

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

## THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 3, No. 6

October 17, 2011

### A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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### MIRACLES OF FAITH AND WILL

THERE is the wonderful story by Paul Gallico, entitled, “A Small Miracle.” It is about a ten-year-old orphan boy called Pepino, who lived in Assisi, and had a female donkey called Violetta, who was his companion and also his means of livelihood. One day, Violetta fell sick and in spite of doctor’s efforts, did not improve. The boy knew of the healing of the sick kitten his friend had taken to the tomb of St. Francis, situated in the crypt beneath the church of St. Francis. The supervisor, who was insensitive to the pure and innocent faith of this little boy, refused him permission to take his donkey inside the church. He was much worried about making this church a place of tourist attraction, and hoped to find the tongue of the saint or his lock of hair or tooth, because these relics would surely attract more tourists. The story goes that the boy who would not take “no” for an answer approaches other superiors in the hierarchy, and with a bunch of flowers, and a note written to the Pope, manages to get the permission of the Pope, which in itself was a minor miracle! Since the donkey could not pass by the normal route, the second entrance to the tomb, which was walled up for centuries was broken, and to everyone’s surprise a box tumbled down, containing a feather, a cord, a dried primrose, and a sprig of wheat—the relics of St. Francis! The Bishop interpreted the relics to be the message of the Saint, viz., Poverty, Love and Faith. That was his bequest to all. The boy and the donkey were seen to enter the crypt, *to complete*

*their pilgrimage of faith.* It is interesting to note that the “small miracle” was not that the donkey was cured, but that a little obscure boy from a small town could meet the highest church authority and get special permission to take his donkey inside the tomb of St. Francis. What is more, he set an example of the efficacy of pure and innocent faith. There is also the interesting dialogue between the boy and the priest, who asked the boy, “Will you go to the crypt only to *ask*, Pepino, or will you also, if necessary, be prepared to *give*?” Though he trembled at the thought of losing his beloved donkey, the boy answered with courage, “I will give—if I must. But, oh, I hope He will let her stay with me just a little longer.” Such attitude is absolutely necessary, because when things go contrary to our expectations our faith should not be shaken. Our faith in God and Law should be such that we are able to accept greatest calamities with patient resignation.

Was it a miracle or a pure triumph of will and faith? But what is a miracle? If by “miracle” we mean any wonderful or remarkable happening, then we witness miracles every day. *Light on the Path* says that the scientist knows what a miracle is achieved by each newborn child, when it first conquers its eye-sight and compels it to obey its brain. Likewise, a miracle is performed with the conquering of every sense. However, any phenomenon that is strange and unfamiliar and for which no rational explanation is possible, is ascribed to supernatural agency and is classed as miraculous. The supernatural agency could be god or devil, and then a miracle is something that goes against the laws of nature. But, Theosophy says:

There is no miracle. Everything that happens is the result of law—eternal, immutable, ever active....There may be laws once “known,” now unknown to science.

Behind the visible, tangible world, there exists an invisible, but real world which has not yet been explored by our science. Man, as well as, nature possess this invisible “astral” nature. It has its own

laws. Thus, for instance, when a person lifts his body into the air, several feet high, it is not by breaking the law of gravitation. We are told that earth is a magnetic body charged with one form of electricity, say positive. All the organic and inorganic bodies on earth are charged with the opposite form of electricity, *i.e.*, negative. Hence, there is an attraction between earth and all the bodies on earth. Change in the electrical polarity of the object on the earth, from negative to positive could counteract this attraction. This change of polarity can be achieved by a well-regulated will.

The performance of magical feats or miraculous phenomena requires extensive knowledge of the various and now forgotten branches of natural science, expertise in occult chemistry and physics, psychology as well as physiology, intimate practical knowledge of laws of electricity and magnetism and their effect on human and lower kingdoms of nature. And above all, it requires a perfected human will, combined with powerful imagination and faith. But what is perfected will?

Will is the colourless force—force of spirit in action. Will is a spiritual power present in every portion of the Universe. The mysterious effects of attraction and repulsion are unconscious agents of will. Thus, when a serpent exercises charm or fascination on a bird, it is *conscious* action of will. However, when amber or glass rod is rubbed, it attracts light bodies. This is *unconscious* action of will. We see the action of will in automatic activities of the body, such as, digestion, blood circulation, in the movement of our limbs, etc. In *human beings*, will is most developed and powerful. Man alone can give conscious impulse to the force of will.

We say, “Behind Will stands Desire.” Desire is the mover of the Will. We experience will at two levels. There is the *personal will*, displayed markedly by a strong-willed or stubborn person. What we consider a strong-willed person is the one with strong and intense desires, which move the will into action for bringing about the wished for ends. Will is the divine power of the Spirit within—illimitable and exhaustless. We have limited that power by entertaining small,

mean and selfish desires. Moreover, the ideas give the direction to the power of will, but what we lack are *universal ideas*.

Some people develop will power through various Yoga practices. But development of *Spiritual Will* or *perfected human will* requires cultivation of unselfishness and readiness to be assisted, guided and instructed by our divine nature. In other words, spiritual will could be developed only when we have learnt to drink, to the last bitter dregs, whatever the cup of life holds for us, without a murmur, and realize that the adverse and painful circumstances are for our experience and discipline. When we are ready to sacrifice the personal nature, so that the lower nature loosens its hold on the higher, then all the power and force of the divine nature becomes available. The more we pay heed to the “Voice of Conscience” within, the greater will be the development of our will. When the attitude is, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,” and when the lower, personal nature is purified so that it is brought closer to the divine nature, then our prayer becomes *Will prayer*. It seems that for a brief space of time the mind is unfettered and becomes one with the divine, and we find our thoughts and desires being translated into action. Hence, it is then no longer a prayer but a command.

Each one of us gives out magnetic emanations, *unconsciously*. But a mesmerizer projects the same fluid from himself, *consciously* and under the guidance of his will, which can put another person into mesmeric trance or bring about cure. Magnetic emanations of one object can affect another, quite unconsciously. However, since man is endowed with will, he can impart his magnetism to any inanimate object, and endow it with a protective or destructive power; because the magnetic influence imparted by a human being could be good or evil, depending upon his motive and magnetic purity or impurity. A piece of iron gets magnetized when applied to a piece of magnet, so also, a talisman is often a worthless bit of metal, a scrap of paper or a shred of fabric, imbued by that greatest of all magnets, called human will, with a potency for good or ill. The power of the “evil eye,” is the sending of the invisible fluid

charged with malicious will and hatred, from one person to another, with the intention of harming him.

Besides healing, there are several examples of almost miraculous happenings through the magnetic fluid directed by will. H.P.B. mentions a certain Fakir called Chib-Chondor, who by making passes, *i.e.*, directing the magnetic fluid with his will, could paralyze most deadly snakes and even far away objects. He could, by the power of will, move furniture, open and close doors and windows, from a distance. (*Isis*, I, 470-71)

Probably, the same explanation holds good for blessing with a hand, in which the person directs the fluid from the palms of his hands, with good intention and powerful will. While sending out New Year Greetings and good wishes, H.P.B. says that let us try to feel especially kindly and forgiving towards our enemies, else we might end up sending “evil eye” greetings instead of good wishes. Thus:

Every man or woman is endowed, more or less, with a magnetic potentiality, which when helped by a sincere, and especially by an intense and indomitable will—is the most effective of magic levers placed by Nature in human hands.

However, Faith establishes the Will, and Faith without will is like a windmill without wind, barren of results. “Faith,” says *Light on the Path*, “is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. For it is a covenant or engagement between man’s divine part and his lesser self.” A covenant is a pact or agreement. The covenant between man’s lower and higher nature is analogous to the agreement between a child and his parents. It is based on trust. A child knows that even though he is scolded, reprimanded by his parents, or denied certain pleasures, it is all for his good. Likewise, the man of *true* faith who knows that the universe is governed by a just and impartial Law is able to maintain his faith in the divine nature, even as he passes through painful experiences.

“At the base of your nature you will find faith, hope and love,”

says *Light on the Path*. Faith is inherent in every human being. With faith the power of the will is strengthened, and we are then able overcome all obstacles. H.P.B. narrates two examples of faith-cure. Sir Humphrey Davy, who was preparing to operate on a paralytic patient with oxygen gas, put a thermometer under the patient's tongue to record his temperature. The patient was impressed by this "treatment," and he declared with enthusiasm that he was already feeling better. So, Davy continued putting the thermometer under the patient's tongue, day after day, and the patient was completely cured in few days, without the operation. Likewise, a woman suffering from acute dysentery was given the necessary treatment by the assistant of her regular doctor, who was away. When the doctor returned, he learnt that the patient was gradually sinking and was on the verge of dying. He decided to pay her a visit before she died. On seeing the doctor the patient expressed great pleasure and said that she was sure to recover, now that he had come to attend her, as she *had such confidence in him!* At her request the doctor remained in her house for a few days, and she completely recovered in a week. The result was that the doctor lost all faith in the efficacy of medicine!

Faith fixed on *anything* will bring results. Most of the time we place our faith on externalities—gods, men, dogmas, systems of thought, and thus, limit the power of Spirit, which cannot expand beyond the limitations of our ideal. H.P.B. writes that we fully believe in the mysterious power of faith. She points out that there are plenty of "miracle-working" relics in the world, such as a tomb of a saint, or a tooth of Buddha. But, some of them are unimaginable, such as, a feather fallen from the wing of Angel Gabriel! She adds that a toenail of Gladstone, a boot of Col. Ingersoll, a tail of a monkey, would also serve the purpose, provided the faith was strong. Thus:

If there be in the patient alone a faith supreme and unshakable in the power of a healer, of a holy relic, of the touch of a shrine, of the waters of a well, of a pilgrimage to a certain place and a bath in some sacred river, of any given

ceremonies, or repetition of charms [spell] or an amulet worn about the neck—in either of these or many more agencies that might be named, then the patient will cure himself by the sole power of his predisposed faith. (*The Theosophist*, April, 1883)

But it is not right to drag higher powers to our plane for purely personal reasons. We should first exhaust all the finite methods which are within human reach. In case of sickness, we must first resort to the ordinary methods of hygiene, of medicine, of surgery and of food. Thus, a person with fractured leg, brain tumor or dislocated shoulder, must undergo surgery. It would be foolish if the person waited for his imagination to set right his dislocated shoulder, or for his thoughts to remove his brain tumor. At times, it is also necessary to cultivate resignation.

Even educated people become blind believers when it comes to getting quick relief from a calamity or problem. Today, increasing number of educated middle-class people are rushing to the *tantriks* or *Babas* to solve problems that belong to the temporal, and not the spiritual world. Whether it is getting a job, a bank loan, getting a break in the films or getting modelling assignment, people wish for a quick and miraculous solution to many of their problems, without exerting themselves. Once such a person is able to bring about a cure, or to help reach the desired goal through his powers, our faith in him is established, and we do not hesitate to follow him blindly.

Often, hypnosis is used in the treatment of deleterious habits. It has been effectively used and has helped some people to overcome alcoholism, insomnia, nail-biting, fear phobias, etc. But, in the process, the person so treated becomes dependent on the hypnotizer. When a habit is overcome by hypnosis, the person has to face the same temptation again, with added handicap/weakness of increased suggestibility. Sooner or later the person has to regain his self-control and learn to overcome the habit himself.

## PITFALLS ON THE WAY

WHEN the self-righteous student falls, he indulges in self-pity. These two weaknesses make a pair and it is most easy to pass on from the one to the other. Both can be overcome by a single effort. Their common factor is the desire to think and to talk about oneself. "I am righteous, I am doing this, I am not doing that, and who knows what I may not be accomplishing!" After such folly, the inevitable fall; and then: "Oh! I am to be so pitied! Who has to suffer as I have to! I did err, but how was I to know? Why was I not told?"

Such modesty and humility are false and assumed and are but the legitimate children of the boasting attitude towards one's own duties in life. The student cannot afford to forget that he should not look out for and expect reward and recognition for the right performance of his own duties and obligations and undertakings. We are not putting the Law of Karma under an obligation by behaving as we should; nor are we favouring the Cause of Theosophy by our endeavours, or putting the Great Ones into a debt by devoted service of humanity, of which we ourselves are a part. Because one of Them has said that ingratitude is not one of Their vices, the self-righteous student thinks he has a claim upon Their gratitude. Such is the *maya* of personal thinking.

When the folly brings the fall, the self-pitying student will not look at the root-cause of his trouble but asks for forgiveness. This only shows how poor has been his understanding of the Law of Karma. Praying for forgiveness is one of those evil practices indulged in by the blind believers in the Personal God. Karma compensates through adjustment; it does not and it cannot forgive. Forgiveness of sin is a demoniacal doctrine, for it tends to perpetuate people's weaknesses and sins. When our self-pitying student asks for forgiveness, all he wants is that his chastisement should be relieved and he be given a chance—to err again. Much time is wasted even by well-meaning and earnest individuals who look for charity while all they need is to seek and find work to do.

No, Karma neither forgives nor forgets, and it is high mercy that this is so. For, according to this doctrine a man can save himself and is not dependent upon any priest or prophet. Thus:

The effects may be counteracted or mitigated by the thoughts and acts of oneself or of another, and then the resulting effects represent the combination and interaction of the whole number of causes involved in producing the effects. (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*)

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## STUDIES IN THE DHAMMAPADA THE ENLIGHTENED ONES—III

10-11. *Men driven by fear seek refuge on mountains, in forests, under sacred trees or at shrines. Such refuge is not secure, such refuge is not the best. Such refuge frees not a man from pain. (188-189)*

12-14. *He who takes refuge in the Enlightened One, in the Law, in the Order, perceives clearly the four Noble Truths—suffering; the origin of suffering; the cessation of suffering; and the Noble Eightfold Path, treading which all suffering is transcended. That, verily, is the safe refuge, the best refuge; in that refuge man is free from all pain. (190-192)*

WHEN one has realized that no lasting happiness can be found in the world, one desires to leave behind everything and seek refuge on mountains, or in the forest under sacred trees, or at shrines, to become free from the world. One is afraid of getting into relationship with other beings out of fear of getting entangled in Karma. At times, one runs away from the world to escape painful consequences of evil deeds. Little does one realize that “Not in the sky, nor in the depths of the sea, nor in mountain clefts is there a place on earth where a man can be to escape the consequences of his evil deed.” Karmic entanglement does not arise from one’s contact with other beings but due to attachment. Unless there is inner relinquishment or true detachment, forests and mountain tops are of no use.

Therefore, we are asked to seek refuge in the Buddha, in the Law and in the Order, so that, at last, we can come to a realization of the four Noble Truths and transcend all suffering. Taking three refuges is an outward sign of earnestness on part of the one who wants to walk the spiritual path. In his book, *A Guide to Buddhist Path*, Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, writes that a Buddhist is one who “Goes for Refuge.” He commits himself to the *Buddha*, the *Dharma*, and the *Sangha*, with body, speech and mind—in other words, totally. Going for Refuge is the essential act of the Buddhist

life—it is what makes one a Buddhist. Unfortunately, the Going for Refuge is not regarded any longer as an expression of genuine individual spiritual commitment. People recite the Refuges and Precepts on all sorts of occasions, just to show that they are “good Buddhists” or respectable citizens; that they belong to a particular social and cultural group.

But what does it mean when one says: “I take refuge in the Buddha, in the *Dhamma* or *Dharma* and in the *Sangha*”? Who is a Buddha? The word “Buddha” is not a proper name but a title. It means “one who knows, one who understands.” It also means one who is “Awake.” Buddha means an “unconditioned mind” or “Enlightened mind.” Knowing the Buddha therefore means knowing the mind in its unconditioned state. *The Voice of the Silence* tells us: “Look inward, Thou art Buddha.” It means to say that you yourself are the Buddha—potentially. We can really and truly come to know the Buddha only in the process of actualizing our own potential Buddhahood through spiritual living. It is only then we can say, from knowledge, from experience, who the Buddha is. To achieve this end, we have to take Buddhahood or Enlightenment as a living spiritual Ideal, as our ultimate objective, and try our utmost to realize it.

*Dhamma* is not simply books of the Buddha’s teachings—it is the Path leading to Enlightenment which is our refuge. The *Dhamma* is well expounded by the Blessed Ones. Thus, Refuge in the *Dharma*, includes not only the words of the Buddha, but also the living experience of realization and teachings of the fully realized practitioners. In Buddhism, *dharma* is the doctrine, the universal truth common to all individuals at all times, proclaimed by the Buddha.

The *Sangha*, or Spiritual Community, is the third of the Three Jewels. According to Buddhist tradition, there are three levels of the *Sangha*. These are known as: the *arya-sangha*, the *bhikshu-sangha*, and the *maha-sangha*. In *arya-sangha*, *arya* literally means “noble”; by extension of meaning, it means, “holy” in the sense of

“in touch with the Transcendental.” So the *arya-sangha* is so called because it consists of Holy Persons, who have certain transcendental attainments and experiences in common.

These people may or may not be in physical contact but are united on a spiritual plane, because of spiritual experiences they have in common. The *Sangha* on this level is a purely spiritual body: a number of people living at distant places, at different times, but sharing, above space and time, the same spiritual attainments and experiences.

The *Bhikshu-sangha* consists of those who have “gone forth from the household life” and joined the monastic order founded by the Buddha. The *Bhikshu-sangha* follows a common set of one hundred and fifty rules (*pratimoksha*). One enters the *Bhikshu-sangha* when one is ordained as a monk by a local *Sangha*, or chapter. This must consist of at least five fully-ordained monks, including at least one “elder” (*sthavira*). The tradition is that at the time of ordination you are handed over to a *sthavira*—he may or may not be the one who presided at your ordination—and you remain with him, under his tutelage, for at least five, preferably for ten years.

Thirdly, there is the *maha-sangha*, or “Great *Sangha*.” It is also so called because it is great in size. It is the collectivity of those who accept certain spiritual principles and truths, regardless of vocation. The *maha-sangha* includes monks and the laity. It is the whole Buddhist community. It comprises of all those who take Refuge in the Three Jewels. The common Going for Refuge is the bond between them, writes Sangharakshita.

Following the affirmation of taking refuge, the “refugee” then recites the Five Precepts—what one might call the minimum requirement or basic moral code for Buddhist laymen and laywomen. The Precepts are not commandments, but principles to live by. One voluntarily accepts the guidance of the Five Precepts, with the understanding that violation of them has consequences, and that each individual is responsible for his or her own conduct (as well as the consequences). The Five precepts or *Panchasheela* are,

abstaining from taking life, from taking what is not given, from sexual misconduct, from falsehood and from intoxicants.

15. *An exalted man is rare to find. Not anywhere is he born. Wherever a wise and noble one is born, that household prospers. (193)*

16. *Blessed is the birth of the Buddha; blessed is the teaching of the Good Law; blessed is concord in the Order; blessed is the austerity of those who live in concord. (194)*

17-18. *He who pays homage to those who are worthy of homage, be they the Enlightened Ones or Their Disciples—those who have overcome the host of evil and crossed beyond the stream of sorrow—he who pays homage to the Fearless and Peaceful Ones, his merit cannot be measured by any. (195-196)*

In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna points out that if a person having faith dies, even before he has attained to perfection in his devotion, his efforts are not lost. Such a person dwells for an immensity of years in the heaven and then is born again on earth in a pure and fortunate family, or even in a family of those who are spiritually illuminated. He comes in contact with the knowledge that belonged to him in his former body, and picks up the thread. This continues life after life in order to reach the supreme goal. The incoming soul is thus born in the appropriate environment in accordance with the past tendencies to carry on the work. If this is true of a humble devotee, how much more it must be so in case of an advanced soul? Such a high soul is not born anywhere but only in the family which is able to furnish necessary environment for that soul. Often, these high souls take birth to fulfill some specific purpose. This is one reason why in the ancient times, people avoided inter-marriages in order to keep their family stream pure so as to attract high souls. Birth of an exalted one brings spiritual prosperity to that household.

Birth of the Buddha and also his teachings are held in high reverence. It brings happiness, contentment and good fortune for the whole world. This does not refer merely to the physical birth,

but his spiritual birth—the great moment of attaining Enlightenment. The whole of Nature thrills with joyous awe at the birth of a “Master.” When that Master chooses to return back to the earth to help and teach the suffering humanity, her joy knows no bounds, and that is described in beautiful words at the end of *The Voice of the Silence*. Blessings of the Buddha continue to reach the world even after he has gone from our midst, through his Order or *Sangha*, particularly when there is unity and harmony in the *Sangha*; when the teachings are lived up to, and not merely talked from the pulpit. This is the reason why H.P.B. puts a lot of emphasis on “Unity.” In her First Message to the American Convention, she wrote:

Each man should strive to be a centre of work in himself. When his inner development has reached a certain point, he will naturally draw those with whom he is in contact under the same influence; a nucleus will be formed, round which other people will gather, forming a centre from which information and spiritual influence radiate, and towards which higher influences are directed.

But even if one is unable to join the *Sangha*, one can gather immeasurable merit by paying homage to the worthy, be they the Enlightened Ones or Their Disciples. By paying homage to those who have overcome evil, who are fearless and peaceful, one is expressing the desire to become like them. Those who pay homage to the enlightened ones are on their way to becoming Buddhas because they have resolved to become like them. Buddha in his former life paid homage to Buddha Dipankara. He resolved to become like him. It is not a verbal homage. It is a vow to walk the path of discipleship. To pay homage is to try and emulate those whom you pay the homage. Such a man is a seed or potential Buddha. It is a mark of True wisdom to respect spiritual instructors, says Shri Krishna in the *Gita*.

(Concluded)

## THE SYMBOLOGY OF THE SWASTIKA

A TRUE symbol is one that is contained in the idea or ideas that it is supposed to represent. A symbol is a visible representation of an idea. “To be a just and correct symbol, it should be such as that the moment it is seen by one versed in symbolism, its meaning and application become easily apparent,” writes Mr. Judge.

“A symbol is an embodied idea, combining the conception of the Divine Invisible with the earthly visible,” writes H.P.B. Every symbol has several meanings. It is easy to understand this. Every object can be a symbol. A tree is a symbol. But it means different things to different minds. The word “tree” brings up one kind of idea in the mind of a child, and a very different kind of idea in the mind of a botanist, a poet, a painter, a philosopher and a mystic. For a philosopher and a mystic, a tree symbolizes the process of life and growth, and they speak of the Tree of Good and Evil, and of the Tree of Knowledge.

Every symbol must have a deeper meaning besides the obvious one. In fact, H.P.B. observes that each symbol has at least seven keys to its interpretation. The *swastika*, which is a form of a cross, is a universal symbol found in the religious symbolism of every nation. It forms part of the seal of the Theosophical Society.



*Swastika* is an equilateral cross with arms bent at right angles, all in the same rotary direction, usually clockwise. The word is derived from the Sanskrit *swastika*, meaning “conducive to well-being.” In India the *swastika* continues to be the most widely used auspicious symbol of Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists. Among the Jains it is the emblem of their seventh *Tirthankara* (saint) and is also said to remind the worshipper by its four arms of the four possible places of rebirth—in the animal or plant world, in hell, on Earth, or in the

spirit world. The Hindus (and also Jainas) use the *swastika* to mark the opening pages of their account books, thresholds, doors, and offerings. The right-hand swastika, which moves in a clockwise direction, is considered a solar symbol and imitates in the rotation of its arms the course taken daily by the Sun. The left-hand *swastika*, which moves in a counterclockwise direction, more often stands for night, the terrifying goddess Kali, and magical practices.

In the Buddhist tradition the *swastika* symbolizes the feet, or the footprints, of the Buddha. It is often placed at the beginning and end of inscriptions. The *swastika* as a symbol of prosperity and good fortune is widely distributed throughout the ancient and modern world. It was a favourite symbol on ancient Mesopotamian coinage. In Nazi Germany the swastika, with its oblique arms turned clockwise, became the national symbol—a symbol for all anti-Semitic organizations. In Scandinavia the left-hand swastika was the sign for the god Thor’s hammer. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

Many meanings have been given to the bent cross or *Swastika*. It is called the Gnostic Cross. When we consider the *swastika* within the circle, it is formed by two intersecting lines or diameters of the circle—vertical and horizontal. When Spirit, represented by the vertical diameter, descends into matter, it is represented by the vertical diameter bisecting the horizontal diameter. When this is completed, the revolution round the great circle commences, and that motion is represented by turning back of the ends of horizontal and vertical diameters. Hence, *Swastika* represents evolution, among other things.

In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna seems to suggest that we must assist the great wheel of evolution. One who fails to keep this wheel to continue revolving, lives to no purpose and lives a life of sin. Humanity is an emanation from divinity on its return path. Hence, assisting the great wheel of evolution means giving our help in the great work of returning to the source from which we have come. It implies continuing the process of transforming our lower nature into higher, and helping in this process, all our fellow men and the whole of animated world, writes Mr. Judge. *Swastika* also represents the

“Wheel of the Law,” mentioned in the Buddhistic and Brahmanical books. The Buddhas are said to give the Wheel of the Law another turn when they come.

In India, *Swastika* represents the spot or centre in which the forces from the great unknown pour forth, and they exhibit themselves through various manifestations. The whirling motion of *Swastika* may be visualized as the great mill of the Gods, and the soul of man sits in the centre. With the motion of the axle of the wheel, all things are drawn to the centre or the soul, to be crushed, amalgamated and transformed again and again.

The *Swastika* is also the symbol of the Hindu *Chakra* or discus of Vishnu, which he is said to have used in the battle between the *Devas* (gods) and *Asuras* (demons), to destroy the latter. The conflict between the *Devas* and *Asuras* was for the possession of the vase of *Amrita* (nectar of immortality), which surfaced during the churning of the ocean. The *Amrita* represented spiritual wisdom, immortality and magic power.

Mr. Judge remarks that Prophet Ezekiel of the Jews saw this wheel in his vision. In fact, he saw “wheel within a wheel,” which represent, among other things, hierarchies of spiritual beings. Each of these hierarchies furnishes the essence, and is the “builder” of one of the seven kingdoms of Nature.

H.P.B. points out that Thor’s Hammer was a weapon which had the form of *Swastika*, and was called by the European mystics and Masons as the “Hermetic Cross.” It is the most sacred and universally respected symbol. The four arms of the *Swastika* point to the four cardinal points, which lose themselves in infinity. It implies that the central point, which represents God, the very highest, is not limited to one individual, even if that individual be perfect. That Divine Principle is in Humanity, and Humanity is in It, like the drops of water are in the Ocean. The horizontal and vertical lines of the cross inscribed within a square symbolize our human existence. The four points of the cross represent in succession birth, life, death, and IMMORTALITY. (*S.D.*, II, 556-57)

There was a time, when the Eastern symbol of the Cross and Circle, the *Swastika*, was universally adopted. With the esoteric (and, for the matter of that, exoteric) Buddhist, the Chinaman and the Mongolian, it means “the 10,000 truths.” These truths, they say, belong to the mysteries of the unseen Universe and primordial Cosmogony and Theogony. This is why the *Swastika* is always placed—as the *ansated* Cross was in Egypt—on the breasts of the dead mystics. It is found on the heart of the images and statues of Buddha, in Tibet and Mongolia. It is the *seal* placed also on the hearts of the living Initiates, burnt into the flesh, for ever, with some. This, because they have to keep those [occult] truths inviolate and intact, in eternal silence and secrecy to the day these are perceived and read by their chosen successors—new Initiates—“worthy of being entrusted with the ten thousand perfections.” Thus, we might regard *swastika* as an emblem or seal of secrecy.

Dr. Schliemann found during his excavations of the old city of Troy that the *swastika* was used by the Initiates, Seers, and the priests of Troy, which being one more proof that the ancient Trojans and their ancestors were pure Aryans, says H.P.B. One finds it with the old Peruvians, the Assyrians and the Chaldeans. The *Swastika* is pregnant with occult meaning. One initiated into the mysteries of the meaning of the *Swastika* can trace the evolution of Kosmos, “the relation of the Seen to the Unseen,” and also “the first procreation of man and species.”

The cross or *Swastika* was used in Egypt as a protecting talisman and a symbol of saving power. The cross or *Swastika* appears prominently in the mysteries of initiation. Thor is said to smite the head of the Serpent with his hammer, which is a form of *Swastika* or four-footed Cross. Visvakarman ties Surya (the Sun), his son-in-law, on his lathe, in the exoteric allegory; on the *Swastika*, in esoteric tradition. On earth Visvakarman is the Hierophant Initiator, who cuts away a portion of the brightness of the Sun. Visvakarman, is the Son of Yoga-Siddha, *i.e.*, the holy power of Yoga. Surya represents the neophyte or the candidate for hierophantship. In the

Puranic allegory, Viswakarman’s daughter Sanjana (spiritual consciousness), who was the wife of Surya the sun, complained to her father of the too great effulgence of her husband. Viswakarman, the divine carpenter, crucified the sun on his lathe or *swastika*, and cut away eighth part of his rays—creating round him a dark aureole. After that, Surya looked as though he had been crowned with dark thorns and he became “Vikarttana,” one who was shorn of his effulgence. Vikarttana is the type of the initiated neophyte. All these names were given to candidates who were going through trials of initiation. The candidate for initiation personifies the sun, who has to kill all his fiery passions and wear a crown of thorns, before he can rise into new life and be reborn.

The “female Arani” is a name of the Vedic Aditi (esoterically, the womb of the world). *Arani* is a *Swastika*, a disc-like wooden vehicle, in which the Brahmins generated fire by friction with *pramantha*, a stick, the symbol of the male generator. It is a mystic ceremony with a world of secret meaning in it and is very sacred (*The Theosophical Glossary*). The name Prometheus is derived from Sanskrit word *Pramantha*, *i.e.*, the instrument used for kindling the fire. In the vedic sutras we are told that by rapidly turning the stick in the socket, first heat and then fire was produced. The stick was called *Pramantha*, the disc was called *Arani*. H.P.B. remarks that in one sense Prometheus represents fire by friction, which cements *manas* with *Buddhi*. (*S.D.*, II., p. 413 and p. 524). The myth of Prometheus relates to evolution of man. There was a time in evolution of man, when man was really no better than a beast, though in human form. According to this myth, Prometheus stole fire from heaven and brought it to earth. This myth refers to the “light of the mind” given to man by solar deities, endowing him with the power to choose, think and to reason. Prometheus also represents fire by friction. The myth of Prometheus relates to the first opening of man’s spiritual perception. (*S.D.*, II, p. 523)

*Swastika* shines on the head of the thousand-headed serpent *Ananta Seshha* on which Lord Vishnu rests. The *Swastika* is the most

philosophically scientific of all symbols. It symbolizes the whole work of *creation* or *evolution* from the unknown *Parabrahmam* to the *moneron* of materialistic science. In the *Chaldean Book of Numbers*, it is called “Worker’s Hammer,” which strikes sparks from the flint (space), those sparks become worlds. In the *Macrocosmic* work, *Swastika* is the “Hammer of Creation,” with its four arms bent at right angles, and refers to the continual motion and revolution of the invisible Kosmos of forces. In the *Manifested Kosmos* and our Earth, it points to cyclic rotation of the axes and the equatorial belts. Applied to the *Microcosm*, Man, it shows him to be a link between heaven and Earth. It is at one and the same time an Alchemical, Cosmogonical, Anthropological, and Magical sign, with seven keys to its inner meaning. The *Swastika* contains the key to the seven great mysteries of Kosmos. One who comprehends its full meaning is forever liberated from the toils of *Mahamaya*, the great illusion and Deceiver. (*S.D.*, II, pp. 98-100)

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ONCE Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) what his ideal in life was. “To remain absorbed in *Samadhi*,” replied Narendra....To which the Master remarked: “Why! I thought you were made of better stuff. How can you be satisfied with such a one-sided ideal? My strength is all-sidedness. I would like to enjoy fish, for instance, in a variety of ways—fried and boiled, made into soup, pickled, etc. I enjoy the Lord not only in His unconditioned state of Oneness, as unqualified *Brahman* in *Samadhi*, but also in his various blessed manifestations through sweet human relationship. So do you likewise. Be a *Jnani* [learned man] and a *Bhakta* [devotee] in one.

—*Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ETHICS

THE SUBJECT of psychology of ethics is directly related to the building of character. Theosophy lays great emphasis on character because our moral nature belongs to the permanent aspect of our being, which, after death, can be assimilated by the Higher Divine Triad—*Atma, Buddhi, Manas*. In his book, *Man For Himself*, Erich Fromm, the German-born social philosopher, mentions that personality is the totality of *inherited* and *acquired* psychic qualities which are characteristic of one individual, and make the individual unique. The difference between inherited qualities and acquired qualities is on the whole synonymous with the difference between temperament, on the one hand, and character, on the other hand. While differences in temperament have not much ethical significance, differences in character constitute the real problem of ethics. To understand why it is ethics that causes the difference, we have to clearly distinguish between character and temperament.

According to Fromm, temperament refers to the mode of reaction and is constitutional; whereas character is essentially formed by a person’s experiences, especially those in early life, and is changeable to some extent, by *insight* and new kind of experiences. For instance, if a person has a choleric temperament, his mode of reaction is “quick and strong,” but what he is quick and strong about, depends on his character. He can be quick and strong about a “just” cause or an “unjust” cause. How he reacts to it, reflects his character. We may prefer a person with spontaneous temperament as against a person with a practical temperament, but if both are dishonest, then from the standpoint of character, both are equally undesirable.

The theory of character proposed by Fromm is not based on the idea of primarily isolated individual, but on the relationship of man to others, to nature and to himself. The manner in which he relates to the world constitutes the core of his character. Erich Fromm differentiates between two basic types of character: the *non-productive orientation* and the *productive orientation*. The non-

productive orientation includes four types: (1) *Receptive*—Where the person feels that the source of all good is outside and that whatever he wants will be received from outside sources. He does not want to make much effort, but expects to receive it from the outside and therefore becomes dependent. (2) *Exploitative*—It is similar to receptive, but instead of just expecting to receive, he wants to take it from others by force or cunning, whether it be the affections of another person or material possessions. There is an element of envy implicit in such character. (3) *Hoarding*—This kind of character has little faith in, and a lot of insecurity about anything they get from the outside world. Hence, whatever they get, they hoard and save. They will hoard their possessions, their energy and their ideas. They are so jealously possessive that they do not want their loved ones (their possessions) to be shared with others. (4) *Marketing*—In any market, certain commodities are in demand. Similarly, certain qualities are in demand in the personality market. For instance, certain personality types which strive to be successful in life are in demand. Hence, people learn how to sell themselves in the market, *i.e.*, how best to put across their personalities. Moreover, “identity” is not in reference to self but in reference to other people’s opinion about self. Identity, in such a person, emerges not by knowing oneself, but in being known to others. Other people are also experienced as commodities—it is not them, but their saleable parts which are given importance.

In discussing the Productive character, Fromm inquires into the nature of the “fully developed character,” which is the aim of human development, and simultaneously the ideal of humanistic ethics. Productiveness is generally understood in terms of material production alone. But productive orientation of personality refers to a fundamental attitude, a mode of relatedness in all realms of human experience. We might say, productiveness is man’s realization of the “potentialities,” that are characteristic of him, and the use of his powers. The ability of man to make *productive use* of his powers is his “potency,” the inability is his “impotency.”

In order to use his powers and potency, man must be free and not dependent on others, and he must know, what these powers are, and how to use them. It implies use of reason. With the use of reason (and we might say, intuition) man can penetrate and understand the *essence* of things. With power of love he can break through the wall which separates one person from another. With his power of imagination he can visualize things not yet existing; he can plan and thus begin to create. When a person lacks the ability to make productive use of his powers, his relatedness to the world is perverted into a desire to dominate, and to exert power over others, as though they were things.

Systems of thought, works of art, are all created by man’s productiveness. But the most important object of productiveness is man himself. After birth, physical growth is automatic, but the emotional and intellectual potentialities of man can be realized only through productive activities. Thus, according to Fromm, the quality which determines one’s character is “productiveness.” If a person can make a productive use of his powers he may be said to have a productive character, if not, then he has non-productive character.

In the Sixteenth Chapter of the *Gita*, Lord Krishna too, differentiates between two basic types of character—the Godlike and Demoniactal. He describes qualities which determine whether a person has a Godlike character or a Demoniactal character. So in both cases, the emphasis is on qualities which are acquired by an individual. The question is how are these qualities *acquired* which determine an individual’s character. There are forces within and without us which contribute to the building of character. We are not born with a “fully integrated” character—some qualities may be present, some may be lacking. Hence, character has to be built, little by little, beginning on the plane of the mind, because thoughts are the seeds of Karma. Thoughts determine our way of relating to others, to nature and to self. So who and what is it that moulds our thinking, our thoughts?

When a child is born, his first contact with the outside world is

his mother and then family. Their thoughts and actions greatly influence the child's character, because for the next seven years or so, the child is trusting, receptive and dependent, without resistance, and imitative in his actions. As he begins to grow, and comes in contact with other persons and things, he is likely to get influenced by them, to a certain extent consciously, and to an extent unconsciously. His school and teachers have a very important role to play in building of his character because for the greater part of the day and over a span of 10 to 12 years he will be in close contact with them. "School training is of the very greatest importance in forming character, especially in its moral bearing," writes H.P.B.

But if a school emphasizes the wrong qualities, such as, competition instead of co-operation, where the student is taught to hoard his knowledge instead of sharing it, or if he is taught to develop the "saleable" or commercial qualities such as, ambition, aggressiveness, over-confidence, instead of faith, charity and honesty, then the school becomes the detrimental force in the building of character. In the majority of schools today, knowledge is synonymous with scientific facts and technical data. Gandhiji has said that the end of all knowledge must be the building of character. If children are taught that the purpose of life is to progress towards the goal of perfection, in co-operation with our fellow-pilgrims, helping and serving them at every turn, understanding the law of our own being, living in harmony with nature, then the character will be integrated. It is necessary, therefore, to teach children the basic concepts of life—what it is and how to live it, etc.

Besides these two agencies—home and school—the lives of great men, the literary works of great men, and other inspirational writings contribute to the building of character. Above all this, the great scriptures of the world have shown the way to develop fully integrated character. But the effort has to be put forth by oneself. The ancient philosophy says that a man's character is the outward expression of his inward thoughts. That is the teaching of all the great teachers. Mind is the garden and Man is his own gardener.

The law of Karma which is *just* brings about the necessary adjustment, and slowly, as right causes are generated, and altruism is practiced to greater and greater extent, one wins one's freedom from the bondage of life and death.

What we must realize is that character cannot be built overnight. It is a constant and continuous process, both on the physical and mental plane. "You can solidify your character by attending to small things. By attacking small faults, and on every small occasion, one by one. This will arouse the inner attitude of attention and caution. The small faults and small occasions being conquered, the character grows strong," advises Mr. Judge. The Nation's character, and the character of the Society are a reflection of its individuals' character. Hence we are responsible, not only for building our own character but also for guiding others to the right sources which will assist them in building their character.

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THE SOUL must begin by warring against itself, and stirring up within itself a mighty feud; and the one part of the soul must win victory over the others, which are more in number. It is a feud of one against the two, the one part struggling to mount upward, and the two dragging down; and there is much strife and fighting between them. And it makes no small difference whether the one side or the other wins; for the one part strives towards the Good, the other makes their home among the evils; the one yearns for freedom, the others are content with slavery. And if the two parts are vanquished, they stay quiet in themselves, and submissive to the ruling part; but if the one part is defeated, it is carried off as a captive by the two, and the life it lives on earth is a life of penal torment. Such is the contest about the journey to the world above. You must begin, my son, by winning victory in this contest, and then, having won, mount upward.

—HERMES

## 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:** What does Theosophy have to say about Mental Health? What is theosophical position as regards the causes and treatments for those with mental problems?

**Answer:** It has been observed that in last few years, a social worker is more concerned about the weakening bond between members of a family and between communities. A modern social worker has to help people combat loneliness, competition, stress, etc. Today, majority of the people going to a psychiatrist are not “sick” in a conventional sense. According to Dr. Erich Fromm “They complain of being depressed, having insomnia, being unhappy in their marriages, not enjoying their work, and any number of similar problems. What they really suffer from is an inner deadness.” Another psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl writes in his book, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, that 85 percent of the students attempting suicide at an American University, did so because life seemed meaningless.

Here we have the clue to the mental sickness. It is the inner sickness of the inner man which surfaces as mental and physical diseases. Mr. Judge observes that the physical woes of the race are only skin deep, the real woes or the cause is the mental and moral suffering.

We might say that the technological advancement is partly responsible for a greater incidence of mental sickness. Both children and adults have fewer opportunities for creative activity, which is replaced by much mechanical activities and meaningless routine. Instead of passive enjoyment of films, television programmes, video games and submission to mass emotion at a football, baseball or

cricket match, ways and means must be found for engaging in creative leisure activity.

Vaccination and immunization are no substitutes for obedience to the laws of hygiene. Likewise, psychoanalysis and hypnosis are no substitutes for obedience to the laws of mental health. According to some psychologists, when certain desires and emotions are repressed or suppressed, and their normal outlet is blocked, due to social or religious pressure, they burst out at some other point. The result is some form of mental abnormality. For instance, a child with inferiority complex, induced by hostile environment may satisfy his “desire for power,” by torturing helpless animals. Carl Jung, on the other hand, distinguished between personal unconscious or the region of repressed impulses and archetypal unconscious, containing the record of all human experiences in the form of archetypal ideas, such as, “God,” “Father,” “Mother,” or “Wise Old Man,” etc. The individual Ego arises out of the archetypal unconscious. According to him mental ill health arises out of a disharmony between the individual and his environment or out of disharmony between him and his parent unconscious. We see that many of the mental problems arise because we are not in harmony, but in conflict with our environment, at home, at our workplace or in the society.

There is much in Jung’s ideas which needs correction in the light of Theosophy. True understanding of mental health depends upon clear understanding of true nature of mind in man. Animal is driven by his instincts, whereas man can override his impulses of sleeping, eating, mating, through the power of choice, which arises from individualized mind that was lighted up many millions of years ago by divine intelligences. In its essential nature, it is heaven-aspiring and close to its divine parent, the spiritual Monad. But in its functional aspect, it receives and processes impressions brought by various senses, stores them and is coloured by them. Mind can be swayed by lower impulses and can also give power and complexity to those impulses, and hence natural and legitimate desires could take the form of obsession and perversion, unlike in an animal. Mind is dual:

it is a directing intelligence, as well as, driver or servant learning to control the horses or the senses. Mental health is based on an understanding of this. A trained horse and his driver are one, and yet the driver is detached enough to be able to control his horse perfectly. So also, the lower and Higher mind are one, and yet, the Higher is detached and the lower mind must become responsive to his commands and not get unduly distracted by the data brought in by the senses. To achieve mental health we must learn to listen to the voice of our inner ruler.

Just as bodily health depends upon eating and assimilation of nourishing and *sattvic* food, so also, mental health depends upon the quality of mental food. Mental health primarily depends upon what kind of thoughts and desires we allow to enter our minds, allow to take root and grow there. If we observe the contents of our mind, we will discover that it is mainly, and in certain people, excessively, occupied by thoughts of making money, getting promotion, or, sensual and sensuous thoughts. We are shutting off the communication with the inner ruler, which is our psychological base of support. When there is a sudden surge of emotion, such that it is all centred in one feeling, then our awareness of “I am I” goes awry and falls, so to speak, outside the base of support. We begin to identify ourselves with the thing we are contemplating. Depression and insanity are often outcome of straying away from our spiritual base. The remedy lies in assimilation of *sattvic* food by discriminating reading and listening; the discarding of preconceived ideas and prejudices, and application in action of what is taken in.

Harmony is an important element in mental health. There must be harmonious development of all our psychic faculties and their dedication to a noble purpose. There is much lop-sided development, with great intellectual progress, but little or no attention being paid to moral values. We are worried about Intelligent Quotient of a child but not of his Emotional or Spiritual Quotient. Much of mental problems arise due to lack of harmony, which is rooted in the sense of separateness, giving rise to competitiveness, the great bane of

our society.

Lastly, regular exercise is necessary for a healthy body, so also, mental health requires more than mental gymnastics, it requires the development of the will to do, the mental energy to realize in action our highest thoughts. There must be combination of Head, Heart and Hand. The sign of mental health is compassionate mind and intelligent heart, where one is neither swayed by lower emotions nor is hardened by dry intelligence, but has cultivated compassionate detachment of the sage.

Often, Tender Loving Care works wonders in many mental sufferings. In a certain case of obsession H.P.B. recommends that help could be taken of morally pure and physically healthy magnetizer, and that the patient should dwell upon pure, elevating and spiritual things. Hypnotism may bring about the cure but it has its own dangers. But *prevention* is better than cure. Keeping aside half-an-hour of time, every day, for silent reflection and self-examination can go a long way in ensuring good mental health.

**Question:** We are told that Karma operates on three planes—physical, psychic or mental, and moral. Is it right to say that physical cause would bring only physical result, and psychic cause would bring result on psychic plane, and so on?

**Answer:** There is no doubt that karma operates on physical, psychic and moral planes. A deformed person with a fine mind has unpleasant karma operating in his body, but good karma is being experienced in his intellectual nature. However, we should not make the mistake of viewing Karma in water-tight compartments. In the first place, no act is performed without a thought *at its root* either at the time of performance or as *leading to it*. In that sense, it is impossible to think of a *purely* physical act, except when performed by an idiot. For instance, in the physical act of over-eating, mind plays an important role, saying, “I like it, I want more of it.” The result may not be confined to physical plane. There will be stomach upset, but that may *lead* the person to resolve to practice moderation. The so-called physical act is not confined to physical realm, while

experiencing the consequences. The same is true of action performed on mental plane. The general understanding is that if we persecute or ridicule a crippled person in this life, we will be persecuted and ridiculed in turn, in this or in the next life. Mr. Judge's explanation in *The Ocean of Theosophy* is that a child is born humpbacked *probably* because in some prior life he persistently reviled and persecuted a deformed person so as to imprint the picture of that person in his own immortal mind. On coming to birth again, the Ego carries that picture and causes the astral body, being formed in the womb, to assume a deformed shape, by electrical and magnetic osmosis through the mother of the child.

However, when it comes to counteracting the karmic consequences, the results of acts done primarily on mental plane, cannot be mitigated or obliterated by actions done on physical plane. For instance, a person who spent many years of his life in mentally torturing another human being cannot hope to nullify that act by giving large sums of money to the poor. Charity done out of the surplus, without any particular concern for the poor, or still worse, only with the intention of earning merit (*punya*), cannot bring about refinement of moral character.

It is also true that Karma manifests in harmony with the plane of desire. When our desire is for money, fame, name, etc.—centred on lower plane, we create a “centre of attraction” on that plane. This will cause the past Karma to unfold itself on that plane. On the other hand, in case of a person who has purer desires and who aspires higher, fixes the “centre of attraction” on the higher plane. The energies on the lower plane are drawn there, resulting in increase of spirituality. Thus, for instance, if we have generated good Karma by giving large donations in the past lives, and if our heart is set on acquiring spiritual knowledge then the same good Karma of the past, on the physical plane, will unfold on the higher plane and we might find that we are aided, in terms of getting right kind of books, a quiet place for study and meditation, and so on.

## IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Both, boys and girls these days seem to be attaining puberty early. A mother noticed that her six-year-old son was having few strands of armpit hair and light fuzz on his upper lip. He was taller than other boys of his class and had developed deep, hoarse voice of a teenager. Medical tests revealed that the boy had attained puberty early. The age of his bones was four years older than his actual age. The boy was put on monthly medication which slowed down his development and the signs of maturity started fading. After four years of treatment, at the age of 10, this boy is like any other ten-year-old boy. A growing number of parents have been experiencing that their little boys are growing up too fast, and attaining to puberty at the age of 8 or 9 instead of the average 12. This is called “early puberty.” However, when the development of sexual characteristics starts before the age of 9 in boys and 8 in girls, it is called “abnormally early or precocious” puberty. A paediatric endocrinologist in Delhi reports that in the recent past he has been treating at least three or four boys for early puberty, and one boy for precocious puberty, every month. If early puberty, is untreated, boys with early puberty do not grow beyond five feet two inches.

So also, these days, girls start menstruating at the age of 10 or 11 instead of past average of 13. Demographic researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, Germany, studied demographic data from five European countries and found that the age of sexual maturity has been decreasing by 2.5 months every decade since 1700s. In majority of cases, early puberty is “idiopathic” or without any cause. Early puberty could be caused due to early working of pituitary gland and hypothalamus, which control hormones that trigger puberty. It is speculated that growing incidence of early puberty could be due to improved nutrition which causes early release of hormones. “It is also believed that exposure to sexual stimuli, through movies and advertisements, may have contributed to the speedy development of children,” writes Neha

Bhayana (*The Times of India*, August 29, 2011)

There could be various physiological and psychological factors contributing to early puberty. However, to the occultist, isolated instances of premature growth are proofs of ending of one cycle and beginning of another cycle, writes H.P.B. In the article, “Premature and Phenomenal Growths,” H.P.B. mentions similar and more astonishing cases of boys and girls in the 1880s. She mentions the case of a girl child born in Moscow, in 1881, who began exhibiting a phenomenal development, only at the age of three months when she began teething. At five months she had all her teeth; at seven she began to walk, and at eight walked as well as any of us, and measured—nearly a yard in her height! When eighteen months old she spoke fluently, and exhibited moreover a bust and bosom as developed as those of a girl of seventeen! A similar case took place in a Georgian family of Asiatics, at Tiflis in the year 1865. Such cases are rare; yet we know of more than a dozen well authenticated instances of the same from the beginning of this century alone, writes H.P.B.

H.P.B. tries to explain it from the point of view of an occultist. We are in the fifth subrace of the Fifth Root Race, which is on the descending pathway. The Fifth Race humanity is slowly crossing the apex of its evolution, and will be soon past the turning point. And, as the descent is always more rapid than the ascent, men of the new coming race, *i.e.*, the sixth race are beginning to drop in occasionally. Such children, regarded in our days by official science as exceptional monstrosities, are simply the pioneers of that race. H.P.B. mentions a prophecy in certain Asiatic old books, according to which the sixth and seventh race men will be born adults; they will know of no old age, though they will live for many years. There is always increase in physical and moral excellence from *Dvapara yuga* (Bronze Age) to *Treta yuga* (Silver Age) to *Krita yuga* (Golden Age). Thus, the life of man lasted 400 years in the first, or *Krita Yuga*, 300 years in *Treta*, 200 years in *Dvapara* and 100 in the present Kali age; so in the next the Sixth Race the natural age of

man will be gradually increased to 200, then 300 and 400 years in the two last yugas.

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In the recent past, public and political figures in India have drawn public attention for having undertaken “fasting.” Anna Hazare, who has been fighting against corruption in India, has been in news because he and his followers undertook 12-day long fasts, taking only water, as a mark of protest against the government policy. However, the Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat, who proposed to undertake fast, has spoken of his fast, in a public letter, as “upvas.” *Upvas* means to dwell closer to God. In the sense of *Upvas*, a fast is different from “*Anshan*,” which is hunger-strike or bodily mortification. *Upvas* is primarily a spiritual act, a personal act of communion with one’s personal god. Gandhiji was one of the most subtle exponents of this form of communion, and he distinguished between “upvas,” and “anshan” or “langhan.” The latter refers to fasting with a view to produce certain effect or bring about some event, and hence becomes a tool for coercion. “Upvas,” on the other hand, is a mode of prayer. There can be no fast without a prayer—and a prayer can produce no effect, except on the person offering it, writes Tridip Suhrud, an Ahmedabad based social scientist.

In May 1933, Gandhiji commenced a fast for 21 days, which he described as his fast for self-purification. He used to say that he observed such fasts submitting to a voice speaking from within. Rabindranath Tagor had challenged Gandhiji’s public fasts for the purpose of self-purification, saying that fast for self-purification must be purely a private act and not a public act, which must be performed in absolute secrecy. The Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat, describes his proposal to undertake fasts, to be the first step in his “*sadbhavana* (goodwill) mission,” which aims at strengthening

Gujarat state's environment of peace, unity and harmony. But he has an immediate responsibility. As a spiritual act his "upvas" must remain a private rite, and must remain outside the media gaze, else it will prove to be no better than a political act, performed with ulterior motive, writes Tridip Suhrud. (*The Indian Express*, September 15, 2011)

When fasting is undertaken as a form of protest, often, it is no better than a form of emotional black-mail. There have been cases where indiscriminately and for trifling reasons, people have been known to undertake fasting, not just for a few days, but "fast unto death." Useless sacrifice is a crime of folly.

As for the philosophical basis for fasting, gluttony is considered to be one of the seven deadly sins. When severe strain is put on the vital energies by overtaxing the digestive machinery, the best and only remedy is to let it rest for some time and recoup itself as much as possible. Fasts were instituted simply for the purpose of correcting the evils of overeating. The Buddhists do not have institution of fasting but they seem to fast daily, and all their life, by following the injunction of moderation in eating. The idea is to learn to control the desires. Hence, we are told that *it is no use fasting so long as there is desire for food*.

The article, "The Elixir of Life," mentions that instead of fasting one must begin with the diet of milk and fruits. Then gradually, very gradually, one must decrease the *quantity* of food consumed. It is possible to survive on little quantity of food. The article points out that many of the simplest organisms have no excretion, such as common guinea-worms. All that is consumed is applied to its growth and propagation. It is possible for a human being to come to such a stage, when he is able to derive nourishment from the Ether (*Akasa*).

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We are all aware of the life instinct in us which is rooted in the urge of self-preservation. Freud said that life instinct is expressed

through the sexual urge which compels reproduction of the species. In his later years Freud spoke about the opposing force to life instinct, which he called death instinct, and which is at the base of violence and aggression. The death instinct accounts for wars and making of the weapons of mass destruction, in spite of all the advancements of civilization. In his recent book, *The Death Instinct*, novelist Jed Rubenfeld claims that Freud tried to explain the meaning and workings of death instinct on the basis of molecular biology. The writer links Freud's theory of the death instinct to a biological process called chromatolysis by which individual cells of the body are designed to self-destruct when their life cycle is over, so that new cells can take their place.

However, if the self-destructive mechanism fails to work, then these mutant cells would rapidly proliferate, killing normal cells. This is what happens in cancer. But we need not remain slaves to our instincts. Freud spoke about sublimation of life instinct, or sexual drive, in symbolic release, in the creation of art, philosophy and science. In Tantricism, sexual energy is sublimated to achieve transcendental levels of consciousness. Though Freud did not comment on sublimating the death instinct, we can think of embracing death and destruction as a means of attaining spiritual liberation, such as in the life of Jesus, who died or sacrificed himself on the Cross for the redemption of mankind. "Death mirrors life, and life mirrors death in subtle symbiosis. . . . Like light and shadow, life and death are not just interdependent but are essentially one, in that neither can exist without the other," writes Jug Suraiya. (*The Speaking Tree*, September 18, 2011)

The true philosophers understand that the paradox of life is that every molecule of the living organs contains a germ of death in itself, and begins dying as soon as it is born, in order that its successor molecule should live—only to die in its turn. Life is everywhere, and is a universally pervasive principle, teaches Theosophy. Mr. Judge explains in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that microbes, bacilli and bacteria are not the ultimate units of life, but they in turn are

made of still more minute “lives.” Each cell is made up of these infinitesimal “lives.” These lives are of two classes: destroyers and preservers or “builders.”

The “builders” sacrifice themselves in the form of vitality and thus restrain the destructive influence of the microbes, and in fact, they compel the microbes to build up the material body and its cells. These same “builders” become “destroyers,” when they cease to supply vital constructive energy to the microbes, which become destroying *agents*. Thus, for the first half of man’s life, *i.e.*, for the first thirty-five years, these “lives” are engaged in building up man’s material body. After this period is passed, the work of destruction and decrease commences. (*S.D.*, II, 262-63 fn.)

Death instinct manifests itself in the form of suicide and even in physician-assisted suicides. H.P.B. argues that “No man...has a right to put an end to his existence simply because it is useless.... There is a vast difference between the man who parts with his life in sheer disgust at constant failure to do good...and one who gives it up voluntarily to save the lives either committed to his charge or dear to him.... One takes away his life, the other offers it in *sacrifice* to philanthropy and to his duty.” Thus, the captain who remains alone on board of a sinking ship, the physician or a nurse who remains by the side of the patient dying of an infectious fever, or a mother who might throw herself in front of a beast in order to save her child; these are not cases of suicide. In each of these cases there is a grand and noble impulse which helps the person to contravene the first great instinctive impulse to preserve life, writes H.P.B. (*H.P.B. Series No. 15*)

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THERE cannot be self-restraint in the absence of desire: when there is no adversary, what avails thy courage? Hark...do not become a monk: chastity depends on the existence of lust.

—JALALLUDIN RUMI