us communicates with the dear departed ones, but on waking up we carry very dim and dream-like remembrance of the same. Mahatmas

with their powers can contact the Real Man in *devachan*. They can even help those who are noble by nature, but do not have the capability to come out of the illusion of *devachan* by themselves, to come out of the bliss of *devachan* to return back to earth to pick up the work—to benefit humanity.

There is a commonly prevailing belief that the after-death condition of soul depends on the thoughts or mental condition during the last moments. The quality of consciousness in *devachan* and the amount of time spent in *devachan* are dependent on a group of dominant thoughts at the moment of death. Some believe that in spite of having spent the entire life in worldly pursuits, if we pronounce the name of God at the dying moment, then we would experience rich and colourful *devachan*. Logically, it is understandable that during life, if we have only thought of money or materialistic gains, or harming others, then at the last moment we are not likely to think good thoughts or remember God. It is clear that in order to improve our after-death condition, it is not enough to make efforts only in the old age, "post-retirement," but it is essential that during the entire life we engender noble thoughts and have high aspirations.

As already seen, the time period in *devachan* depends on the proportion and strength of a person's noble and moral thoughts in his previous life. When the forces created by the thoughts of the person are expended, the Law of Karma forces him to take birth once again. We have performed many actions (Karma) in the past life, so to get reward or punishment for our actions it is absolutely necessary to be reborn on the earth. However, the mental forces appropriate to *devachanic* condition act against the forces of our actions (Karmic Forces) and prevent an immediate birth of the Ego. But, as soon as this mental pressure or force of the previous birth is exhausted, the cumulative effect of the actions of many previous births pushes out the Ego from *devachan* and it has to again take birth.

We have seen that before death the Ego takes a review of the life

just ended. Similarly, on emerging from the *devachan* and before taking birth, the Ego is in a state of complete *manasic* consciousness with which it is able to analyze the acts of past lives and the resulting effects. In accordance with the causes generated in the past, the Ego takes new birth. But since the ego has to experience and balance many acts of many previous lives, it cannot experience their effects in a single life. Hence, by selecting only *some* of these acts or karma, the ego takes a new birth on the earth. Not only that, it takes birth in place and surroundings which may give less obstructions and difficulties in adjusting the results of his past karma. Also it will take birth to such parents and family where he has engendered strong karmic affinities. Thus, it can be seen that our ego itself chooses the parents and family according to the past karma. Knowing that the new environment is in accordance with his past actions, the Ego takes up the cross—the burden of the new bodily vesture—once again, and takes birth. Thus, death is not an end but the beginning of a new life.

(Concluded)

IF we depend upon God, everything becomes possible...It is not external conditions that deter us from trying to realize God, but our own mind. If the mind is averse to the practice of constantly remembering God, then the external circumstances seem to hamper us. If the mind longs to realize God, and pines for His contact, the circumstances automatically prove to be conducive and helpful. Even difficulties that face us will become helpers in our path, provided our aspiration for God is very keen. In a wonderful way, the very obstacles become our aids, and people around us will cooperate with us in our efforts to reach Him. In strange and mysterious ways, God Himself provides us with all the things necessary for our spiritual progress.

- SWAMI RAMDAS

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: Lord Ganesa or Ganpati is the God of Learning or Wisdom, then why is his idol immersed in water at the end of Ganpati festival?

Answer: Ganesa festival lasts for ten days, beginning with *Ganesa chaturthi*, which falls on the fourth day in the bright fortnight in the Hindu lunar month of *Bhadrapada*, and ends on the fourteenth day called *Anant Chaturdashi*, when idol of Ganesa is immersed in the water. Lord Ganesa is the God of Wisdom and also the remover of obstacles. Eighteen million years ago, *Kumaras*, the sons of Siva, lighted up the mind of man that was lying latent like an unlit candle. Thus, Ganesa is also a *Kumara* or *Manasaputra*. Ganesa is considered to be the embodiment of AUM, and represents the First Cause. It is believed that since worship of the unmanifested, formless transcendental Reality, or *Nirguna Brahman* is difficult for most of us, Ganesa represents the manifested aspect of the One Reality. After the ten day celebrations, the clay idol of Ganesa is immersed in water to remind us of the law that anything that is born or is manifested must die or undergo dissolution. During the immersion process, devotees sing loudly and bid goodbye to Ganesa, asking him to return early next year. This indicates the cycle of manifestation and dissolution.

Moreover, "water" is the symbol of chaos or primordial and undifferentiated matter, or matter in its precosmic state. It is *Mulaprakriti* or immaculate Mother, "from whom proceeds all the gods, or the anthropomorphized creative forces." In fact, all forms in manifestation come into existence as a result of differentiation of that primordial matter and they return back to it at the time of

dissolution. The immersion may also be taken to be the reminder of the fact that every God, other than the *Parabrahm* or One Reality, is finite, limited and conditioned, in space and time. With dissolution or *Pralaya*, "Brahma and all the other Devas, and the gods are merged into the Absolute."

A rite of purification, which is a variant to the complete immersion of the idol of a deity in the water, is practised by the Brahmins. H.P.B. mentions that outside every temple in India, there is a lake, stream, or reservoir full of holy water, in which the Brahmins and the Hindu devotees bathe daily. The bathing festivals or *baptismal rites*, are held twice every year. During these festivals the statues of gods, goddesses and idols are immersed in water by the priests—as was done in ancient Egypt and Greece. "The object of the ceremony being to wash away from them the sins of their worshippers which they have taken upon themselves, and which pollute them, until washed off by holy water....The Orphic hymn calls *water* the greatest purifier of men and gods" (*Isis*, II, 138). Perhaps it symbolizes the restoration of pure magnetism to the idols, as well as to the temple, as the temple atmosphere is said to be vitiated by our purely petitionary prayers, creating a kind of psychic miasma. Probably, in the absence of the knowledge of such purificatory rite, it is considered better to immerse the idol and bring a new idol for worship every year.

The immersion of the idol may well be the physical representation of the end of the mental image formed of a deity. It is essential to destroy such images because there is always a chance that someone else might use it. In *The Perennial Philosophy*, Aldous Huxley points out that in case of idol or image worshippers, a field of force is generated "by the minds of past and present worshippers and projected on to the sacramental object where it sticks, so to speak, in a condition of what may be called second-hand objectivity, waiting to be perceived by minds suitably attuned to it." It becomes very relevant when it is image of a deity such as Goddess Kali, who is offered blood sacrifices, as representing destructive aspect of Nature.

Question: Is modern science heading towards the dead end?

Answer: The question may sound strange and out of place, given the technological advancement and new discoveries being made in various scientific fields, such as, Medicine, Physics, Biology, Nanotechnology, Chemistry, Genetic Engineering, and so on. In fact, a Master of Wisdom says that scientific men are the pioneers of modern thought. However, he adds that though he esteems very highly the knowledge obtained by hard work and experiment, these methods are only applicable to matter. No doubt, using these methods of observation, rationalization, analysis and experiment, science has made many discoveries in the *physical realm*, and "every fresh discovery drives them a step onward," but there are realms beyond the physical. Scientific inquiry comes to dead end when there are matters pertaining to astral, psychic and spiritual realms. Does God exist? How does a Yogi lift himself in the air like a bird? How does a solid metal ring pass through another? How did Buddha appear at two places at the same time? There are many more questions for which science has no answer and some of the magical phenomena are being brushed aside as deception or fraud.

The field of scientific investigation is bounded by physical nature on every side. Modern science relies entirely on *observation and inference*. It is not willing to admit of the existence of anything outside the scope or method of its investigation. H.P.B. writes, "once the limits of matter are reached, inquiry must stop and work be recommenced" (*Isis*, I, 5). She points out that based on their excavations, deeper and deeper into the earth, the scientists have concluded that man must have been savage and brute-like in his origin. Thus:

...fossil implements have been exhumed together with the human remains, which show that man hunted in those remote times, and knew how to build a fire....from this they do not try to search for the origin of human race but come to a dead stop and wait for future proofs....neither geologists nor archaeologists are able to construct, from the

fragmentary bits hitherto discovered, the perfect skeleton of the triple man—physical, intellectual and spiritual. Because the fossil implements of man are found to become more rough and uncouth as geology penetrates deeper into the bowels of the earth, it seems a proof to science that the closer we come to the origin of man, the more savage and brute-like he must be. Strange logic! (*Isis*, I, 4)

H.P.B. argues, how can one say looking at the fossils of man and implements of Indian and Andaman Island tribes, that humanity of 19th Century was just emerging from Stone Age? Is it not possible that a high civilization could have flourished side by side with savage tribes? *Light on the Path* emphasizes the importance of intuitive knowledge. "To obtain knowledge by experiment is too tedious a method for those who aspire to accomplish real work." Science is analytical and experimental and therefore believes that nothing can be known about the constituents and properties of a plant or stone without subjecting it to the mechanical and chemical processes. Nor can we understand the thoughts and feelings of another until they are expressed in words. Occult Science asserts that through the development and use of astral and spiritual senses it is possible to know unexpressed thoughts of another and the very essence and occult properties of a plant or stone and even know what is passing through the mind of an ant.

The other stumbling block of science is her conceit and feeling of superiority. "Most of our modern inventions for which we claim glory, are after all, things people were acquainted with three and four thousand years back. Lost to us through war, floods, fire.. Modern thinkers *rediscover* them once more." H.P.B. points out that the modern philosophers and scientists are not willing to give credit to the ancients that they could have known more of the meaning of the old esoteric texts. They allow their conceit to run away with their logical reasoning powers.

In *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, Mr. Crosbie suggests that our modern modes of thought are based upon and applied to material

existence and external appearances, all of these being *effects* of unseen causes. When an "attempt is made to understand the unseen, material existence is taken as the cause, and the unseen as the effect, with no perceptible gain in the direction of an understanding of Life or its purpose." For instance, we know that modern science describes mind to be an epi-phenomenon of matter or merely the "name for the action of the brain in evolving thought."

Science would have to first take as working hypothesis the existence of astral body and astral senses and then develop these inner senses, to discover the missing links in the astral plane. Likewise, unless science admits the existence of Higher Mind, she will be unable to explain soul memory, which includes remembering of past lives, Prophetic and Warning Dreams, and the like phenomena.

Can science explain mental illnesses such as depression, bipolar disorder (or manic depression) and schizophrenia? The issue was debated by Peter McGuffin, director of the social, genetic and developmental psychiatry centre at King's College, London, and Steven Rose, director of the brain and behaviour research group at the Open University (*Prospect*, October 2005). McGuffin believes that molecular genetics and understanding of the brain structure and activity hold the key to mental disorders. As against this, Steven Rose argues that it is not likely that in most cases the *major determinant* is biochemical. A hundred years from now—or sooner—today's attempts to locate causes in terms of genes will seem misguided. Rose writes:

I am still not sure whether you would want to argue that, once you have catalogued all your genes of small effect, you would say you have "explained" the "causes" of schizophrenia. The phenotypic effect of any one of your genes will be probabilistic...It may be that your techniques *will* point to new drug prospects, but I fear that "explanation" will still elude simple reductionism.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Human beings are born in relationship and our lives from infancy to old age are anchored in relationships. We need to learn to cultivate relationships in a way that there is room for love, mutual respect and space for the other to grow. In an office or work environment, relationships tend to remain at a rather superficial level, and they generally end when one leaves that environment. The family was once regarded as an ideal ground for building close relationships, but these days increasing mistrust and feeling of insecurity threaten family relationships. Sometimes we find that in order not to sour relationships it is better to keep distance, while at other times breaking the relationship becomes inevitable. Relationships provide one of the chief means of reaching God. Sometimes the give and take of ordinary relationships creates a gentle arc that connects us to the Divine. Conversations—silent or vocal—play an important role in creating, sustaining and mending relationships, writes Janina Gomes (*The Times of India*, September 12, 2009). Further:

When we cultivate virtues like patience, compassion, mutual respect and a loving nature, we are well on the way to touching the heart of God, whose reflection we see in other human beings. God invites us through the diversity and wealth of his Creation, to a relationship of universal love. To love His Creation is to love God. Any relationship that is nurtured for selfish motives and which is vulnerable to feelings of jealousy, hate and suspicion, cannot last, for it is not founded on unselfish love. And without the ingredient of love, a relationship lacks the spark that can help take it forward towards high dimensions.

"Trust is the best of relationships," says the Buddha. Besides unconditional love, mutual respect and trust must form the foundation for building a lasting relationship. Often, what mars the relationship is the sense of possessiveness. Says Peace Pilgrim:

You do not possess any other human being, no matter

how closely related that other may be. No husband owns his wife; no wife owns her husband; no parents own their children. When we think we possess people there is a tendency to run their lives for them, and out of this develops an extremely inharmonious situation. Only when we realize that we do not possess them, that they must live in accordance with their inner motivations, do we stop trying to run their lives for them, and then we discover that we are able to live in harmony with them.

Human relationships provide an excellent opportunity for going closer to God. To love, and to be loved, is to know God. Love is the great theme that runs through the ocean of Sufi poetry. There are two forms of Love: Ordinary Love and Special Love. People confuse these two forms of love. When there is perception of beauty in the form, it is ordinary love. When this becomes profound (special) love, it is transmuted into viewing the beauty of the essence (*dhat*) and not form. The ordinary love beautifies existence while the special love refines existence (*The Sufis*, pp. 315-16). The Upanishads say that wife is not dear because she is your *wife* but because the Self shines in her. Everything becomes dear because of the presence of the *Atman*. True love leads to self-denial, self-abnegation, self-effacement and self-transcendence.

A review of the book "The Age of Empathy," authored by Frans de Waal, appeared in *The Indian Express* for September 10, 2009. Frans Waal is a primatologist in the psychology department of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. The book is aptly subtitled, "Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society." Frans Waal observes a recent change for the better toward empathy in mankind. For instance, he points out that even the large-scale social and economic crises in the world have a silver lining! They bring about spontaneous human response of global magnitude. Instances of such compassionate crisis

management are the evidence against the cynical verdict of pessimists and Thomas Hobbes's gloomy statement that man's existence tends to be "nasty, brutish and short."

The book is polemic, and its main target is what Mr. de Waal takes to be a distorted idea of human life as relentlessly selfish, and ruthlessly competitive. As an antidote to this picture, he offers plenty of evidence of apparently selfless sacrifice, unforced sympathy, cooperation and even a keen sense of fairness in our closest animal relatives. Unfortunately, we are daily exposed to the sensational newspaper reports of what is called man's "brutal" behaviour, associating it with the animals. Frans Waal rightly feels that when we label some people as "brutal" or "bestly," we are being unfair to the irrational animals, who are only true to their native instincts, although with the limited intelligence of their own. "The Age of Empathy" is best seen as corrective to the idea that all animals—human and otherwise—are selfish and unfeeling to the core. It offers not only plenty of examples to the contrary, but also provides hints to show how and why empathy evolved, and how it might be related to self-awareness. Frans Waal points out that surprisingly most soldiers are unwilling to fire at the enemy, even in battle, but on the other hand, politics can be a much bloodier battleground than war.

Is there something we can learn from the animals? Mr. de Waal asks: What is the moral relevance of empathy and such fine responses seen in the "non-human" animals? Is it valid to deduce ethical norms for human beings, based on scientific observation of animal behaviour?

In the first place, such conclusions are based on unsound premises, such as, humans are simply the superior genus of animals, and no more! Man's superiority is believed to be a matter of his DNA structure, which he shares with the Chimpanzees, considered to be our ancestors. But the fact remains that beasts are not actually that bestly, nor human beings need to be so. "Nature does not force us to be selfish!" observes de Waal.

The theosophical position is that animals have souls. Since animals

do not exhibit clear "rational" capacity, it is conjured that they do not possess souls. The fact is animals do exhibit sufficient intelligence and are capable, like human beings, of intense suffering or pleasure, even if they do not possess conscious surviving *Ego-soul*, like man. Defending the rights of animals, H.P.B. quotes from the *Ecclesiastes*, Chapter III: "A man has no pre-eminence over the beasts." Animals are gifted with a superior faculty of unerring instincts that have helped them in their survival and progress. We can learn a lesson or two, if not wisdom, from our "dumb" brothers!

Why should we believe in astrology? How can the lines on our palms predict the future? How can planetary positions and energies affect our lives? These are some of the common questions, which bother us when we read our horoscope or get a palm reading. Answering these questions, Sunita Chabra, an astrologer, points out that astrology is the science of stars, and is based on the belief that the position of the stars in the sky influences human life. Pythagoras, the great mathematician gave us numerology, and John Kepler, the great astronomer and mathematician, who also made many discoveries in astrology, said: "A most unfailing experience of the excitement of sub-lunary natures by the conjunctions and aspects of the planets has instructed and compelled my unwilling belief." Chabra points out that the failure to predict accurately could be due to wrong interpretations of the planetary positions or due to wrong information on date and time of birth. All astrological predictions are based on mathematical calculations.

As for palmistry, she says that the lines on our palm are the imprint of our destiny as charted by our past and present *karma*. Astrology and Palmistry are based on our *karma*. Predictions based on palmistry are accurate. For instance, a break in the fate line signifies set back in career, and this can be tested on any hand. However, we are not bound by our destiny, God does give us choices on the crossroads

of life. "Kind words bring positive reactions from the universe but harsh and cruel words bring sorrow." There is an amazing synchronization in this universe. For instance, whenever inimical planets Sun and Saturn were at loggerheads, it has claimed lives of several luminaries in India. "Being older than history, astrology has suffered repeated attacks. Some ancient scriptures have been destroyed or taken away by invaders, but it is for the new generation of astrologers to try and fill these gaps," says Chabra. (*Sunday Times of India*, September 20, 2009)

H.P.B. describes Astrology as a science, as infallible as Astronomy itself, with the condition, however, that its interpreters must be equally infallible. She calls Astrology a mathematical science. Astrology is a very ancient science, which can foretell future events from the position of the planets and stars. However, planets are only *indicators*. They are like a clock and an astrologer is like the clock maker. If we tell a clock maker that it is 3 o'clock, then he will be able to tell us exact positions of the small hand and big hand, and where certain cogs, wheels, etc., inside the clock will be at that time. In the same way, depending on the planetary position, the astrologer predicts, but neither he nor the planets influence the destiny of the individual. The position of the planets at the birth of an individual is the result of the causes generated by the entity seeking birth. Mr. Judge goes to the extent of saying that the stars are inextricably linked with the Karma of the man, but, if we have reached the stage where we are not making any more Karma, then the stars and planets have nothing to indicate for us. For others, it is just the fulfilment of the Karmic law.

If horoscope interpretation and prediction depended only on mathematics, the computer, which can do all sorts of complex computations, could have predicated accurately. But astrological predictions require something more. H.P.B. points out that in addition to mathematics, intuition on the part of the astrologer is necessary. Thus:

An element of clairvoyance is necessary to constitute a

true astrologer....The ancient Rishis had, by observation, experiment and deep occult knowledge, taken account of all conceivable combinations of various causes and determined with mathematical precision almost to infinitesimal point their effects. But yet, since the cosmos is infinite, no finite being can ever take cognizance of all the possibilities of Nature...first condition of success in astrology is a pure life, physically, mentally and spiritually. This was intended to develop psychic capacities of the astrologer who could thus see in *Akasa* the combinations, not alluded to in the written works and predict their results....True astrology teaches us what particular causes produce what particular combination...and thus gives us means to obtain knowledge of how to guide our future births.
(*The Theosophist*, June 1884)

The article, "Chiromy and Palmistry," (*The Theosophist*, Vol. VI, December 1884), states that chiromy is the art of delineating character by means of the hand. One of the arts of the Gypsies of Europe is Palmistry, which is allied to Chiromy. By means of the lines of the palm, they pretend to tell the fate of the individual. Being strange and peculiar people living near the nature, it is very likely that clairvoyance aids them in making these predictions. The article goes on to explain the character traits indicated by the shape of the hand, quality of palm, shape of the fingers and the length and shape of three principal lines in the palm—head line, heart line, and line of life. These lines are fewer and simpler in more direct and simple characters, but numerous and complex in the more many-sided and sensitive natures. The palm shows passional and physical nature, while the fingers indicate intellectual and psychical nature.

PERPETUAL inspiration is as necessary to the life of goodness, holiness and happiness as perpetual respiration is necessary to animal life.

—WILLIAM LAW

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