

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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DIVINE VIRTUES

KSHANTI—PERFECT PATIENCE

KSHANTI is “patience sweet, that nought can ruffle.” It follows *Shila Paramita*, which is perfection of morality. We are told that when vices are removed in their gross form, they reappear in their subtle form, and it is not very easy to become aware of their presence. While practising *Shila*, often the path ahead is not clear, and the aspirant begins to lose hope. Fear breeds doubt and impatience. To have patience means to have sufficient strength and faith to walk steadfastly. As the aspirant advances on the path he may experience a sort of silence and loneliness within his nature, and he may decide to stop, sinking into deep despair. But Mr. Judge says, “If I cannot see the road, nor the goal, for the fog, I would simply sit down and wait; I would not allow the fog to make me think no road was there, and that I was not to pass it. The fogs must lift.”

“Great man is he who is strongest in the exercise of patience,” says a Master of Wisdom. Perfect patience which gives birth to a man of unruffled serenity is most difficult to develop, and yet it is one of the most important virtues, because without it nothing lasting can be achieved or learned. You cannot have patience “if you are not calm and ready for the emergency, and as calmness is the one thing necessary for *the spirit to be heard*, it is evident how important patience is,” writes Mr. Judge. Just as the ruffled surface of the

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pond cannot accurately reflect any image, so also, if the mind is ruffled and made impatient by desires, it will fly from one idea to another, one emotion to another, and cannot receive or transmit accurately the ideas which reside in our Divine nature, and as a result the quality of insight or intuition can also not be developed.

Literally, *Kshanti* means “patience” and “forbearance.” But it also includes the idea of gentleness and humility. *Kshanti* also contains very definite overtones of compassion, of tolerance and acceptance, and receptivity. *Kshanti* may be considered to be the antidote to anger. Modern man lives fast life, characterized by hurry and impatience. We live in the age where we get “instant” coffee and “instant” noodles. The electronic gadgets seem to have contributed to our impatience. Very few of us can stand in a long queue or wait in a traffic jam without getting agitated, at least inwardly—though we may control angry outbursts. We are also impatient with other people when they do not “deliver” the results, at the expected time, and in the way we expected. In impatience, there is subtle assertion of personal will. “The way of inward peace is in all things to conform to the pleasure and disposition of the Divine Will.” Gandhiji said that all virtues should be practised in the spirit of humility.

The most important aspect of *Kshanti* is forbearance. Once a man met Buddha and started abusing him. The Buddha did not say anything but waited for the man to stop. After five minutes of uninterrupted abuse, the man stopped. The Buddha then asked him a question: “Suppose a friend brings you a gift, which you refuse to accept. Then to whom does it belong?” The man said, “If I do not accept then it belongs to the person who brought it.” The Buddha said that likewise, “you have tried to make me a present of this abuse, which I refuse to accept. Take it, it belongs to you.” It is patience which allows you to give right response to the situation, instead of *reacting*.

Forbearance means patient self-control, restraint or tolerance. To forbear means to desist or abstain. The predominance of the

rajasic quality exhibits itself in impulsiveness, drive to achieve, over-zealousness, and self-assertion. Forbearance helps in subduing the *rajasic* nature. To want things to happen as per our desires is a mark of self-assertion. We must forbear from fixing our desire on accomplishing even a seeming good result. It is not wise to fix our mind on any set plan. Buddha brings home this truth when he says, “‘Here shall I pass the monsoon; there shall I dwell in winter and summer.’ This is foolish reflection. He does not consider obstacles of existence.”

Forbearance involves checking a hasty conclusion, decision or action, and hence requires deliberation before acting. Moreover, it is the ability to remain calm or silent, if that is what the situation demands. For instance, we are more interested in talking than in listening to others. We are only too eager to tell the other person about *our* experiences and opinions. We need to conquer this habit of pushing ourselves forward, as it marks subtle assertion of the personal self.

Often, it is better to withdraw in silent pity, *i.e.*, forbear from reprimanding, and thus give the offender a chance to repent and improve, suggests H.P.B. Our “Great Parent”—our Divine nature—forbears and watches with pain the child (personality) going astray. Like the unruly child choosing to stray away from the parent, often we stretch the “silver thread” that binds us to the divinity within, when we assert our will. Our divine nature can guide and help only when *we* turn to it for guidance. Whenever we are able to suppress in us the impulse to express anger, hatred, dislike, etc., we act as *true* human beings should act. For then, we momentarily exercise free will, instead of reacting to the external stimuli.

It is suggested that as we begin the day we may make certain inward resolves, such as, “I will adjust myself to what *is* rather than trying to adjust everything else to my own desire. If my feelings are hurt I will not show it to anyone.” Such a practice helps in acquiring the ability to absorb minor emotional shocks arising out of hurt pride, injustice and misunderstandings that come through

personal relationships. It makes us strong enough to endure personal injustice and attacks. The occult principle requires that if the injustice is against one's self, then one must be able to let it go. The Buddhist ideal of forbearance is a very sublime one, which is expressed in the Buddha's parable of the saw. The Buddha one day told his disciples, "Monks, suppose you were going through the forest, and suppose you were seized by robbers who were highwaymen, and suppose they should take a sharp, two-handed saw, and saw you limb from limb. If in your mind there arose the least thought of ill-will, you would not be my disciple." Forbearance is essentially positive mental attitude—an attitude of love.

The *Dhammapada* says, "Enduring patience is the highest *tapas*." In the Buddha's time all kinds of self-mortification and torture, such as, eating very little or no food, or standing on one leg for many days, etc. were considered to be the means of attaining salvation. If we could practise forbearance and patience, in the middle of the trials of everyday life, without complaint, anger or irritation, then that is truly highest asceticism. To attain that supreme state requires extraordinary patience. It is called highest *tapas* or asceticism because the practice of patience in true spirit cannot come about unless one begins to simultaneously cultivate many other virtues such as detachment, control over one's desires and emotions, cultivating reliance on the Self and *Dhamma*, courage of conviction and above all, never allowing doubt or despair to deter one from the path under heaviest trials—knowing that the Self is not touched by anything that befalls a man.

Conditions do not change of themselves, and while it is true that no effort is lost, still it requires real patience to make any change. "One little period passed without doubt, murmuring, and despair; what a gain it would be!" says H.P.B. When even irksome duties are performed, cheerfully and carefully, without murmuring and complaining, we begin to develop patience.

Kshanti is also spiritual receptivity. People may admit that they do not know everything, and that there is a lot more to learn, but in

fact, they are not receptive. Spiritual receptivity implies open-mindedness. We should hold ourselves open to truth. Though, race mind may be receptive to spiritual ideas, there is a difference between passive and active reception of the new ideas. Receiving every new idea without analysis and reflection could be equally fatal as *a priori* rejection. There are those who passively accept an idea only for the novelty of it, without deeper examination and evaluation.

Mr. Judge asks us to put every proposition before our higher nature and wait for an answer. In case we are unable to understand, we should lay aside that concept "as fruit not ripe for us yet." We should have patience to wait for the day when understanding will dawn on us; when we have raised our consciousness. We begin to develop receptivity when we open our heart to "Humanity's great pain," when we search for the reason and the purpose of that pain, and use our knowledge as well as our compassion to heal it.

Mr. Judge asks us to cultivate *higher patience*, which is a fine line between pride and humility. How shall we be proud, when we are so small? How dare we be humble when we are so great? In both we blaspheme. But between these two extremes there is a place, "neither too high nor too low," and *there* we may stand calmly, not overshadowed by any man however great, because each of us contains potentialities of every other. That *special* skill, *special* virtue or *special* power that the other person possesses, "I" also possess. "I" am not a poor, miserable sinner, either. I have the *potentiality* of creation, preservation, destruction and regeneration.

Patience and anxiety often go hand in hand. We are anxious, because we expect instant results. Some of us get anxious as to our progress in spiritual life. A good gardener does not dig out the plant by the roots to see how it is growing. We cannot force the growth of the soul-plant. It may not be large or strong enough to bear fruit when we wish it to, but some day it will, if only we are not anxious and nurture it well. "What is to learn, is to be content, or, rather, resigned to ourselves and our limitations even while

striving to get above them. . . . We cannot all at once live up to these high ideals as some others live up to theirs.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 162)

When we are anxious we seem to assert, in a subtle way, our own will. We want things to happen as we desired. Mr. Judge says, “By anxiety we exert the constrictive power of egoism, which densifies and perturbs our magnetic sphere, rendering us less permeable to the efflux from above” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 12). In other words, by being anxious, we mar our chances of receiving help from our divine nature. Instead, if we learn to accept that whatever happens is for the best, we will never have any need to be anxious. Sometimes, apparently adverse looking circumstances or happenings work to our advantage or at least prove educative for the soul.

We have these encouraging words from Mr. Judge:

Keep right on, and try for patience in all the very smallest things of life every day, and you will find it growing very soon, and with it will come greater strength and influence on and for others, as well as greater and clearer help from the inner side of things.

Kshanti and *Virya* go hand in hand. Perfection in exercise of patience implies surrender of personal will and personality, which in turn, facilitates expression and manifestation of Divine Will or spiritual energy, (*Virya*). It is higher form of patience which cultivates *Virya*, and both are children of dispassion or *Vairagya*. Sangharakshita, a Buddhist teacher, says that the practice of all other *paramitas* depends upon *Virya*, because whether we want to help others, or meditate or to practise patience or forbearance, we need energy—at times, it is negative energy, in the form of resistance. “Patience itself is a healing-power and very much indeed can be gained both spiritually and psychically through patience,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT “INCLINATIONS OF THE SENSES”

BETTY laboriously spelled out her verse for the day in *The Bhagavad-Gita*: “He who attendeth to the inclinations of the senses, in them hath a concern; from this concern is created passion, from passion anger, from anger is produced delusion, from delusion a loss of memory, from the loss of memory loss of discrimination, and from loss of discrimination loss of all.” She liked the sound of it, in spite of the long words, and read it aloud again after she had mastered them.

“It sounds a little like that verse we had to learn in the third grade,” mused Betty. “‘For lack of the nail the shoe was lost; for lack of the shoe the horse was lost; for lack of the horse the rider was lost; for lack of the rider the battle was lost; for the lack of the battle the kingdom was lost, and all for lack of horse-shoe nail.’ It seems to all start off from a little thing, the same way, and get worse and worse, but I wonder what are ‘inclinations of the senses’ that we dare not attend to, or all those dreadful things will happen to us.”

She meant to ask Mother what it meant, but anticipation of the morning’s treat crowded the verse out of her mind. For it was during the spring vacation and the circus was in town. The parade was to pass that morning only six blocks away and Mother had said Betty might go. The parade was all of circus Betty would see, for the little family had no money to spare for amusements. The children’s father had died over a year ago, and their mother had to work hard to get the necessities for herself and Betty and little Lawrence. On school days a woman was hired to come in to look after Larry, but Betty was such a responsible child her mother felt safe in leaving her in charge during the holidays and the money so saved was badly needed.

Betty knew, of course, that Larry had a cold, but what was her dismay when Mother, hurrying through her work before she left,

said, “I am sorry for your disappointment, dear, but it looks like rain and Larry’s cold is worse this morning, so I do not dare have you take him out. You would not mind giving up the parade this time to look after your little brother.”

Betty’s face showed that she did mind, dreadfully, but she tried not to show it and gulped down the big lump in her throat until they waved good-bye to Mother as she turned the corner. But how she cried then, and the frightened small boy joined in and wailed hoarsely. How she wanted to see the elephants and the camels and the horses and the smiling, pink-cheeked ladies in fancy dresses! All she remembered of past parades rose in her mind to whet her desire to see this one. She began to feel resentment at the little brother who prevented her going, and gave him a little shake and told him, none too gently, to stop crying.

Even mother was included in her growing anger at not being allowed to go, and presently Betty had convinced herself that she was a badly-abused child, that Mother was “mean” and trying to spoil her pleasure. Quite forgotten were her real affection for Mother and Larry and her usual appreciation of Mother’s tireless devotion to them both. Forgotten, too, the lesson learned in Theosophy School about duty and service. Betty seemed all big desire, and seeing the parade looked, at that moment, like the most important thing in the world.

“I do not believe Larry’s cold is very bad, and it does not look much like rain,” muttered Betty defiantly, as she started down the walk with Larry trudging miserably beside her.

When they reached the street where the parade was to pass, she perched Larry on a low wall and stood beside him, trying not to notice his coughing and making a desperate effort to enjoy herself. They had quite a long wait in the cold before the parade appeared, and, when it came, nothing looked as wonderful as Betty had anticipated. The elephants and camels were the same as last year, but she felt, oh! so different. And the smiling ladies were not pretty. Even a little girl could see they were painted.

It began to rain in big drops before all the parade had passed, but Betty was quite willing to forego the rest and started home with Larry, who had begun to cry. It rained smartly before they reached home, and it was a bedraggled pair who toiled up the front steps.

And who should be there to open the front door for them but Mother! She had been so uneasy about her sick baby that she had been excused for the day and come home to find the house empty. All she said was, “Why Betty!” but Betty long remembered the look on her face, so anxious and so disappointed in her little daughter.

Betty found some relief in working as hard as she could to help Mother, who was trying to repair the mischief done, with hot blankets and simple remedies. It was several of the longest hours Betty had ever spent, before Larry stopped wheezing and fell asleep.

Then, satisfied that he was really better, Mother sat down by the open fire with Betty on her lap and they talked it all over.

“You see, dear, the steeds of desire, which will carry us forward if we hold the reins tightly and guide them, are quick to run away with us if we let them.”

“Why, Mother,” exclaimed Betty, “I do believe it just proves my verse this morning,” and she got her *Bhagavad-Gita* and read the verse to her mother. “My senses wanted to see the parade; that must be ‘inclinations of the senses.’ And I thought I wanted to; that was ‘concern,’ wasn’t it? I got all excited. Would that be ‘passion’ Mother? Then I was angry at Larry and at you, Mother dear,” and Betty’s eyes filled again, but she went on bravely. “I thought it was mean of you not to let me go. Is it ‘delusion’ when you think something that is not so?”

Mother nodded, and Betty continued, “Then I lost my memory. I forgot all you were doing for us and how often I have found out you knew better than I did. I did not think it looked like rain or that Larry was very sick.

“That was loss of discrimination, surely, dear!”

“I guess it was ‘loss of all’ to lose control of myself entirely and go, when I knew ‘way inside, it was wrong.” Betty’s lip trembled. “Oh, Mother, can you ever trust me again?”

For answer Mother held her closer and they sat silent watching the fire until Betty murmured, “That is one verse I *never* will forget.” [This story is taken from “Teacher’s Manuel and Guide to Eternal Verities,” p. 181]

The story is worth pondering over by children and grown-ups alike. We are surrounded by allurements of all kinds. We are almost hypnotized by the advertisements, which tend to arouse desires that often go out of hand. Continual bombardment through the medium of magazines, televisions and newspapers, not only forces us to dwell on the alluring objects, but even succeeds in making us imagine that we really *need* those objects of enjoyment or comfort, and that we *must* get them.

Verse 62 quoted above from the Second Chapter of the *Gita*, gives us a chain-reaction, which begins by attending to the object of sense and ends in loss of all. The Sanskrit word used is *dhyayato* meaning one who constantly thinks about or dwells on desired object. When we constantly think upon a sense-object, such constant dwelling creates in us an attachment for the object of our thought, which ultimately becomes a strong passion to possess that object. We often hear of cases of young boys and girls, “obsessed” with the desire to buy an expensive mobile, a motorcycle or a car, and resorting to theft and even murder to get it, or committing suicide when unable to fulfil the desire. Thus, frustrated desire causes anger, which ultimately tends to obscure *sara-asara-viveka* or discrimination between right and wrong, or good and evil.

In the *Gita*, Arjuna asks Shri Krishna, “What is that unknown force which drives people to commit offence, seemingly against

their will? Krishna’s reply is, “It is desire which instigates them. It is passion sprung from the quality of *rajas*.... Its empire is over the senses and organs, the thinking principle and the *discriminating faculty* also.”

Senses and organs produce sensation, when they contact external objects. For instance, when we put ice-cream on the tip of our tongue, the tongue reports that it is cold and sweet, but it is the mind that intervenes and says, “I like it, I want more of it.” We are cautioned in *The Voice of the Silence*, “Thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind.” To win a victory over one’s self is to experience the feelings and yet check the desires.

There are several instances of “momentary madness,” or a “moment of unbridled passion,” when emotions cloud reason and discrimination. There are several instances of murder, suicide and rape committed in a fit of passion, by normal, well-respected persons. The libidinal impulse that takes birth in the brain may take over so badly that it demands instant gratification. However, Dr. Erich Fromm writes that often, the “moment of madness” is the *last* decision in the chain of events. Indeed, at the point of final decision the freedom to choose has usually vanished, but it may still have been there when the person was not so deeply caught in his own passions. Many a time the passion is slowly building up, while we are not aware and there is still freedom to act according to reason. Then comes this moment when it is too late to make a decision.

“You know, of course, that attachment to things or results, comes by thinking about them. You can have no attachment for a thing you do not think about; neither can you have any dislike for a thing you do not think about,” writes Mr. Crosbie.

Do not judge in anger, for though the anger passes the judgement remains.

—W. Q. JUDGE

ART OF SERVICE

“KARMIC CAUSES already set in motion must be allowed to sweep on until exhausted, but this permits no man to refuse to help his fellows and every sentient being,” says an Aphorism on Karma. Even a tyro in theosophy knows that everything a man is, or is not, everything he possesses or lacks, is the result of Karma. Each soul is the maker of his own destiny; everyone has to work out his own salvation with diligence. The Way can be pointed out to him; yet each must walk it relying only on himself.

This principle of the Law of Karma is very important, especially in India where Karma is mistaken for unalterable fate or predestination fixed and immovable. That is not the teaching either of Theosophy or of ancient Indian Philosophy. It is taught: “As by elimination of oil in the lamp its light is extinguished, so is the influence of destiny by the abatement of one’s own present deeds.” And the contrary is equally true: “Even as fire of small proportion, when fanned by the wind, becomes of mighty power, so does destiny increase in force when joined to individual exertion.” In these aphorisms everyone gets instruction as to his correct attitude towards all things in life. What is that attitude? Whatever the cause, the effect properly handled in the present will not only enable us to pay our debts and remove the offending cause, but, that effect in itself will become a channel for improvement and growth. The whole of life is a school in which every event and experience yields a lesson, and the learning of the lesson is the most important factor.

From this we can deduce another principle of the Law of Karma. The only evil karma is that in which a man has no control over himself owing to intoxication of some kind, so that he is disabled from learning the lesson of the Karma—*e.g.*, a drunken man, or a lunatic of a certain type. As long as an individual is able to understand that he can learn a lesson out of what he calls a piece of ill-luck, or evil fortune, or bad Karma, he really is not out of luck, is not unfortunate, and his Karma has beneficent potentialities.

Therefore it is said: “One’s own present acts are like the soil and destiny is the seed, the result of past deeds.”

These principles of the law of Karma are sound and right, but a twisted vision, or a mind clouded by desires and passions, can draw wrong conclusions from them. Thus, for instance, sometimes the question is raised: if each one suffers and enjoys because of his own past deeds, and if self-reliance is a prime virtue, then are we not depriving others of opportunities of self-growth by trying to help them? If we are to work out our own salvation, then why worry about the salvation of others? We have no right to interfere directly with the lives of others, for this would not be true help. What, then, constitutes true help?

We are all part of one great whole. Whatever good or evil we do will have its influence not only upon ourselves but also upon the whole world. Nations are realizing now that they cannot work for themselves alone, but that they must take into account all the other nations. And so it is with man. We must love and cherish our companions, and the best thing that we can do to help them is to point out the Way, to encourage them impersonally to tread the path of wisdom-virtue, not only by precept but by actual example. Never should we render them weaker or more dependent, but, on the contrary, we must aim at sustaining and strengthening their own self-reliance.

It is true that in our civilization wrong forms of charity and service retard and even injure the soul-growth of many people. If false knowledge distorts the mind, false expressions of kindness, misplaced charity, and desire to help others because one feels satisfaction in thus helping, weaken the heart. H.P.B. has said that the art of service is most difficult. We need to see not only why brotherly service should be rendered, but also how it should be rendered. “Work for the shedding of light upon other minds through yours,” wrote a Master of Wisdom.

In his usual lucid manner, W. Q. Judge has dealt with the subject in answering the question: “Is it right to restrain the impulse to

benefit another, either by teaching or by furnishing necessities for physical use, for fear of interfering with Karma?" A portion of his reply is reprinted here from *The Theosophical Forum* of February 1891:

No one of us knows the karma that is coming to another or to himself, and it is only when events have arrived that we know....Hence, even if we knew the coming karma or that which was due and should then decide, "I will help this person although I know it will interfere with karma," acting accordingly, we could not interfere in the least, because it would still be karma. This is an absurdity, but it is just the absurdity of those who talk of interfering with karma. We cannot interfere with it, for it is beyond our power, and we are, indeed, the very instruments it uses to carry out the decrees we have ourselves been the means of passing. The idea of possible interference has arisen out of the statement now and then made that Adepts have not done this or that because it would interfere with karma; but this has not been understood. What was really meant by such words was that the Adepts themselves are karma just as we are, only they see what we do not, and, as some of us asked for a reason, they said they would not interfere, or in other words, the law is strong and no being, god or devil or man can interfere with it. Any attempt to "interfere" is merely new karma carrying out that seed of karma already sown, no matter how many ages or years ago. But, still further, it seems to me that if we assume to decide what we shall do out of fear that our brother may not be sufficiently punished, we not only lay up wrath against ourselves, but at the same time set the germs in our own character which will sprout in selfishness and pain. We need not fear that karma will not do justice. It often does it by offering to us chance to help another, and, if we stand aside, it will at another day give us the punishment of our selfishness and arrogance.

ON MEDIUMS AND MEDIUMSHIP

A MEDIUM "is a person through whom the action of another being is said to be manifested and transmitted; by the either consciously or unconsciously active will of that other being." In this sense, almost all of us are mediums, because our thoughts and emotions, and hence the actions are influenced, in some way, either consciously or unconsciously by another. For instance, if a beloved general leads, even the coward is filled with heroism and enthusiasm; a speaker or writer may awaken noble sentiments or arouse bestial and low feelings, and likewise, television, movies and newspapers could influence people for better or worse.

Who, then, is really a medium? A medium is a person "through whom the action of another being is said to be manifested and transmitted to an abnormal extent by the consciously or unconsciously active will of that other being." H.P.B. explains this by analogy. A very eccentric person is not regarded as insane unless he has lost all control over himself, and does not know what he is doing. Likewise, a medium is a person who is influenced by others to such an "abnormal extent," as to lose all self-control and has no power of will to regulate his own actions. However, a medium can give up control over himself either consciously or unconsciously, voluntarily or involuntarily. For instance, a *chela* (disciple) may consciously and voluntarily submit his will, *i.e.*, put himself in receptive *passivity*, to receive communication from his Master.

But in our days, mediumship means yielding of weak nature to the suggestions and control of "spirits" and intelligences other than one's own immortal, divine spirit within. A "medium," in this sense, is necessarily an excessively passive person. The more passive he is, the more successful he is as a medium. The moment he begins to exercise any control, that moment he ceases to be a medium.

Does one become a medium in a given life? If yes, what makes a person mediumistic? Are there natural-born mediums? "Mediumship may be either 1st, self-developed; 2nd, by extraneous

influences; or 3rd, may remain latent throughout life.” (*Isis*, I, 487)

H.P.B. agrees with the view of Dr. Fairfield that mediums are usually diseased, and in many if not most cases, they are the children or near connections of mediums. One of the ten items of oriental psychology points out that just as races of men differ in colour, stature or any other external qualities, so also, they differ in psychic and spiritual gifts. In some races of people mediumship naturally prevails.

It appears that self-developed mediumship might be the result of wrong meditation practices. For instance, by following the instruction in the *Gita*, for meditation, namely, “Keeping his body, head and neck firm and erect, with mind determined, and *gaze directed to the tip of his nose*,” literally, many have come to suffer physical discomfort, such as, headache, giddiness, developing lethal passivity. In his article, “Contemplation,” Damodar Mavalankar cites an example of a person who carried out the injunctions enjoined in the *Gita*, literally, only to discover that he was gradually losing self-control. Even though he discontinued his “contemplation,” he could never again regain his normal and healthy state of mind and body. In another case, after beginning the practice of contemplation, the person began to hear musical bells and seeing abnormal sights, without control—and loss of self-control is the first indication of mediumship.

Attempts to cultivate clairvoyant faculty, by gazing into coffee cups or white of the Egg or glass of water, or shining objects, in which pictures or images from astral light get reflected, without proper training of the mind and senses, slowly but surely, leads to passivity, almost beyond recall. The will of the person, says Mr. Judge, is gradually overpowered, and they are under the control of demons and evil elemental spirits. A person who dabbles in the astral realm begins to live on the astral plane and hears and sees things of that plane, *without his control*.

H.P.B. describes a “medium” as a “sick sensitive,” born with a

peculiar organization. All of us are sensitive to changes in the atmosphere, to the needs and moods of others, to a certain extent. A spiritual aspirant becomes more and more sensitive as he progresses, and feels more keenly the joys and sorrows of others, but he does not allow these to shake him from his fixed purpose, says *Light on the Path*. In other words, a psychically or passively sensitive person is sensitive to every passing sensation, while a Mahatma is sensitive to the thoughts and feelings and needs of every living creature.

To be a medium means to be attuned to the impressions in the astral light. Seeing in the astral light is done through the astral senses. The astral senses of the medium are accustomed to seeing images and pictures in the astral light, but the mind or Ego is not yet trained to interpret them correctly. For example, though the image on the retina of our eye is inverted, our mind is trained and experienced to reverse that image and see it correctly. The images are also inverted in the astral light, but the mind and astral senses of the medium are not trained to enable him to differentiate true from the false. H.P.B. writes:

A medium is simply one in whose personal Ego, or terrestrial mind (*psychê*), the percentage of “astral” light so preponderates as to impregnate with it their whole physical constitution. Every organ and cell thereby is attuned, so to speak, and subjected to an enormous and abnormal tension. The mind is ever on the plane of, and quite immersed in, that deceptive light [astral light]...His senses, accustomed from his birth, like those of a native of the London slums, to stench and filth, to the unnatural distortions of sights and images tossed on the kaleidoscopic waves of the astral plane—are unable to discern the true from the false. (*Raja-Yoga or Occultism*, pp. 79-80)

Mediumship developed by “extraneous influences,” may include use of drugs that may induce trance state, as also, hypnotic and mesmeric trance. In waking state we operate on physical plane, while in trance state we operate on astral plane. In trance state, the

physical eyes and ears are paralyzed for the time being, and the brain is made to report what is seen and heard by the inner senses. In the ancient times there were prophesying priestesses called Pythia, and H.P.B. describes them as *half-mediums* and *half-magicians*. “Sitting on a tripod of brass placed over a fissure in the ground, through which arose intoxicating vapours, these subterranean exhalations penetrating her whole system produced the prophetic mania. In this abnormal state she delivered oracles” (*Isis*, pp. xxxviii-ix). Further, she observes that a medium needs extraneous means to overpower his physical and mental parts, and induce trance, while adepts and even simple fakirs require only a few minutes of “self-contemplation.” For instance, the priestesses of Northern Germany, under the guidance of hierophants, could never prophesy, but watching fixedly the eddies formed in the rapidly moving river they *hypnotized* themselves. Likewise, “the priestesses of Dodona placed themselves under the ancient oak of Zeus...and listened intently to the rustling of the sacred leaves, while others concentrated their attention on the soft murmur of the cold spring gushing from underneath its roots. But the adept has no need of any such extraneous aids—the simple exertion of his *will-power* is all-sufficient.” (*Isis*, II, 592)

Someone who regularly attends séances may find that he is beginning to lose his positivity and self-control. In the article “A Case of Obsession,” mention is made of a person who having attended few séances for the purpose of witnessing “materialization” of spirits, discovered that he had become the bond-slave of some evil powers which forced him to say and do painful and even disgusting things, despite his resistance. In other words, he was compelled to act against his will. H.P.B. explains that the atmosphere of the séance rooms is diffused with degrading magnetism or moral poison. Just as a physically susceptible person absorbs the virus of small-pox or cholera and suffers from that disease, so also, a psychically sensitive person absorbs bad magnetism which benumbs his moral sense and spurs on his lower,

base nature to activity, overpowering his good resolutions. “As the fumes of the wine-vault make the brain reel...so this heavy cloud of immoral influences carries away the sensitive beyond the limits of self-control, and he becomes ‘obsessed,’” explains H.P.B. Thus, a natural-born medium is one who might have developed mediumship in one of his prior lives, by dabbling into astral or psychic realm or by attending séances.

It appears that repetitive, mechanical and monotonous movements of the body can also put a person, temporarily, into a passive and mediumistic state. A sort of religious frenzy is experienced by women in India, who vigorously move their heads and torsos round and round, in gyrating motion, till finally they slip into a sort of trance state and answer certain questions. There is the short story “The Rocking-Horse Winner” by D. H. Lawrence, which is about a boy’s gift for picking the winners in horse races. The boy’s family is always short of money. The boy (Paul), as a child, receives a rocking horse for Christmas. While riding on his rocking horse, Paul envisions the winners. Paul proves to be unnaturally talented at divining the winners of the races, and before too long he has saved a considerable sum of money. The more Paul gives, the more his mother demands. Paul becomes obsessed with picking the winner of the upcoming Derby, “his blue eyes blazing with a sort of madness” as he rides his rocking horse. He has been spending hours riding his rocking horse, sometimes all night long, until he “gets there,” *i.e.*, into a “clairvoyant state,” where he can be sure of the winner’s name. He suggests the name of the horse to bet on, which fetches 80,000 pounds. But after suggesting the name the boy suffers a *seizure* and falls off his rocking horse and after remaining in stupor for three days, finally dies.

A medium is characterized by seizures or epileptic fits. In an ordinary person, the astral body is interwoven with the physical like fibres of the mango in the mango pulp, but in case of a medium, the astral body is loosely attached to the physical. A medium is

characterized by unconscious or involuntary withdrawal of astral from the physical body. When the astral body is withdrawn, the physical body appears to be more or less cataleptic. The moment the person becomes passive the door is opened and all the unknown forces rush in, and these are lower forces which tend to affect the lower, animal nature. Thus, a medium can become prey to evil entities, and under their influence become a murderer, a drunkard, a thief, etc. History shows that all those mediums who attempted to communicate with the “spirits” of the dead, ultimately suffered in health of body and mind. They died, either of the disease of spinal cord, or consumption or of insanity.

“Mediumship is measured by the quality of aura with which the individual is surrounded. This may be dense, cloudy, noisome, mephitic, nauseating to the pure spirit, and attract only those foul beings, who delight in it...or it may be pure, crystalline, opalescent as the morning dew. All depends upon the moral character of the medium.” Mediumship is always marked by *passivity*. When a medium is perfectly passive, his own astral spirit may be benumbed or crowded out of his body and the body is occupied by some depraved entity, which is termed *possession* or *obsession*. (*Isis*, I, 487-490)

Too much day-dreaming and phantasy, could ultimately result in passivity and gradually lead a person towards mediumship. Phantasy is automatic and operates without the control of the Ego. Day-dreaming is mild form of phantasy wherein the Ego has weak and intermittent control. In the article “A Case of Obsession,” H.P.B. makes the following suggestion for the cure of obsession, which is equally applicable to cure “psychically sensitive” people. Thus:

The sensitive must have his sensitiveness destroyed....He can be helped by a magnetizer who understands the nature of obsession, and who is morally pure and physically healthy; it must be a powerful magnetizer, a man of commanding will-force. But the fight for freedom will, after all, have to be fought by the patient himself. His will-power must be aroused. His

diet must be of the simplest, he must neither eat animal food, nor touch any stimulant...[He must] control his thoughts and compel them to dwell upon pure, elevating, spiritual things. (*H.P.B. Series No. 9*, p. 44)

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DO GODS ANSWER OUR PRAYERS?

PRAYER is a common practice in all religions. There are different meanings of the word prayer, as also, many practices pertaining to it. All religious ideas, beliefs, customs, traditions and practices, such as the one under consideration, have a foundation in truth, however much it may have been obscured by outgrowth of wrong ideas and superstitions over centuries owing to imperfection of human nature. We have, therefore, to examine our beliefs and conceptions in the light of the Esoteric Philosophy and try to bring out the true sense and meaning, and true practices based on knowledge.

The word prayer comes from the Latin root-word *precari*, which means to beg, to entreat, to beseech, to seek favour. Such indeed is the sense in which the popular practice of prayer consists. It comes from a belief that there is a God, or that there are Gods, outside of us, from whom favours can be obtained by offering worship and making supplication. It is commonly seen that people, either with a view to seek relief from their troubles, or to obtain the objects of their desires, throng temples, churches, tombs of saints, and offer prayers to the deity, or the dead saint, who, they believe, has the power to bestow favours they are seeking.

Teachers point out that this particular form of prayer is an error, and pernicious in its consequences. Because, firstly, it is an absurdity to believe that the Universal Divine Principle, Absolute Deity, the root of ALL that was, is and will be, from which all proceed and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of Being, listens to, and answers our prayers; and, secondly, what are called Gods are hierarchies of intra-cosmic intelligences and creative forces of Nature, the manifesting powers of Absolute Deity, devoid of any element of personality such as we humans have, and are themselves as much bound by Karmic and Cosmic Laws as man himself. These cosmic powers, moreover, being on higher planes of cosmic consciousness wherein absolute

harmony reigns, human sentiments and prayers addressed in so many words, mechanically uttered, are not felt there. Hence, appealing for their intervention and help by supplications is useless. Endowed potentially with Deific essence as man is, it is the law of his being that he has to evolve in spiritual life, towards divinity, by his own self-induced and self-devised ways and means, checked by his Karma, through life's experiences. It is therefore shown by Teachers that such prayers as petitioning God for help kills self-reliance, weakens the will and accentuates selfishness in man.

And as the great majority of people are intensely selfish, and pray only for themselves, asking to be *given* their “daily bread” instead of working for it, and begging God not to lead them “into temptation” but to deliver them... from evil, the result is, that prayer, as now understood, is doubly pernicious: (a) It kills in man self-reliance; (b) It develops in him a still more ferocious selfishness and egotism than he is already endowed with by nature. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 69-70)

If Deity is Omnipresent, Eternal, Absolute Principle, the One without a second essentially, then the universe of beings is a manifestation of It, and that Deific Omnipresence is the very core and essence of every being, high or low. The Deity and Law being one, the only God man can ever become cognizant of is the Deity in his own heart, the seat of Divine Consciousness and Absolute Justice, and in the heart of all other beings. Hence Plato taught that divine Justice subsists in the soul, and is ubiquitous. True worship and true prayer, then, is an ardent aspiration of mind and heart to be ruled and guided by, and finally to assimilate one's self with, the Deity within—one's Higher Self. This can only be done by pursuit of Self-knowledge, leading a life of unselfishness, altruism and devotion to the good of humanity.

One of the Masters of Wisdom, when asked why They, with Their great knowledge and power, do not make men think and do as they should, said that the human soul is not so constituted, and that *it has to see and act for itself* (*Universal Theosophy*, p. 37). As

the universe is governed by immutable law of cause and effect, by which everyone reaps the effects of his own acts, the only good that anyone can aspire for and obtain, is what he himself has earned by himself performing such actions which are productive of good, and not by prayers addressed to an outside God. No power on earth, whether gods or saints, has the power to confer gifts and favours upon anyone who has not earned it by his own meritorious acts, nor is there any power in heavens or on earth placating which man can stall or divert even by a hair's breadth the ill effects of his evil actions from overtaking him. "The visible universe depends for its existence and phenomena on its mutually acting forms and their laws, not on prayer or prayers," writes H.P.B. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 66). It is through self-effort and meritorious actions alone that one progresses in spiritual life, as well as obtains happiness in earth life. Selfish intent and motive in action, and in religious life, is the enemy of man on earth which robs him of his happiness and of his freedom from bondage. True prayer is silent and unuttered. Thus:

"...the ardent turning of the soul toward the divine; not to ask any particular good (as in the common meaning of prayer), but for good itself—for the universal Supreme Good," of which we are a part on earth, and out of the essence of which we all have emerged." (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 10)

All the great Teachers have taught such a prayer. It is renunciation of all self-interest in action and giving oneself unconditionally to the dictates of the Higher Self and the Law of our being, as taught by Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad-gita*, and by Jesus in the Gospels. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of (the absolute) God dwelleth in you?" interrogatively exclaims Jesus, and bids aspirants to seek that God within themselves, the "Father in Heaven" of everyone, by turning inwards, seeking communion with the Divine Consciousness in the silence and sanctity of one's purified soul.

Such prayer is what is called Will-Prayer. It is an occult mystery,

says H.P.B., not a petition. Thus:

It is a mystery rather; an occult process by which finite and conditioned thoughts and desires, unable to be assimilated by the absolute spirit which is unconditioned, are translated into spiritual wills and will; such process being called "spiritual transmutation." The intensity of our ardent aspirations changes prayer into the "philosopher's stone," or that which transmuted lead into pure gold. The only homogenous essence, our "will-prayer" becomes the active or creative force, producing effects according to our desire. (*The Key to Theosophy*, pp. 67-68)

When one's aspiration is for the Supreme Good itself, untainted with selfish intent, and heart full of unconditioned Love for all, the Spiritual Will, freed from the trammels of lower desires, becomes a sovereign creative power. Prayer of such an one is not prayer as ordinarily understood—as a petition or supplication—but a command. He acts in unison with his Higher Self, always for universal beneficence. His very thoughts and words have a creative potency. "To desire is to realize in proportion to the intensity of one's aspiration; and that, in its turn, is measured by inward purity." (*Isis*, II, 592)

But Teachers warn that without entirely purifying oneself inwardly of all selfish motives, if one sends up prayers to the Divine Self within for selfish purposes, prayer of such an one becomes spiritual sorcery and black magic fraught with dire consequences. Many instances are there in the past as well as in the present of people resorting to such a prayer with an evil intent, whether consciously or unconsciously. Intense thoughts of ill-will or revenge of anyone towards another positively harms the latter, and also unfailingly reacts on the former to his detriment. "*Every mesmerizer knows the power of will during an intense desire bent on particular subject.*" (*Isis*, II, 21)

At the same time, a sincere and heart-felt good will, or a heart full of feeling of gratitude and benediction for another, unfailingly benefits the one towards whom the sentiment is felt, as much as

the one who wafts the beneficent currents of good-will and gratitude. Theosophy teaches that more benefit accrues to the one who feels gratitude than to the one for whom it is felt. Hence gratitude is a divine virtue which should be cultivated; ingratitude is one of the deep-dyed taint of human nature, which degrades man, and which should be expunged from our hearts.

If our modern civilization is in deep crisis of human and ecological degradation, it is because generally man, at the present time, has lost the spiritual perception of the essential unity of life, and with that lack, he has estranged himself from that innate heart quality of reverence, love and gratitude for all life, and for the bountiful Nature, which are now sadly come to be looked upon as commodities to be exploited and desecrated for selfish ends.

True prayer, then, comes from spiritual perception of unity of Self, and reciprocal interdependence of all beings, which naturally gives rise to a realization of that practical ideal that the only good that can come to us is in the degree of unselfish labour of ours for the highest good of all, and that selfishness is the death of man. When this truism is well understood, then will come over a change for a better and a happier world. True worship and true prayer is stated by the great Teachers to be unswerving devotion to one's Higher Self, untainted by self-interest.

The ever unknowable and incognizable *Karana* alone, the *Causeless* Cause of all causes, should have its shrine and altar on the holy and ever untrodden ground of our heart—invisible, intangible, unmentioned, save through “the still small voice” of our spiritual consciousness. Those who worship before it, ought to do so in the silence and the sanctified solitude of their Souls; making their spirit the sole mediator between them and the *Universal Spirit*, their good actions the only priests, and their sinful intentions the only visible and objective sacrificial victims to the *Presence*. (*S.D.*, I, 280)

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: Christian doctrine teaches that animals have no souls or that *the soul of the animal dies with its body*. What has Theosophy to say on this and on killing of animals?

Answer: This question has been answered at length by H. P. Blavatsky in her article, “Have Animals Souls?” She shows that it is this doctrine, combined with another, misunderstood doctrine that God gave *dual* Adam—“dominion over fish, fowl, cattle, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (*Genesis*, Ch. I, v. 28), that has led to terrible suffering of animal kingdom at the hands of man. This includes untold suffering of animals in the “scientific slaughter-houses” called “vivisection rooms.” While God commanded man’s “dominion over every living thing,” yet nowhere we find “Lord God” commanding man to devour animal creation or destroy it for sport. In fact, pointing to the vegetable kingdom God says very plainly: “To you (men) it shall be for meat” (I, 29), and based on it the early Christians during the first centuries never touched meat. Mr. Judge in his article “About Killing Animals,” presents true theosophical position, thus:

In certain environments, at certain stages of evolution, we have to do an amount of injury to others that we cannot avoid. So while we thus live we must eat, some of flesh and others of the vegetable. Neither class is wholly right or wrong. It becomes a wrong when we deliberately without actual need destroy the lives of animals or insects. So the man who was born in a family and generation of meat-eaters and eats the meat of slaughtered animals does less wrong than the woman who, though a vegetarian, wears the feathers of slaughtered birds in her hats,

since it was not necessary to her life that such decoration should be indulged in. So the epicure who tickles his palate with many dishes of meats not necessary for sustentation is in the same case as the woman who wears bird's feathers. Again as to shoes, saddles, bridles, pocketbooks, and what not, of leather. These are all procured from the skins of slain animals. Shall they be abolished? Are the users of them in the wrong? Any one can answer. Or did we live near the North Pole we would be compelled to live on bears' and wolves' meat and fat.

Since the misunderstood Biblical teaching has resulted in killing and suffering of the animals at the hands of man, it is necessary to know whether or not the animals have souls. The Brahmin and Buddhist philosophy points out that "by killing an animal, or even an insect, we arrest the progress of an entity towards its final goal in nature—Man." Hence, "kill not" is one of the foremost commandments enjoined upon man by every true religious system. The whole Bible teems with charity to men and mercy and love to animals. To those who believe that "man is endowed with an immortal soul, and the dumb brute has no immortality, not even short survival after death," H.P.B. points out that there is not the slightest proof in the Bible that after death man's soul goes to heaven, but the same is not true of animals, as seen in the utterances of Solomon in *Ecclesiastes* (Ch. III).

The doctrine of the Church is that animals, though not soulless, have no *permanent* or immortal soul in them, and that the principle which animates them dies with the body. If this is true, how Church reconciles this statement with that other claim that animals may be and have been frequently and miraculously resurrected, asks H.P.B. For instance, resuscitation of dead bustards by St. Remi, resurrection of a lamb from burning coals of an oven by St. Francis, and so on. H.P.B. writes that one who credits man with an immortal soul independent of the body it animates can easily believe that by some divine miracle the soul can be recalled and forced back into the body. But how can a Christian accept the same possibility in

case of an animal, since his faith teaches him that the animal has no independent soul, since it is annihilated with the body? The answer presented by the Church is that the soul that animated the animal during its life being dead or dissipated after the death of the body, another soul—"a kind of an *informal soul*" is *created* for the purpose of miracle by God; a soul, moreover, which is distinct from that of man, which is "an independent, ethereal and everlasting entity." H.P.B. points out:

The whole question rests upon the misconception that "soul," *nephesh*, is entirely distinct from "spirit"—*ruach*. And yet it is clearly stated that "God breathed into the nostrils (of man) *the breath of life* and man became a living soul," *nephesh*, neither more or less than an animal, for the soul of an animal is also called *nephesh*. It is by development that the *soul* becomes *spirit*, both being the lower and the higher rungs of one and the same ladder whose basis is the UNIVERSAL SOUL or spirit.

In the article, "Psychic and Noetic Action," H.P.B. explains that what the Kabalists call *Nephesh* or the "breath of life" is the psychic element or *Kama-manas*, of Theosophy, and which is common to both animal and human being. *Kama-manas* is developed more in human being because of the greater perfection and sensitiveness of his cerebral cells. In his article "Reincarnation of Animals," Mr. Judge explains that animals cannot have *Manas* as much developed as man, and so cannot be self-conscious in the sense that man is. Since man has more developed mind and brain and nervous system, man suffers more intensely than animal. But animals do suffer pain, feel anger and fear. The animal kingdom, being lower, has the impulse still to rise to higher forms, but they may rise higher in their own kingdom. They cannot in this evolution rise to the human stage, as we have reached the middle or turning-point in the fourth round. This is further clarified in the *Secret Doctrine* as follows:

In calling the animal "Soulless," it is not depriving the beast, from the humblest to the highest species, of a "soul," but only of a conscious surviving *Ego-soul*, *i.e.*, that principle which

survives after a man, and reincarnates in a like man. The animal has an astral body that survives the physical form for a short period; but its (animal) Monad does not reincarnate in the same, but in a higher species, and has no “Devachan” of course. It has the *seeds* of all the human principles in itself, but they are *latent*. (II, 196 fn.)

Thus, unlike man, there is no self-conscious Ego in animals, but there is a monadic essence which after the death of an animal incarnates in next higher species, and tends to get individualized through such innumerable incarnations. This process is gradual and “in higher animals comes almost to the point.” (*S.D.*, I, 78)

The Kabalistic axiom contains the true doctrine of evolution when it says “A stone becomes a plant; a plant, a beast; a beast, a man; a man, a spirit; and the spirit, a god.” This becomes amply clear if we turn to H.P.B.’s comment on the wise sayings of St. Paul in Romans VIII, thus: “*We (Initiates)* know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth [in childbirth] in pain together until now” (viii, 22). This is plainly saying that man and animal are on a par on earth, as to suffering, in their evolutionary efforts toward the goal and in accordance with Karmic law. By “until now,” is meant up to the fifth race, explains H.P.B. Further, “Not only they [the animals], but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (viii, 23).

Human beings have the “first-fruits of the Spirit,” or *Atma* or seventh principle, owing to the perfection of our fifth principle (*Manas*), which is far less developed in the animal. As compensation, however, their Karma is far less heavy than ours. But that is no reason why they too should not reach one day that perfection that makes of a man a Dhyani Chohan. The hope of redemption or, of the survival of the spiritual entity delivered “from the bondage of corruption,” or the series of temporary material forms, is for *all living* creatures, not for man alone.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

A great number of people in the United States and Canada are attracted to what is known as “ganja yoga.” It is considered to be spiritually “higher” alternative compared to plain yoga. It consists in taking (smoking) marijuana before starting the yoga practice. Lucelene Pancini, who has been teaching ganja yoga for last two years, at her Toronto studio, House of Yoga, says, “you feel more connected with your soul,” because Marijuana floods your mind with dopamine and the happy state of mind helps you enjoy yoga better. Many people, who come to yoga class directly from office, are tired and stressed out, and hence cannot get all the benefits of yoga practice, hence, “smoking weed before starting will ease the muscles, boost circulation and relax the mind,” says Pancini. Cannabis, not only enhances the feeling of pleasure but it also helps to get rid of inhibitions so that one may be able to summon the courage to do a headstand. Another yoga teacher, Liz McDonald, who has been teaching ganja yoga in Los Angeles’ Atwater Village is of the opinion that smoking up before yoga “makes its mystical components feel more ‘real,’” and that one can actually feel one’s *chakras*. She believes that yoga has therapeutic powers and it helped one of her clients deal with post-traumatic stress disorder. She argues that over centuries yoga has evolved into many forms—vinyasa, hatha, tantra, etc. Ganja yoga, “too, is progressive. You have to keep pushing ahead.” Pancini argues that Patanjali mentions in his Yoga sutras that consumption of “certain herbs” can give the same benefits as Yogic practice. However, the purists do not approve of mixing drugs with the ancient practice of yoga, writes Shobita Dhar. (*Sunday Times of India*, September 14, 2014)

Yoga practices have taken many bizarre forms, especially in western countries. Not only are dogs taught yoga, but there is a new genre of yoga called “nude yoga” where everybody is encouraged to strip and merge their egos! The word “Yoga” is derived from the Sanskrit “*Yuj*,” meaning union. Yoga is supposed

to bring about the union of Higher (Divine) and lower (personal) nature in man. The Yoga system is divided into two principal parts—Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga. Hatha Yoga system deals mainly with the physiological part of man with a view to establish his health and train his will. Undertaken without adequate guidance, Hatha-Yogic practices involve serious physical and moral risks. Patanjali's eightfold system of Yoga is "Raja Yoga" that is more concerned with the control of the mind and lays more emphasis on practice of the virtues.

In the first aphorism of *Kaivalya Pada*, Patanjali mentions that Perfections of body or superhuman powers are produced by birth, or by powerful herbs, or by incantations, or penances or meditations. This aphorism is taken as the basis to argue that one can have spiritual experiences through use of drugs, herbs or elixirs. *Permanent* perfection or spiritual accomplishment can only be obtained through performance of meditation for several lives. Any other perfection, physical, mental or spiritual through incantations, drugs or penances is "impermanent." Moreover, Mr. Judge points out that by the use of drugs and narcotics, "the consciousness is put into an artificial state and is more entangled than ever," although under their influence a person may obtain knowledge of things not known in normal state.

However, mention is made of Soma-juice made by the initiated Brahmins from the rare mountain plant. When it is taken sparingly by the initiate, it is said to make a new man of the initiate; he is reborn and transformed, and his spiritual nature overcomes the physical; it bestows the divine power of inspiration, and develops the clairvoyant faculty to the utmost. However, H.P.B. says that the majority of the sacrificial priests of the Dekkan (in India) have lost the secret of the true Soma. The Soma-drink known to Europeans is not the *genuine* beverage, but its substitute, prepared from the roots of the Nyagradha, a plant or bush which grows on the hills of Poona.

Many of us find it difficult to follow discipline. "Every time I force myself to do something disciplined and fixed—such as sit down at a particular time for a fixed number of hours to write, or get into an exercise schedule—something strong within me rebels and struggles violently to be set free," writes Vinita Dawra Nangia. Instead of being tied down by the time schedules and constraints imposed by others, she chose to listen to the inner monologue, which is the greatest Guide and Master one could ever hope for. But this does not mean that she is advocating indiscipline, but her protest is against the discipline imposed from the outside. It would be much better if the rules and procedures for performing the task arose out of the love for the task and with a motivation to achieve it. She writes:

What is discipline after all? It is expending time and energy trying not to do things you really want to do. Or, forcing yourself to do something that your mind and body rebel against. There are some things that must be done even if you force yourself to do them for the sake of your own growth, health and hygiene, or for general sociability and compatibility with fellow beings. Once that is taken care of, I find externally-imposed discipline to be just an albatross around the neck. It puts me off rather than gets me into doing something.

Instead of disciplining herself to do certain irksome tasks she tries to look for aspects that would arouse her passion, and if that cannot be found then she would try to add elements that would create passion, so that the task can become "Love To Do" rather than "Must Do." We need motivation to achieve anything. Discipline is required if the motivation is not strong enough. When one dreams and aspires strongly, one is motivated to work towards it, and then the journey becomes as exciting as the destination. When there is strong motivation we create our own rules for reaching the goal. It is true that external authority is necessary during formative years, but each one has to learn to give up a beaten track and choose one's own drummer, and then you have a great

responsibility towards yourself, writes Vinita Nangia. (*Times Life, Sunday Times of India*, September 21, 2014)

Discipline means moulding ourselves in accordance with certain rules or principles laid down by family, society or religion for guiding us on the right path. A child is an old soul in a new body, and needs guidance, till the age of seven when the *manasic* Ego makes connection with the personality, making the child responsible for all its actions. As the child grows up and begins to take charge of himself, restrictions and inhibitions must be increasingly replaced by constructive advice and education. But there must be a balance between freedom and inhibitions.

In the absence of self-discipline, it becomes necessary to impose discipline from the outside, and then sooner or later, it arouses rebellion. Wherever possible, emphasis must be on self-discipline. From within his own consciousness a person must evolve his own code of discipline. Especially in spiritual life, the disciple has to put the “bit” into his own mouth. A bit is the restraining instrument used for controlling the horse, and it is very painful for the horse. When people are obedient out of fear of authority, or some divine power, growth of human conscience and moral insight does not take place. “The Authority which we recognize is...*an internal recognition of the value*...This is the authority of one’s Self-discrimination, intuition, the highest intellection. If we follow what we recognize in that way, and still find it good, we naturally keep our faces in that direction,” writes Mr. Crosbie. (*The Friendly Philosopher*, p. 372)

Indeed, great is the responsibility of a person who chooses not to follow external discipline, but prefers to be self-disciplined. For the purpose of self-discipline we need to have right knowledge, practice regular meditation and self-examination, and work for humanity, which will give an opportunity for the application of knowledge. Disciplining the mind is a primary step.

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast,” said Shakespeare,

but in her book *When Things Fall Apart*, Pema Chodron, a Buddhist nun, suggests that we must learn to “abandon all hope.” In her book she tells us that when trapped in hopeless situation, in a crisis like failed marriage or financial disaster, our normal instinct is to look for security or a silver lining, and latch on to something, like a drowning man clutching at a straw. This grabbing is based on hope, and not grabbing is called hopelessness. It is only when we are willing to give up hope that this suffering and pain can be obliterated that we are able to summon the courage to relax into the groundlessness of the situation. Suffering and wretchedness will confront us sooner or later; and we should be mindful and accept the situation and relax into the uncertainty, uneasiness and panic. Life is full of uncertainties and to seek for a lasting security is a futile task. She says, “To be fully alive, completely human and wide awake is to be continuously thrown out of the nest...We keep moving in circles in our effort to seek pleasure and comfort, and the satisfaction we get is fleeting and short-lived. Let us rather make friends with the situation, and embrace it whole-heartedly.”

From a spiritual point of view, hopelessness may be termed choicelessness, *i.e.*, having no other choice but to accept the present moment, completely and gracefully. Eckhart Tolle beautifully describes in *The Power of Now* that waiting is the state of mind where we do not want what we have got in the present, but live in the projected future, where we want to be. Pema’s advice to “abandon all hope of things improving” is not fatalistic or pessimistic, but rather an optimistic and clear portrayal of stark reality as it is; rather than trying to beat a hasty retreat to the nearest exit door, one should confront the problem head-on like a spiritual warrior. When we learn to transcend the cycle of hope and fear, and stop resisting the moment, and learn acceptance and surrender, we notice a fundamental shift in our way of thinking, and this change in our mental outlook makes the circumstances far more agreeable, writes Saroj Dubey, a medical gastroenterologist practising in East Delhi. (*Life Positive*, September 2014)

At the base of every nature there is faith, hope and love. Hope is a theological virtue, and is opposite of Despair. Re-birth is said to be the doctrine of hope, and asks us to hope that if one continues the spiritual effort, then even though goal of perfection may seem far away in this birth, it may be attained in some future life. Hope that things can change for the better, keeps the person going. It is hope based on the understanding that “when the lesson is learned the necessity ceases.”

There is a difference between the kind of hope which is only wishful thinking, and optimism, which seems to say that even though things may not work out the way we wanted, *ultimately* it will all lead to good. “Abandoning hope” means having the discrimination and ability to surrender, instead of trying to fight and resist the situation. Someone has rightly said, “There is no failure in unavoidable surrender; to know when to give up struggle there also is a triumph.”

When Karma has ripened and begun to precipitate, all we can do is to experience the effects with right attitude. *There should be no attempt to deviate the course of the Law and dodge the karmic consequences, by prayers or propitiatory ceremonies.* Mr. Crosbie writes, “‘Abandoning Hope’” reads to me the same as ceasing to look for results for self, and ‘shunning pain not yet come.’ If we would just take conditions as they come and make the best of them, other ‘bests’ would follow, and all worry, fear, doubt and anxiety would depart....We have power over nothing but the ‘is.’ It is by working with present conditions that the nature of the future is changed....This is reliance upon the Law, and working under it.”

In the higher, spiritual context, over the door which leads to the occult knowledge and powers, it is written: “Abandon Hope, all ye who enter here.” The one desiring to progress towards self-realization and desiring to be initiated into the mysteries, must “abandon hope,” for the gratification of his passions, curiosities, ambition or desire for gain, writes Mr. Judge.