

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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THEOSOPHY COMPANY (INDIA) PRIVATE LTD.

40 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020, India
email: ultmbai@mtnl.net.in ♦ Phone : 22039024
website: www.ultindia.org

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

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INTUITION—SOME REFLECTIONS

INTUITION has been variously defined as quick and ready insight, a powerful supernatural force, an internal compass that guides and directs. It is also described as an ability to sense things not perceptible to physical senses. According to Dr. Eric Berne, intuition means that we can know something without knowing how we know it. Malcolm Gladwell, the author of *Blink*, describes intuition as the power of thinking without thinking. Steve Jobs is often quoted as saying that intuition is “more powerful than intellect.” At a simple level, intuition is a *gut feeling* based on experience. Intuition, for some, is the ability to acquire knowledge without recourse to *conscious reasoning*. Intuition, in its highest aspect, is “direct cognition of the truth in all things.” H.P.B. rates intuition higher than the reason saying, “Only those who realise how far Intuition soars above the tardy processes of ratiocinative thought can form the faintest conception of that absolute Wisdom which transcends the ideas of Time and Space,” thereby at once showing the difference between ordinary knowledge and Absolute Wisdom and linking the latter with intuition. Intuition soars far above reason as the vision of the high-flying eagle soars far above that of the ant crawling on earth. Interestingly, the word intuition comes from the root *intuit*, which means “to contemplate.”

In the world which relies mostly on logic and reason, the power of intuition is underrated and underused. We are normally guided

by the opinions of the people around us, by the prevalent religious, scientific and cultural ideas, rather than by the quiet voice of intuition. Our intuition is not all that asleep as we think. We acquire it through observation and experience. Hence, the most common form of intuition is a gut feeling, based on experiences in one's own field of work. Thus, for instance, based on their previous experiences business people make their judgement about people and decide future strategies. Law enforcement officers observe suspects and immediately "know" that they possess a weapon or illicit narcotic substances. Just as the old family doctor could diagnose typhoid fever "by the smell" because of his vast experience with the disease, so also, an observant psychiatrist learns to judge many things about his patients "by intuition." He makes a shrewd guess by observing the patient. Any professional can become "intuitive" about his own business, writes Dr. Berne. We might say that when there is genuine concern for another person, one may intuitively know what is troubling that person, as also the best way of helping him. A Mother intuitively knows what is troubling her child, or if her child is lying. In one case a fire in a building could not be extinguished, because its source was not known. When the chief experienced fireman stood calmly for a minute, something from within prompted him to check the cellar, and surely that was the source of fire. But even professionals do not always possess intuition *with certainty*. Malcolm Gladwell's introduction to his book *Blink* presents the example of the J. Paul Getty Museum's purchase of a statue that turned out to be a forgery. Only some experts were suspicious about the authenticity of the statue. Throughout the book Gladwell refers back to the introductory example to explain why some of the experts knew upon first glance at the statue that something was wrong.

We make our decisions, either by weighing the alternatives, or we make snap judgements, which at times are accurate, but these could also be influenced by innate biases, wrong assumptions and prejudices born of personal experiences. A criminal for us is a person in shabby clothes, wearing long hair, etc. For instance, when

Malcolm Gladwell grew his hair long, he was pulled out of airport security lines, and was questioned by police in a rape case, even though the prime suspect was much taller, and so on. Reasoning is like entering into a dark and unfamiliar room where you feel around and figure out what all things are there in the room, little by little. Intuition is like switching on the light, which shows the entire room, exactly as it is, in an instant.

What we call the "voice of conscience" is a pale shadow of intuition. "Voice of conscience" is generally understood to guide in terms of negatives such as "do not go there," "do not do this," rather than pointing to a clear-cut course to be followed. The more one pays attention to and acts in accordance with the conscience, the louder it speaks. "Conscience seems to be a faculty which may be stilled or made active. In my opinion its source is in the Higher Self, and as it comes down through plane after plane it loses its force or retains power according to the life and education of the being on earth," writes Mr. Judge. Its expression could be partially or totally blocked depending upon the ideas, habits of thought and ideologies followed by a person. A savage who kills, or the religionist who indulged in religious persecution for the sake of God and Christ, are both acting according to what they call their *conscience*, but limited and tainted by education or lack of it, and right or wrong beliefs. "In those cases where men are doing wrong according to what they call their conscience, it must be true that they have so warped their intuition as not to understand the voice of conscience," writes Mr. Judge.

Intuition is considered in Theosophy as "Divine Conscience." The human principle of Manas, when freed from Kama or lower desire propensity, turns toward the still more luminous faculty of *Buddhi* for illumination, thereby it becomes increasingly receptive. Intuition is premonition, knowledge of things that are to happen in the future, which may be experienced during waking hours or during sleep. Intuition is an embodiment of the knowledge that has been gained in the past by the spiritual nature of man. It is the highest

spiritual faculty in man but lies dormant as long as man remains a slave to the senses and the mind. Intuition is the faculty of Spiritual Discrimination or *Buddhi activated*. *Buddhi* is the channel through which divine knowledge reaches the “Ego.” When a poet, a scientist or an artist gets flashes of intuition, his mind has to be receptive and porous to the influences from his higher nature. There is a temporary conjunction of *manas* with *buddhi* when one gets a flash of intuition. In Great Beings there is a permanent conjunction of *buddhi* with *manas*. Flashes of intuition do not come from deep thought; it comes *after* we have indulged in deep thought. Deep thought is like a camera. Intuition does not come from the camera, but from the direction toward which the camera is pointed. Usually, our thought-camera is turned to pictures perceived by our senses. Instead, if we turn in deep thought, to the causal source from which these effects flow, *i.e.*, to the divine world, we get pictures, impressions, ideas, flashes, from that world. We do this unconsciously when we fall asleep after an intense struggle to find the solution of some problem, particularly some philosophical or ethical problem. During sleep, we move our thought-camera from the outward world to the world within for solution and often receive an answer from our all-knowing Self within.

It is increasingly believed that you do not need high IQ (Intelligence Quotient) to be a genius. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* a creative person relies strongly on intuition instead of adopting rational approach while solving the problems of life. H.P.B. sums up the idea of genius by saying that no Ego differs from another Ego, in its essential nature. That, which makes one person a great individual and another a silly person is the capability of the brain and body to transmit and give expression to the light of the *Inner man* within. Both instinct and intuition are direct perceptions. But instinct seems to be more concerned with the knowledge of personal, material things, while intuition pertains to the knowledge of Spirit. Hence, while reason may suffice to understand the world of matter, it requires intuition to know the world of Spirit.

Therefore, we are asked to study the scriptures *intuitively* and not merely intellectually, so as to get “the knowledge of the real meaning of sacred books.” Mr. Judge tells us to study the *Bhagavad-Gita* by the light of that spiritual lamp—be it small or great—which the Supreme Soul will feed and increase within us if we attend to its behests and diligently inquire after it. Jesus said that there will be false prophets and indeed we have many now. Even our scriptures have not remained pure due to interpolations, false interpretations by supposed spiritual leaders. How are we to know the true from the false? By using our intuition.

Interpreting an individual’s horoscope involves taking into account the sign and the house in which each planet is situated and the aspects (angles) each of them makes with other planets. It would give rise to an immense number of permutations and combinations and the interpretation; to take them all into account requires more than mere mathematical acumen. In addition to mathematics, intuition on the part of the astrologer is necessary. “An element of clairvoyance is necessary to constitute a true astrologer,” suggests H.P.B. The rishis are not so much the authors of the truths recorded in the Vedas as the *seers* who were able to discern the eternal truths by raising their consciousness to the plane of universal spirit, writes Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

All human beings possess the faculty of intuition, it only needs unselfish effort to develop it. It grows in us in proportion to the use we make of it. Just like a muscle, our intuition grows stronger the more it is used. When we try to apply the Law of Analogy and Correspondence, we give exercise to our intuition. Interestingly, it has been suggested that regular study of *The Secret Doctrine* can aid us in developing intuition. The teachings have been purposely presented in a complex way to arouse intuition and bring into play our Higher Mind. Likewise, an effort to get at the inner and deeper meaning of the symbology in myths and fairy tales can also aid in the development of intuition.

Building a trusting relationship with your inner voice is a

continual process. When we complain about adversities and pain, we show our unwillingness to take all that our Higher Self has in store for us as discipline and experience. When we rebel, we assert personal will instead of surrendering it to divine will and thus clog the channel of communication with the divine. Hence, in such a person intuitive perception is not likely to be keen, writes Mr. Crosbie.

We often get warnings about situations and people in our lives, but it seems we are too busy to notice. We seem to stifle intuition with our constant busyness, multitasking and involvement with our digital devices. To get in touch with our intuition, we must spend a little time alone, everyday, with ourselves. Solitude can connect us with our deepest inner wisdom. Strong emotions, especially negative ones, can cloud our intuition. We are unable to hear the inner voice in a state of anger or depression, or when we refuse to let go feelings of hurt, revenge, injustice, etc.

Development of the intuitive faculty is a gradual process. We may begin by putting all the moral questions to our inner self and wait for an answer. We will make mistakes in the beginning. We may not get a right and definite answer, but when one lives the life of purity and altruism, in thought, word and deed, one is able to purify the sheaths of the soul, and the inner light is able to shine into the brain-mind. We are asked to give to our brain-mind, a larger view of life, by considering universal doctrines such as Karma and Rebirth. When we fulfil the duties of life, which are ours under Karma, the mind is drawn nearer to the divine. So also, Mr. Judge suggests that if we are urged from within to visit a sick person, or moved to help a suffering person, or prompted to turn the corner, then we must obey the impulse at once. When we learn to respond to every prompting of the Divine within, we are aided in the development of intuitive faculty. Mr. Judge's advice to the student-aspirant is: "If we rely on the higher self and aspire to be guided by it, we will be led to the right, even if the road goes through pain; for sorrow and pain are necessary for the purification of the Soul."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE LOST CHILD

THE LOST CHILD is a short story by Mulk Raj Anand, a famous Indian writer and art critic, notable for his depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. This story was written in 1934. It is the story of a boy who was lost in a village fair during the Spring festival. People from different walks of life, brightly dressed, were moving out of the village towards the village fair. Some walked, some rode on horses, while some travelled in bullock carts. Among them was a young boy, accompanied by his parents. The boy, fascinated by the toys in toy-shops along the way, lagged behind. When the parents called out, "Come, child, come!" he ran to them, and pleaded with them to buy him a toy. He got a cold stare of refusal from his father, while his mother diverted his attention by asking him to look in the front. His attention was shifted from the material world to Nature. The boy was delighted to see before him a mustard field in flower, stretching for miles like a rippling yellow river. He began chasing dragon-flies and butterflies, trying to catch them. In a while, his parents called him back so that he started walking with them on the footpath. Once again, the child was left behind, attracted by some worms and insects, but was back with the parents, as they called out, "Come, child, come!"

When they had almost reached the fair, the child's attention was attracted by the cries of a sweetmeat-seller. His mouth watered for a particular sweet which was his favourite and he expressed his desire to eat it. However, knowing only too well that his parents will never agree to buy it, he moved on. A man stood holding a pole with yellow, red, green and purple balloons flying from it. The child was simply carried away by the rainbow glory of their silken colours and he was filled with an overwhelming desire to possess them all. But he well knew that his parents would never buy him the balloons, saying that he was too old to play with such toys. The next attraction was a snake-charmer who was playing on a flute before a snake. He was tempted to wait there and watch but knew that his parents

would not approve of it, so he walked on.

The next attraction which held the child spellbound was a roundabout (merry-go-round). He saw men, women and children shrieking and laughing, as they were carried round and round, in a whirling motion. This time he made a bold request, "I want to go on the roundabout, please, Father, Mother." But he did not receive any reply. When he turned around, he found that his parents were not there. They were nowhere to be seen. With a heart-rending cry of fear and grief, he ran about madly in search of his parents. His turban came off and his clothes got wet with sweat and mud. He sobbed and ran frantically searching them here and there. Finally, he ran to a crowded temple, crying all the time, "mother, father." A kind-hearted man noticed the weeping child, who was knocked down by the crowd and was about to be trampled over, and asked him whose child he was. The child kept repeating, "I want my mother, I want my father!"

In his effort to console the crying child, the kind man offered him a ride on a roundabout, which the child refused. When taken to the snake-charmer he refused to listen to his flute. When the man offered to buy him the bright-coloured balloons and also some sweets, ironically, the child refused those very things which he had deeply wished for. Every time the child only sobbed, "I want my mother, I want my father!"

In this story we have many themes: desire, materialism, kindness, connection, desperation and security. The prominent theme of the story is the universality of a child's desire for everything he sees. The child in the story is fascinated and obsessed with the variety of things he sees. The parents in the story try to wean him away from the lures of the illusionary world, almost as if they know that what the child needs the most is something else. When the child is lost, it was as if his life changes, and he is seen to refuse the very things he intensely desired, and realises that what he wanted the most was his parents. According to some critics, the fact that it is a festival of Spring is very suggestive. Spring is the season of renewal in nature,

and could be the same for man. It is a kind of rebirth for the boy when he overcomes his intense desire for things, and instead desires to reunite with his parents with the same intensity. It is as if the boy realises that the most important thing is not material possessions but his family.

We are readily able to identify ourselves with the child that was fascinated by many things at the fair. We are all in the strong grip of consumerism. Our world and our civilization are characterized by an insatiable desire for the "new." Very quickly things get outdated. We are wearied of and lose interest in gadgets, products, amusements and are out to buy new. We are drawn by attractive packings and end up buying things we have no need of. When we, as grownups, are tempted to, and end up buying more books than we are able to read, or more clothes and shoes than we can use, are we in a position to deny our children when they make similar demands? Human psychology seems to be changing now. Someone who grew up in want, was almost always denied toys, new clothes, biscuits and chocolates, though loved and cared for, may still carry with him the wound of deprivation. They grow up to be indulgent parents, determined to give their child "everything," they want. For a child, a *good* mother or father is the one who buys them all that they ask for. In fact, for a working mother and father, who are not able to give enough time and attention to their child, the only way to show their love and care, and bond with the child is to succumb to their demands for material things.

The child in the story, quite dramatically realises that the most important thing was to have his parents or shall we say *human bonding*, and not the material things. He is desperate to have them back. We are made to realise it these days, the hard way. Each one of us is absorbed in our own little world, surrounded by the amenities of life, and ever seeking to make our lives more and more comfortable through material things, and counting on them to give us lasting happiness. Then one day, the loss of a loved one, especially those who stood by us demanding nothing, leaves us shattered. Their

loss creates a vacuum, and we suddenly realise their value, and long to have them back, as if to make amends, for not having given them enough time and care.

The story serves as a metaphor for human life. Most of us, leading a humdrum existence, live like “lost children” in this world, which has many attractions. We are Children of Light, having divine origin, but are blissfully ignorant of the same. Like the child in the story we have insatiable desires. For those of us who are satisfied with our present state, spiritual life is irrelevant. More often than not, what jolts us out of this complacency is some painful experience. For some, however, such a turning point comes through extreme indulgence in pleasures. Sooner or later, a point of satiation is reached, waking us up to higher possibilities.

One of the themes of the story is *security*. Our attachments and aversions, our freedom and bondage, are through the mind. Our lower mind is the child of the Higher Mind, connected with it through a silver thread or *Antahkarna*. The silver thread is that consciousness which binds or links the lower personal self with the Higher. It serves as a medium of communication between the two, which allows us to receive guidance from the Divine parent. *The Voice of the Silence* says that our soul is caught in the “webs of delusion” when it glides forth from her secure retreat, and breaks loose from the protecting shrine, and rushes onward, extending the silver thread. When a string or thread is stretched too much it tends to break. Extending the silver thread is only a manner of speaking. If we visualize a child holding a hand of the parent and walking on the road, then if the child is attracted by something on the other side of the road, it may pull the parent in that direction. If the parent does not try to pull back the child, then it may even succeed in breaking his hand free from the grip of the parent and run across, and run the risk of meeting with an accident. Likewise, when we assert our personal will, disregarding the divine will, the silver thread is stretched. When the mind becomes increasingly absorbed in the illusive world it becomes *Kama*-tending instead of *Buddhi*-tending,

and pulls itself away from the divine parent. If it persists, then the silver thread may even break. When the lower mind repeatedly ignores the guidance of the Higher Self, one gradually stops hearing the voice of conscience. Then after several life times, after being given chance after chance by nature to turn the corner, if a person deliberately chooses evil and continues to do so, there comes a point when there is not a single good or noble thought, feeling or action, that is worthy of being part of the Higher Ego. Then the path of communication between the lower mind, which is the child, is broken from the divine parent, resulting in a lost soul, a lost child, indeed.

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MEANS AND ENDS

EVERY year on the 2nd of October the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi is observed all over India. His uncompromising and fearless experiments with practical application of the life-transforming principles of truth and non-violence to every aspect of his private and public life, and the record he has left of the rich experiences he gathered from his experiments, are a perennial source of inspiration to every aspirant to truth as well as to men and women in every walk of life.

Study of the philosophy of Theosophy includes exemplification of the eternal verities in our lives to the extent of our understanding and ability. It is our *Dharma*. It is an exercise in self-transformation for the benefit of humanity, and it requires conviction in the unfailing efficacy of the supreme virtue of truth and non-violence under all circumstances. We find inspiration in the noble lives of those who made the valiant attempt in that direction and left behind their invaluable experiences for the benefit of mankind. H. P. Blavatsky in her work, *Theosophy: Some rare perspectives* (p. 9) points out one such noble soul, Count Leo Tolstoy, as a perfect model for all aspirants to true Theosophy. H.P.B. would no doubt have cited the exemplary life of Gandhiji in the cause of truth and non-violence also as another model to sincere Theosophists to emulate had she been bodily present with us today. Gandhiji and Tolstoy exchanged a series of letters on the bearing of non-violence on global politics. Tolstoy's Christ-like life of self-abnegation, putting into practice the virtues of right living which Jesus preached and exemplified, and his labour for ameliorating condition of the poor by personal example, identifying himself with them, inspired Gandhiji to emulate his example. Both are inspirations to Theosophists.

There is an all-important practical lesson for everyone in Gandhiji's clear exposition and practical application of the ethical principle of means and ends, which is overlooked in almost every relation in the lives of people. The general rule in the lives of many

people is that end justifies means, as that is easiest way of gratifying one's desires and wants, being ignorant of the heavy price one has to pay in violating the moral order. However lofty the end result we aim at, if the means adopted to achieve it are motivated by falsehood, deceit, selfishness—in which violence inheres—the end result will be of the same nature as of the means adopted, in which the individual would become inextricably embroiled. Hence Gandhiji exhorted his countrymen to strive for nobler ends and diligently attend to purity of means to achieve them. "I have often said," he wrote, "that if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself. Non-violence is the means, the end for everyone is complete independence" (*The Mind of the Mahatma*, Navjivan publishing house, 1967, p. 132). "Complete independence," truly, is the outcome if the means employed are pure; contrarywise, bondage and slavery to our passional nature born of ignorance is the end result.

It is the working of the immutable law of ethical causation, Karma, exemplified in the simple truism that as one sows, so one reaps. It is imperative that not only should the end one aims at be pure but the means adopted to achieve it should also be pure. The test of purity of ends and means lies in the fact whether or not they conform to the principles of truth and non-violence. Gandhiji found that truth and non-violence are not two different things but intertwined which cannot be separated; non-violence, or *ahimsa*, is the means, and truth is the end; and *ahimsa* is our supreme duty, as taught in every religion. For him God is Truth and Truth is God. It is purely Theosophical and practical. "For me truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness of word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God, because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me." (*ibid.*, p. 43)

And he goes on to say, speaking of himself, that as long as he has not realized this Absolute Truth so long must he hold to the relative

truth as he conceives it, and that relative truth, says he, is his beacon, his shield and buckler; and that he finds it in the voice within, which guides him in all his undertakings. The voice of conscience is often distorted according to one's wrong education, and, that it can be a safe guide only when one entirely renounces personality, purifies his mind and heart. He said that Truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility, and that one who would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth, must reduce himself to a zero (*ibid.*, p. 42). His Theosophical idea—in his case a live experience—is articulated by him, thus:

“For me the Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth, or the Inner Voice or ‘the Still Small Voice’ mean one and the same thing. I saw no form. I have never tried, for I have always believed God to be without form. But what I did hear was like a Voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain it was the Voice, and struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fast were fixed....” (*ibid.*, p. 33)

He wrote that to see the universal spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creatures as oneself, and that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realization of *ahimsa* (*ibid.*, p. 44). *Ahimsa* is the means and Truth the end. Non-violence, is not for saints but meant for common people. According to Gandhiji non-violence avails nothing to them, who do not possess a living faith in God of Love and love for all mankind, and that when it is accepted as the law of life, it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts. He took pains to make it explicit that practice of non-violence is not cowardice; that it does not admit of running away from danger and leaving the dear ones unprotected; and that between cowardice and violence he would rather prefer violence. “The path of true non-violence requires much

more courage than violence.” He shares his experience that whenever he acted non-violently he had been led to it and sustained in it by the higher promptings of an unseen power. (*ibid.*, p. 120)

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, responding to criticism of “practical people” that there is risk in the principle of non-violence and truth said that they do not know the value of truth. He said, “To act as the opponent acts amounts to playing into the adversary's hands and handing over the initiative to him. This is a cowardly attitude which creates a vicious circle and gives a merry-go-round to wickedness. To break it one must act courageously with love and generosity without calculating consequences. After all it is truth, love and righteousness which are positive and real. Untruth, etc. are negative and unreal.” (*Sarvodaya: Its principles and programme; Navjivan publishing House*, 1951, p. 34)

“Sow with the seeds of merit the fields of future harvest” is the guiding principle of right living. Seeds of merit are the right means. If the truism that happiness and wellbeing, the end we all strive for, is best accomplished only when the means we employ to achieve it have a firm basis in, and satisfy the criteria of, the principles of truth and non-violence, that we have to be more careful about the means than about the ends, and that the means not only lead to the end but shape it also, is firmly established in our consciousness, then we would have taken the first step in the science and art of right living. Unfair practices in business, dishonesty in the discharge of public duties as a politician or a bureaucrat or a judge, malevolence in interpersonal relationships in family and social life, suppression of truth and resorting to deceit, betrayal of trust and faith, hypocrisy, corruption etc., which are glaringly common in society, in which violence is implicit, would then be carefully avoided in deciding the means one employs in whatever end one wishes to accomplish. We cannot expect happiness in life as long as we continue to think and act carelessly as to means and ends. Truth is divinity, the true Self; true Self is the Self of All. To see divinity in all and all in the Divine Self, by intuitive perception—this is the Truth. Thought and

action contrary to it is violence. Where the motive and intent is selfish there is violence in it. Though absolute renunciation of personal self is not yet possible for us yet it is perfectly practical and possible for us to reduce the personal element in our actions to minimal extent and, think and act for good of all. We have control over what we think about, over our feelings and emotions, and we are endowed with the power of discriminating between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and untruth. Thus we have the power to act on the principles of truth and non-violence. Right means then is to discriminate and choose that path which is the right means and the right method, and dismiss from our mind the end result. Whatever the end result may be that will be the best for us, and tend to the highest good of all, irrespective of whether it seems favourable or otherwise to our lower personal self.

If these plainly evident truths were well known and made the basis of policy in all actions of individuals and the state would there be so much corruption and violence in society, in our national life and in international relations? Humanity is learning this lesson the hard way, through much suffering and misery, while all the time it is possible to establish a nobler basis of thought and action by right education. Much good would come out of it. On this count Vinobaji very pertinently said:

“Many a saint has preached the path of righteousness. Man is not, however, yet fully convinced that good alone begets good. He is still experimenting to see if good can come out of evil as well. He does not doubt that a *babul* (thorn) tree cannot produce a mango fruit and vice versa. May be, in the ancient days even this might not have been so clear to him. But the present age is convinced that so far as the material world is concerned, the law of relation between the seed and the fruit holds good. In the moral sphere, however, he has not yet shed his doubts. He of course realizes that goodness generally pays, but he lacks the conviction that unadulterated goodness has the power to do good.” (*ibid.*, p. 32)

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS STUDY, APPLICATION AND PROMULGATION—VI

AS YOU have to do the whole organizing of your office, you will have your hands very full. It is in such periods as this that Theosophical study proves of real value to an aspirant. Philosophy and metaphysical study calm the mind and elevate the heart and, along with the reading of our devotional books, will help you to handle all your outer activities with calmness ever present.

No doubt there is a gulf that separates the intellectual apprehension and recognition of truth from the realization that comes from the assimilation of the teachings. The assimilation of the teachings is possible through self-examination and quiet reflection on what is studied and heard of Theosophy.

As to the question about the gap between understanding and living, and the place of understanding in living the true life: It is unfortunately true that study and application, or intellectual understanding and exemplification in practice of what is understood, do not always go hand in hand. It is not always recognized that without study and understanding it is not possible to lead the higher life. Many of our struggles and sufferings arise because we do not recognize that it is necessary to know and understand the Science of Life if we wish to practise the Art of Living. Without proper understanding we cannot be sure of making the right choice between two courses of action and judging what is right and wrong. “One must study to know, know to understand, understand to judge.” On the other hand, mere intellectual understanding without any attempt at application is of no use. In fact, we cannot really understand unless side by side we also try to practise. Hence the famous three insisted upon in our Declaration—study, application, promulgation.

Books are not the final source of Self-Knowledge. That is in the Self. But how to get at that final source? Philosophy, even esoteric, is got from books, as a starting point. The very essence of work at the *Shravaka* stage in this cycle depends on books, and the Textbook of the century—*The Secret Doctrine*.

As to *The Secret Doctrine*: It is a difficult book; but, sooner or later, the student has to make friends with it, and the first step towards friendship is getting acquainted. I would advise you to take a look at the contents of both the volumes and to study the dedication. If you study the dedication of H.P.B.'s four books, *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Key to Theosophy* and *The Voice of the Silence*, you will find that this very study reveals the whole plan H.P.B. had in mind. The Theosophical Movement was inaugurated for the study of the propositions contained in *Isis Unveiled*; and, because the number of students of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion increased, she was called upon to record *The Secret Doctrine*: Out of these students some became pupils, ready to teach what they had learned, so *The Key to Theosophy* was published. Finally came *The Voice of the Silence*, dedicated to the valiant souls who would give all to Theosophy and keep nothing back. In these dedications you will find the place *The Secret Doctrine* occupies and its value to all students.

A cursory glance at the table of contents will not take you any great time. The contents will give you an idea of the profundity of H.P.B.'s mind; not only her breadth of vision but also her depth of perception and clear vision are seen. When you have studied the dedication and the contents, you may turn to the Preface to the first volume. In that Preface there are many important points which will raise questions.

I am glad that you are reading through *The Secret Doctrine*. It will give you an idea of what a wonderful mind was H.P.B.'s which could deal with all the subjects in such a perfect and masterly manner. But to get at the core of *The Secret Doctrine* one has to absorb what is given by quiet and continued reflection.

You need not be frightened by *The Secret Doctrine*. No doubt its style is difficult and the method of presentation of the teachings seems complex. But H.P.B. used that method with a very serious purpose. The book is not to be read only by the lower mind which analyzes and understands. It is a book which brings the faculty of

intuition into operation and although a student may not understand all the contents of the work, still he is helped. We might compare it in this way. To many of us is not known the value of different kinds of nourishing foods. We eat those foods and, though we are not conscious of it, the nourishment produces its healthy reaction in the human body. This is exactly what *The Secret Doctrine* does. You may not know which part of your body gains nourishment from a particular food. Some foods nourish the nerves, others nourish the bony structure, others nourish the brain, and so on. Now *The Secret Doctrine* nourishes that aspect of the soul which is above the logical, analytical mind. The latter compares and contrasts and moves between many pairs of opposites. But the Higher Mind is not ordinarily in use by us. Therefore, we do not know what are the effects of its working on the brain and the way in which the grooves in the brain are filled up. Therefore, a study of *The Secret Doctrine* is of enormous value, though we may not see that value. One more idea about *The Secret Doctrine*: Do not look upon it as merely a metaphysical book. If you study carefully the Preface to *The Voice of the Silence*, you will find H.P.B. stating that the Stanzas of Dzyan and *The Voice of the Silence* belong to the same series of instructions. The Stanzas represent the metaphysical and the philosophical side, while *The Voice of the Silence* represents the ethical and practical side, and both the wings of the human soul are essential if that soul is to rise like the giant bird that tries to touch the very atmosphere of Akasha.

(To be continued)

BUT prayer against his absolute decree
 No more avails than breath against the wind,
 Blown stifling back on him that breathes it forth:
 Therefore to his great bidding I submit.

—Milton

ON VIBRATIONS

II

OCCULT Philosophy teaches that there is nothing like an inert matter or object, nor a solid and hard object. A block of wood or stone may appear inert but its particles are in ceaseless vibration, which is so rapid that to the human eye they may appear to be motionless. Hence it is said that we only know the phenomena of matter. Even the diamond, “hardest of all,” is actually made up of rapidly moving molecules which in turn are made up of moving atoms. If a diamond can cut a glass it is because the molecules of diamond move faster than those of glass, so that the rapidly moving molecules of diamond get in between the slower moving molecules of glass and thus cut it. From this we may conclude that all masses of matter are but molecules in different rates of vibration. (*Vernal Blooms*, pp. 227-28)

What is perception? Who is the perceiver in man? Though we say that the eyes see, ears hear, etc., the organs and the senses do not cognize objects. Mr. Judge explains that when we “see” an object, the eye receives the picture on the retina, which is first turned into vibrations in the optic nerves, and then transmitted to the brain, where *Manas* (mind) is able to perceive the object as an *idea*. Images and sounds are caused by vibrations, and they are preserved in the Astral Light. In case of clairvoyance and clairaudience, these vibrations are first transmitted to the (inner) or astral senses and then transmitted to the brain, from where they reach physical eye or ear.

In fact, there are limitations to our senses. Both colour and sound are rates of vibrations. Frequency is number of vibrations per second. At the peak of our youth our ears hear frequencies between 16 and 20,000 cycles per second. Humans do not hear low frequencies very well, and that is merciful, because, otherwise sounds of our own bodies would be as deafening as sitting in a lawn chair next to a waterfall. But we are skilled extenders of our senses. For instance, a doctor listens better to a patient’s heart with a stethoscope. Doctors rely on ultrasound, consisting of over 20,000 cycles per second, to

help diagnose tumors, writes Diane Ackerman (*A Natural History of the Senses*, pp. 188-89). There are almost infinite gradations of colours and sounds in the cosmos. Our eyes are able to perceive seven prismatic colours, but there are vibrations slower than those of the Red and more rapid than those of Violet called infrared and ultraviolet respectively. They are not perceptible to our eyes. X-ray, Gamma-rays, Ultraviolet rays have higher vibrations than that of Violet colour. Similarly, micro-waves, radio-waves, etc., have vibrations lower than that of Red colour. But even if we take the perceived colours, there can be innumerable shades for every colour which can be perceived clearly by a sensitive eye.

In the article “Exact or Occult Science?” we are told that ants do not allow their eggs to remain in light and always carry them from lighted place to a dark place. However, when rays of red light were allowed to fall on their eggs, they did not move them, as if the eggs were in darkness. It has been observed that they are not impressionable or sensitive to bright rays of light, *e.g.*, red, yellow and orange. But they are sensitive to light and dark blue and violet rays of light. If the eggs are kept partly exposed to red light and partly to violet light, they would shift the eggs from the violet patch to the red light. For an ant, a violet ray is the brightest of all the spectral rays. This is quite the opposite of the perception in man. So also, if we take ultra-violet and infra-red rays, both are beyond man’s perception. However, when the eggs are subjected to action of these dark rays, ants would drag them to a patch lighted by infra-red rays. From this we can infer that objects seen by the ants must appear to them quite different from what they appear to us. They must be able to see hues and colours in Nature of which we are not aware. The same is true of sounds. They do not hear the sounds that we are able to hear, but they are not deaf. They hear the sounds, which are inaudible to us. A human ear is insensible to vibrations beyond 38000 per second, while ants are able to hear them. Hence, they must be able to enjoy so many melodies of nature, which we mortals are not able to.

The real centres of perception are within the astral body, which is the model body for the physical. At times, the physical sense organs are unable to perceive correctly, due to some defect, while the inner, astral organs perceive correctly. Such discrepancy may lead to mental aberration as explained in *Vernal Blooms*, in the article “Occult Vibrations.” We are told that in the case of a colour-blind person, the same amount of vibrations corresponding to, say, red colour, reach his physical eyes, as would reach the eyes of a normal person. But the physical eyes of the colour-blind man pick up or perceive only a certain amount of vibrations and he sees colour corresponding to those vibrations, while the astral senses are able to see the true colour—picking up the correct number of vibrations. However, the vibrations of the physical eyes seem to overcome for a time those of the astral senses, and so the astral man reports to the brain that it saw correctly. In every case, the outer stimulus is sent to the inner man, who is forced to accept the message and confirm it as true. But in many cases the inner man is able to overcome the outer defect and make the brain see the difference. In many cases of lunacy the confusion among the vibrations of all kinds is so enormous that there is no correlation between the inner and the outer man and then we have a case of aberration. In some of these unfortunate cases the person inside is all the time aware that he is not insane, but cannot make himself be understood.

Normally, our ears pick up only one range of vibrations, and eyes pick up another range of vibrations. Therefore, what eyes see, ears cannot hear, and what ears hear, eyes cannot see. But experiments conducted with sensitives and psychics show that many sensitive people see a colour for every sound. Inversely, there are sensitives in whom the sight of colours evokes the sensation of sound, and in some others, a triple phenomenon is produced, by one sense generating two others. Thus, a certain sensitive reported that whenever he heard a brass band, he saw dark golden clouds, and experienced a taste “like copper in the mouth.” (*H.P.B. Series No. 19*, pp. 9-11)

H.P.B. mentions a case of a gentleman in Paris for whom sound generated the impression of colour. To him human speech appeared in the shape of many coloured, or variegated ribbons coming out of the persons’ mouths. Scientists now accept the phenomenon that one type of sensory input (such as hearing music) evokes an additional one (such as seeing colours). The phenomenon is termed *synesthesia*, from the Greek roots *syn* (together) and *aesthesia* (perception). Occultism explains these phenomena by saying that the real centres of perception are in the astral body. Every sense pervades every other, there being only one sense acting through different organs of sensation.

Animal magnetism is a fluid, an emanation, and some people can emit it for curative purposes through their eyes and the tips of their fingers. Eyes play an important role in the phenomenon of Hypnotism. In Braid’s method, the hypnotic state is produced by fixing the eyes on some bright spot, a metal or a crystal. The eye is the most occult organ of all, on the superficies of our body, and it serves as a medium between the bit of metal or crystal and our brain. The eye catches the molecular vibrations of the objects gazed at, and passes them on to the brain, attuning the molecular vibrations of the nervous centres of the brain with that of the object gazed at. The hypnotic state could also be produced by the direct gaze of the operator, in which the eye is the chief agent of the Will of the active operator. The Will of the operator radiating through his eye produces the required unison between *his* will and the will of the person operated upon. H.P.B. goes on to explain that out of two objects attuned in unison, such as two chords, one will be stronger than the other, and will have mastery over the other. Thus, for instance, consider the “sensitive flame.” If a note is struck in unison with the ratio of the vibrations of the heat molecules, then the flame will respond to the note struck and dance or flicker in unison with the sound. But occult science teaches that the flame may also be extinguished, if the sound is intensified. (*H.P.B. Series No. 9*)

The *rationale* of telepathy is that if two minds, sympathetically

related, vibrate or change into the same state they will think alike, *i.e.*, receive the impression sent by the other. But telepathy could take place between two people who do not share a deep bond.

To communicate with another mind at any distance the Adept attunes all the molecules of the brain and all the thoughts of the mind so as to vibrate in unison with the mind to be affected and that other mind and brain have also to be either voluntarily thrown into the same unison or fall into it voluntarily. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 148)

There could also be sympathetic relation between the living and the dead, and the consequent transfer of impressions. Sometimes, a pure and unpaid medium (a pure sensitive) may ascend to the plane of *Devachan* and remain *en rapport* and hold communication with the Egos there. In “Fragments of Occult Truth,” it is stated that “being *en rapport*...is simply an identity of molecular vibration between the astral part of the incarnated sensitive and the astral part of the disincarnate personality.” When the identity of molecular vibrations is established, for a brief space of time, the sensitive becomes the departed personality, and writes in its handwriting, uses its language, and thinks its thoughts.

Both colour and sound being vibrations they have definite impact on the human nervous system and psyche. “Certain kinds of music throw us into frenzy, some exalt the soul to religious aspirations....It is the same with colours; some excite us, some soothe and please....Red inflames the anger of certain animals,” writes H.P.B. Music is defined as the combination and modulation of sounds and is known to have singular power, especially, over nervous diseases. Sound is the effect produced by the vibration of ether. Sound has an attractive property, so it draws out the disease and the two kinds of vibrations blend together and disappear in space. In *Isis Unveiled*, mention is made of a harmonica, an instrument composed of five tumblers, filled with, water, wine, oil, etc. Sound is produced by rubbing the edges of these tumblers. Mesmer is supposed to have used a harmonica to cure diseases such as insanity and epilepsy. Asclepiades used a trumpet sound to cure sciatica, while Democritus

affirmed that many diseases could be cured by the melodious sounds of a flute.

H.P.B. argues that just like musical vibrations we are affected by the vibrations produced by the stars and planets. The Pythagorean “music of the spheres” is not a mere fancy. As the planets move around the Sun in their respective orbits, the swift revolution of each of these bodies causes a swish, or musical hum, in the air. “Evidently each planet will hum on a different pitch, depending on the ratios of their respective orbits—just as the tone of a string depends on its length. Thus, the orbits in which the planets move form a kind of huge lyre whose strings are curved into circles. It seemed equally evident that the intervals between the orbital cords must be governed by the laws of harmony,” writes Arthur Koestler. H.P.B. points out that we may compare the impulse communicated by different planets to the surrounding ether to the tones produced by the different notes on a musical instrument. It is easy to understand the combined influence caused by the movement of these planets in their orbits producing harmonious vibrations. We are also able to appreciate that certain planetary aspects (planetary position measured by their angular distance), may imply disturbances in the ether of our planet earth, while certain other aspects may imply rest and harmony. (*Isis*, I, 215 and 275)

Vibrations imply motion, and motion symbolizes change. *Light on the Path* describes our mundane life as “vibratory existence.” Our body, our ideas and emotions, all keep changing. We try to derive pleasure out of sensations. *Light on the Path* says: “In sensation no permanent home can be found, because change is the law of this vibratory existence. That fact is the first one that must be learned by the disciple. It is useless to pause and weep for a scene in a kaleidoscope which has passed.” Things and pleasures of the world are as fleeting as the scene or pattern formed in a kaleidoscope. In fact, the law of diminishing returns seems to govern the realm of pleasures. We do not derive the same pleasure the second time and still less the third time, and so on.

(*Concluded*)

APHORISMS ON KARMA—SOME REFLECTIONS

V

[Preface to the *Aphorisms on Karma* by Mr. Wm. Q. Judge (*U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 21*) reads: “The following, among others not yet used, were given to me by teachers, among them being H. P. Blavatsky. Some were written, others communicated in other ways. To me they were declared to be from manuscripts not now accessible to the general public. Each one was submitted for my judgement and reason; and just as they, aside from any authority, approved themselves to my reason after serious consideration of them, so I hope they will gain the approval of those my fellow workers to whom I now publish them.”]

APHORISMS 7 and 8 say: “*For all other men Karma is in its essential nature unknown and unknowable.*” “*But its action may be known by calculation from cause to effect; and this calculation is possible because the effect is wrapped up in and is not succedent to the cause.*” To the ordinary human beings who do not have the knowledge of the ultimate division of time, or the relation between Karma and Time, the meaning of which was seen in the explanation on Aphorism 6, Karma is understood only as a law which brings certain effect for a cause or group of causes. The essential nature of Karma as explained in Aphorism 6 eludes an ordinary person.

Karma is the *power to act*. Karma is also action and reaction, knowable through observation and experience, and this is the only aspect of Karma, known to ordinary human beings. These actions and reactions are subject to time, comprising past, present and future. A person who can repose in that which is Absolute Consciousness, or his divine nature, can acquire limitless vision, seeing past, present and future as a continuum. That which we call future arises from the past and present, *and is continuous with it*. Between the past and the future, there is continuity of change and continuity of causation, and that continuity inheres in the Ego who produces the cause and feels the effect of it. Without continuity of causation we would be at a loss to anticipate future.

Corresponding to three divisions of time, action or Karma is also divided into three types. *Sanchita* Karma is that which is stored up from the past and not in operation now, because there is not the appropriate environment or condition for bringing it into action. *Agami* is Karma we are making in the present life and will be felt by us in future births. It is being generated by our thoughts, feelings, words and deeds, day by day. *Prarabdha* Karma is that portion or aspect of Karma with which one is born, and for its precipitation the field is ready. It is operating in the present life and body, bringing about all the circumstances and changes. Destiny or Fate is the Karma that has ripened, so that its expression cannot be averted or postponed. Thus, we see that these three kinds of actions are produced by, and inheres in, the Ego, and, therefore, are inter-related, forming a chain of cause and effect.

The relation between cause and effect is not always apparent, because there is quick Karma and slow Karma. Sometimes the plant grows overnight from the seed, and then we know what was the seed-cause, and what is the effect. This is *quick Karma*. Sometimes the seed-cause waits years and years for flowering, but it flowers just the same, because Karma never stops. *The Light of Asia* says: “It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true, Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs; Times are as nought, tomorrow it will judge, Or after many days.”

If we eat stale food, the effect is that we will suffer from stomach problems. It may happen the same day, or the next. A person indulging in chain-smoking or chewing tobacco might experience cancer of mouth or lungs in old age. However, some actions do not bear fruit in this life, but only after many lives. It is possible for Yogis and advanced Beings, or even pure and intuitive astrologers to predict a future event. The observer who is able to fix his attention on his divine Ego, detaches himself from the panoramic view of nature, and becomes aware of both the past and future karma, because *the effect is wrapped up in the cause*. A yogi knows the ultimate division of time and the intricate working of Karma, and

does not see time in compartments of past, present and future, but as one continuum, as eternal present. Thus, “he, who knows, what is the ultimate division of time in this Universe, knows Karma.”

For instance, a good doctor can predict, at least approximately, the date of a woman’s delivery, once he knows the time of conception. A boy in a mathematics class can complete the semi-circle or half circle, once he knows the centre and radius of that circle. Conception of the future child in the womb begins with a moment, which, added to other moments, mark the stages of its growth in the uterus till the culmination of its uterine life in nine months. Birth of the child begins with a moment, and succession of subsequent moments in cycles of months and years mark the stages of the growth of the child, its maturity into manhood, ripen into old age, and ending in death, all of which cyclic changes and vicissitudes experienced by the soul are the fruitage of its Karma of the past. If the relative position of planets and constellation of the zodiac are ascertained *vis-a-vis* the moment of birth, an astrologer will be able to predict more or less accurately the effect of celestial influences on the future life of the man, his tendencies and character—which is the fruitage of his past Karma. The same is true of a nation, of a civilization, of the earth, of the Solar system of which the earth is a part, and so on.

When the causes are definite, with no scope for changing them by exercise of free will, and the effect being wrapped up in the cause, an advanced being can accurately predict the future event, with the help of the astral light, the invisible register of nature. “In the Astral Light are pictures of all things whatsoever that happened to any person, and as well also pictures of those events to come, *the causes for which are sufficiently well marked* [italics ours] and made. If the causes are yet indefinite, so will be the images for the future,” writes Mr. Judge. (*The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 150)

We must make a special note of the fact that only those effects can be predicted with certainty, at the precise time, for which the causes are “sufficiently well marked.” These causes may fall within

the category of “*prarabdha karma*,” for the operation or precipitation of which the environment and time are ready. It is karmic cause so strong and overpowering that its action cannot be counteracted by other Karma. We also read in Aphorism 23 of *Patanjali’s Yoga Aphorisms*, that a Yogi, by performing concentration with regard to two kinds of actions—those performed with the anticipation of consequences and those without such anticipation—has knowledge concerning the time of his death. Mr. Judge explains that, by calculating the effect on his body, of the actions of the present and the previous incarnations, by contemplating on these actions, the ascetic has the power to calculate correctly the exact length of his life.

The relation between Karma and Time is best expressed by the term “cycles.” Cycles are not different from Law and Karma, but they are only the way of marking the time of cause and of effect, of action and reaction. We are given the illustration of a clock to understand this relation. Karma is like the mainspring in a clock that makes all the wheels go round. Cycles are like the hands that point the hour, minute or second on the face of the clock, as hands travel round it. Cycles mark the time for receiving the effect of ripened Karma. Thus, quick Karma may be thought of as small cycle or spiral of cause and effect, and slow Karma means a long or large cycle of action and reaction.

Those who understand Karma understand the limits of time, and *vice versa*, but ordinary human beings, who do not understand the operation of causes, are not given this understanding. It is not necessary for us to have such understanding, writes Mr. Crosbie. Mercifully, a veil seems to separate our present from the past, and prevents our looking into the past, and trace back the effect to its cause or causes. If we could know the people who harmed us in anyway or were responsible even in an indirect manner in forcing us to act in this or that manner, we would be busy settling scores with them. There would be cases when even if we are able to know the cause we might find that the karmic backlash or consequences

were too severe for a trifling cause. Hence, till we have reached a certain stage in our inner development the merciful law hides the past from us. It is useful to ask, what we do even when the cause is known. Do we at once begin to take remedial steps? The answer is, “no.” We prefer to deal with the effect side keeping the cause intact. If overeating causes a stomach-ache, instead of practicing moderation in eating we would take a digestive pill! As to knowing in advance, the exact time of receiving the reaction, Mr. Crosbie writes, “If we could now know exactly when the rebound of an action would come, we should probably spend all our time figuring just what we could do to dodge it, to improve it, or to arrange just the right condition in which to receive it. The thing to do is to meet anything and everything exactly as it comes....Take care of every moment, every hour, as it comes along, fearing nothing, doubting nothing, in full confidence, relying on the Law of our own natures,” and try to work out Karma. (*Answers to Questions on The Ocean of Theosophy*, p. 156)

Hence, only a person who is ready to be accepted as a *chela* (disciple) is taught “unerring discernment of *Phala*, or the fruits of causes produced.” He will be able to trace back the effect to its cause and know what cause produced the present effect. The story goes that Lord Rama’s forefather King Dilip was childless and when he enquired of sage Vasishtha the cause for his childlessness, the sage only closed his eyes and saw the past, present and future. He then said that the King was childless because he had insulted cow Kamadhenu in a previous life. To negate the ill-effects of the curse, the King was advised to worship the divine cow Nandini, the daughter of Kamadhenu, and thereby earn her goodwill. At a still higher stage, sages and rishis have the faculty of not only linking the effect back to its cause but also to predict in advance the effect of present action because the effect is wrapped up in the cause. These great beings have the knowledge of the ultimate division of time or cycles.

(To be continued)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

Man, by his very nature, is destined to live a conscious life, so he must stop living and acting mechanically, like a robot. In our world, largely dominated by Artificial Intelligence, with Alexa and robo-cleaners in our homes, we are able to see how a machine can imitate human behaviour, and may even be convinced that it is, in fact, human. But is it? In 1949, in his paper, *The Mind of Mechanical Man*, Geoffrey Jefferson, a British neurologist, raised a pertinent question as to whether a machine can write a poem or compose a concerto. He emphasised that a machine cannot have consciousness. It cannot feel happy when it succeeds nor feel miserable when it does not get what it wants. Man, far from being a machine, is an angel.

It is a pity that man is an angel, yet he lives a mechanical life like a robot. Before reaching enlightenment, the Buddha too, in his endeavour to find the meaning of life, lived mechanically, by following a routine discipline borrowed from various scriptures. On realising his error, he lived the life of meditation. Man must realize that he has invented technologies to accelerate pace of growth and achieve better connectivity, and not to become a machine himself. Probably, we have gradually begun to realize this, so we hear of “system detox” and “digital detox,” and find more and more people periodically withdrawing, away from gadgets, in the lap of nature, to connect with the true inner Self.

The daily routine of our lives shows that we are not trying to live a conscious life. Our life is shaped by the values, customs and traditions followed by our parents, and they in turn have inherited it from their parents, and so on. Our life seems to be governed by external forces rather than being guided by the inner core of our being. Even the continuous repetition of a *mantram* becomes mechanical without conscious awareness. The first step towards living a conscious life is becoming aware that we live mechanically. How can we become aware of it? Shri Krishna says in the *Gita*: “It

is better to have knowledge rather than mechanically following the rituals; better than knowledge is meditation.”

Man is potentially divine. “If realization dawns and man acknowledges his true potential, life will become peaceful and blissful,” writes Pratiksha Apurv. (*The Speaking Tree, Sunday Times of India*, September 22, 2019)

A good “thinking” machine can remember, classify, choose between alternatives on the basis of logic and, acting on past experience, can even correct itself; but activity of any one machine is strictly limited to the instructions with which it is fed, in the form of mathematical formulae or other code mechanisms. In spite of its speed, precision and infallibility, the most “intelligent” computer cannot correlate dissociated ideas and events spread out in time and space and present an original thought or an unexpected query.

What is it that distinguishes a man from an animal or a machine? It is self-consciousness and the power to think and choose. These arise from the mind. There are three aspects of mind: (1) When involved in desires and passions, the mind is *reactive*, making man an animal-man. (2) When the mind functions on its own plane—thinking and reasoning—it is mind *per se*. (3) When the mind works in conjunction with spiritual nature, it is *creative*—making man divine. Our ordinary, everyday mind acts like a machine or automaton, because it does not *act* but only *reacts* to stimuli from outside. It is a penny-in-a-slot machine. When someone speaks angrily we hit back without a moment’s thought, like a packet coming out of the machine when you insert a coin. Thus, we have fixed responses to given stimuli. It is as if we are programmed. We merely *absorb* the ideas and opinions of people around us or from magazines and newspapers—sponge-like. It is seldom that we exercise the power of choice.

Angels are men of a superior kind, and every human being is *potentially* an angel. He can become one if he brings his creative mind into operation, by making the mind porous and receptive to the guidance from the divine nature. The creative mind *responds*,

instead of reacting. The creative mind loves *unconditionally*, and makes for an emotionally positive person. A creative mind creates, as seen in a musician, a writer or a philosopher. We must each become an artist and using our power of choice, will and imagination, carve or cut away, all that which is out of sync with the contours of this Real Self, the Divine Angel.

Could there be a soldier on duty after death? Dr. (Major) Nalini Janardhanan shares the story of a soldier in the Indian Army, Sepoy Harbhajan Singh, from Punjab, who joined Indian Army in the year 1966 and died in 1968, whose ghost is guarding the Indo-China border in Sikkim, day and night, and is worshipped as a saint. He slipped and fell into a stream and died while collecting water for his regiment. His body was carried about two kilometres downstream and therefore could not be found for a long time. First his close friend and then some other fellow soldiers dreamt of him in which he directed them to the place where his body was lying. The body was found and cremated with military honours. He continued to appear in the dreams of his fellow soldiers and told them of his desire to have a memorial for himself, and also promised that he would always protect them from enemies. His army unit converted his bunker into a *Samadhi* (memorial). After his death villagers claimed to have seen a mysterious ghost-rider along the border areas. The Chinese also reported seeing a figure in Indian Army uniform riding a white horse and patrolling along their territories. Even today, it is claimed, the border area of Nathula Pass is guarded by the ghost of Harbhajan. There is a temple built in his name, called “Baba Harbhajan Mandir.” Soldiers believe that Baba warns them days in advance about any attacks by enemies. Civilians believe that ordinary water bottles left for some time at the temple acquire medicinal properties capable of curing diseases. Soldiers and local people believe that he is still there protecting everyone, and that he gives strength and courage to the soldiers to do their duty even in the harsh and hostile conditions. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, August 31, 2019)

It is being increasingly accepted that ghosts, apparitions or spectres are not a fiction. Most of the time the apparitions seen are of people who died an unnatural death, such as suicides or of people who died by accident or at the hands of others. In *Isis Unveiled* (I, 69) H.P.B. describes apparitions of “unrestful ‘souls,’ hovering about the spots where they were murdered, or coming back for some other mysterious reasons of their own.” Often these apparitions are drawn to a particular spot by some attraction or association.

H.P.B. observes that when a person dies a violent death, the last thought of such a person may be so strong that the tragedy may be re-enacted a thousand times before the thought fades out. There is an instance of the Air Force station at Lichfield, Staffordshire, being haunted by the headless ghost of a Royal Air Force pilot who was decapitated during the war. It was said to walk in uniform and flying boots. H.P.B. tells us that a sufficiently intense thought at the moment of death “becomes objective and under favourable conditions is very apt to be seen.” After the death of the physical body, what is left behind is the astral body or *Sukshma Sarira*, with thoughts and desires of the former owner impressed upon it, which we know as ghost, while the soul goes to *Devachan*, *Swarga* or Paradise, almost immediately, in case of *natural* death.

However, in case of *unnatural* death, or if the person had some strong unsatisfied desire, or if he wanted to convey something to someone on earth, then the Ego of such a person would be detained for a few hours, days, months or even years. A patriotic soldier would have desire to protect the country and die while fighting for his country. Since the young soldier died within two years of joining the army, probably his deep-seated desire to protect his country remained unfulfilled, and that may be the reason why the ghost is still seen to be patrolling along the borders.

The miracles happening at the temple could be attributed to the strong faith of the people in this valiant and extremely patriotic soldier. Faith put in *anything* brings results. Faith is a great engine, an enormous power, which in fact can accomplish all things. If the

person has supreme faith in the power of a healer, of a holy relic, of going to a certain temple or of a bath in some sacred river, then the person can be cured by his predisposed faith, writes H.P.B.

Can we revive empathy in our selfish world? Empathy is considered to have evolved as one of human beings’ vital survival skills. We have the ability to get into the minds of other people, including those in films and novels, which helps us to become the kindest species on earth. But it appears that the modern world has made kindness harder. Scientists and psychologists who have measured empathy over last few years have found that empathy has dwindled steadily. The average person in 2009 was less empathic than 74 per cent of people in 1979. Jeremy Bailenson decided to use VR (Virtual Reality) in his Virtual Human Interaction Lab at Stanford University to rebuild compassion. He feels that VR is far more psychologically powerful than any medium ever invented because while movies and books transport us to a different plane, we remain aware that we are reading or viewing. Virtual Reality is like actually experiencing a thing, so much so that people confuse virtual experiences for real ones. This is done by making people wear, what is called the Oculus helmet, which when removed, brings one back into the real world. VR is being seen as a powerful tool which allows people to see themselves in the body of an elderly adult or person of another race, or through the eyes of a colour-blind person. Findings like these led artist Chris Milk to use VR as empathy machine. In 2014 he created a VR film that told the story of a 12-year-old girl in a camp in Jordan, that is home to about 84,000 Syrian refugees. Through VR viewers meet this girl, spend time with her and her family, and explore the camp. According to Milk, “being there” mattered.

In another VR experiment designed by Jamil Zaki and Jeremy, to make people see the plight of their homeless neighbours in a new light, they found these people becoming empathic and willing to help, having gone through the experience of eviction, etc. However,

these researchers do not consider VR to be the perfect empathic machine. Some experiences cannot be mimicked. It is one thing to be homeless for a few minutes and quite another to feel grinding desperation of long-term hunger. All the same they are hopeful that VR can raise people's curiosity and drive them to learn more about such people. Having installed these machines in museums and malls, thousands of people have tried it. As VR becomes more commonplace, millions of people will have the chance to get first hand experience of other people's plight and see things from their point of view, writes Jamil Zaki, an associate professor of psychology at Stanford University and head of the Stanford Social Neuroscience Laboratory, in an article in *Nautilus* magazine.

Technology is a double-edged weapon, based on the use to which it is put. The very gadgets that can alienate people from one another could be used to bring them together by one who knows how. Empathy is often described as being in another's shoes, and then keeping it on for some time to get the feel of another's misery, understand the cause, while retaining one's equanimity. But today, greater number of people are becoming "insensitive" to the pain and problems of others. But it is possible to learn from the experience of another, if we have empathy. We enjoy and suffer vicariously, by reading a book or watching a movie or television. This learning from experiences of other people calls for great imagination and sympathy. For some people nothing is an experience till it happens to *them*. Therefore, undergoing some experiences virtually, might be a good substitute for an actual experience, as it may leave a deeper impact on the mind. However, such virtual experiences may at best be compared to a bad dream, wherein one suffers *subjectively*. After experiencing a nightmare some of us wake up and realize with relief that it was only a dream. But it should make some impact. Only a sensitive nature may reflect upon it and acquire deeper sympathy. However, every effort in the right direction brings its own results.