

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: ultmumbai@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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JOY BEYOND PLEASURE

THERE are certain pleasures, which appeal to an individual; and naturally he turns to it systematically through life, just as the sunflower turns to the sun. Whether it is money the person desires, or some intellectual or academic interest that captivates him, he pursues that interest and tries to obtain maximum happiness. When he obtains what he wants he feels happy. No sooner has he obtained his pleasure than he loses it again and has once more to go in search of it. More than that: he never actually reaches it, for it eludes him at the final moment.

One may work very hard and get all that the world considers necessary for a happy life, yet one finds that none of these things singly nor all of them put together lead to lasting happiness. Why does this happen? It is because either we do not get what we wanted in the first place; or, even if we get it, in due course, it all turns to dust and ashes in the mouth. Or, having got what we wanted, there is in us the desire to cling to that thing or that person forever, and that is not possible; as the Buddha says, “All conditioned existence is impermanent.”

As long as we depend upon outside things for our pleasures, we are going to encounter pain. We cannot plan our life so as to experience only happiness. Even if we succeeded in doing so, we would not enjoy it for long. The best-experienced pleasures are the ones that come to us as a treat, so to speak, after having worked hard, after having undergone suffering, after having paid the price.

Interestingly, no teacher teaches stoicism, though hedonism must be avoided as it is an obstacle to spiritual living. The Buddha, the greatest psychologist of our age, asks us to surrender pleasures of little worth in order to secure deep joy. By “deeper joy” he means “real joy” which is not dependent upon any object. Joys of this world are conditioned, transitory and depend upon external objects or beings. A mother might tell her young son to put aside the video game and first complete the home work after which she would not only allow him to play his video game but also permit him to watch his favourite cartoon channel on the television. The child obeys her because he sees that he can obtain greater joy later by giving up his small pleasure now. So, like this child, we learn to give up joys of little worth in order to secure deeper joys. Religions often use this method to make us do what is right and avoid doing that which harms others. They ask us to give charity and perform sacrifices because it promises greater joy in the heaven world after death. Religious fanatics willingly sacrifice their life because they are assured of their place in heaven with its limitless celestial enjoyments.

A verse in the *Katha Upanishad* says that there is a choice to be made between *Shreyas* or that which is good for the soul, and *Preyas*, or that which is pleasing to the senses. We might say *Shreyas* is joy beyond pleasure. *Preyas* is that pleasure which is born from the contact of the senses with the objects, which is sweet as the waters of life in the beginning, but is like poison at the end, which the *Gita* (XVIII, 38), describes as *rajasic* pleasure. It is accompanied by bitterness, disappointment, disgust or suffering. That which is *Shreyas* is the *sattvic* pleasure described in the *Gita* (XVIII, 37). This pleasure is like poison at first but in the end, it is like nectar of immortality. It is the pleasure born out of the purity of one’s own mind, or it is the result of purified understanding. The words used in the *Gita* are, *Atma-Buddhi Prasada*jam. *Prasada* refers to the peace and tranquillity that the mind experiences as a result of discipline, self-control and integration of the inner nature. Thus,

there is a distinction made between pleasures of the lower order, pertaining to the personality, and the joys of the soul arising out of the disciplined life.

This also brings in the great question of choice. The majority of us seem to be going along the beaten path, driven by the force of previous karma instead of making a deliberate choice, by bringing in discrimination and will power. The pull of *Preyas* keeps us anchored to worldly life with its gross pleasures, whereas the pull of *Shreyas* can take us to higher planes of existence. In the *Katha Upanishad*, the boy Nachiketas exercises his spiritual discrimination and resolves to rise above the worldly, short-lived pleasures. Seeing his exceptional courage to face death, Yama, the god of death, grants him three boons. As his third boon, Nachiketas asks Yama to reveal to him knowledge of the Self (*Atmajnana*) and secrets of death. Yama dissuades him from seeking this knowledge and tempts him by offering various pleasures of life, such as, wealth, cattle, kingship of the whole world, a long life, etc. The boy’s answer to the God of Death is that things look beautiful, and worthwhile, so long as the sense organs are vigorous. “Even the whole of life is short; thine are the chariots and dance and song. Shall we choose wealth if we have seen thee?”

It is then that finally, Yama relents and tells him that there are two roads to be travelled, that which is *Shreyas* or good and that which is pleasant or *Preyas*. It is improper to choose the pleasant because the pleasant is not always good, as also, good does not always look pleasant. Moreover, what we call pleasant is determined by the condition of our body, mind and sense organs. At the time of death, the sensations are dying. Also, there is no real pleasantness in things, because we see that what is pleasant or attractive to one is not necessarily attractive or pleasant to another. If there is real pleasantness in things, there should be pleasantness for all people equally. And yet there is something in the world which is finally good, and that final good cannot be something which is impermanent. But rather it should be something which can satisfy

the needs of the soul, explains Swami Krishnananda.

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. Even those who possess all that earth life can give—health, wealth, comfort, fame, power—are dissatisfied and unhappy. The pursuit of such pleasures can never lead to permanent satisfaction in life, because in pursuing them we lose sight of the needs of our higher nature. We have the answer in *Through the Gates of Gold*: “How can that which is external satisfy or even please the inner man—the thing which reigns within and has no eyes for matter, no hands for touch of objects, no senses with which to apprehend that which is outside its magic walls?”

When an acme of civilization is reached, as in Egypt, Greece and Rome, with perfect development of intellectual, mental and material part of man’s nature, it is but an indication that the climax of sensuous perfection is reached. The purpose of civilization is to produce spiritual fruit (progress and perfection). Unfortunately, History shows that after the civilization has flowered, in terms of technological and material advancement, the flower of civilization falls and dies, without producing spiritual fruit. Why do we struggle to roll the stone up the hill only to see it roll down again? Can we not see that beyond civilization, art, and mechanical perfection lie the realities of life? It is because of indolence and incredulity of humanity, which refuses to believe that peace and happiness can lie in the direction other than material advancement, says *Through the Gates of Gold*.

Worldly pleasures are short-lived and left behind at death. It is

only the noble qualities and merits earned which are carried by the Ego to the heaven world, the state of unalloyed peace. Still deeper joy is called *Ananda*, the natural and spontaneous joy, which we experience when we live according to our true nature—as the divinity within.

Whenever we are faced with a moral dilemma, we can ask ourselves whether that which I seek is going to give me lasting happiness; whether we are going to harm or injure another in obtaining our object of happiness; whether that which I seek selfishly is of greater value to another. Then, treating other people as our own self, we should choose that which is good (*shreyas*) and not that which dear to us personally (*preyas*).

But even in this world, there are events which can give us selfless, impersonal joy such as appreciation of a piece of art, nature’s beauty, the sweet smile of a child, etc. There is immense joy to be derived from being of help to another, from doing the acts of charity, justice, generosity and so on without personal considerations. In the article, “Spiritual Gifts and Their Attainment” we read that according to apostle James, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.” Every time our soul aspires for spiritual things, every resolve we make to live a pure life, every time we extend a helping hand to the needy and suffering, and all efforts towards righteous living, are the “gifts” of our Divine nature to the lower nature, which ultimately result in developing humane qualities such as, love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, etc. The “joy” mentioned here, is pleasure of greater worth, or *Shreyas*. There is happiness, or joy in appreciating the worth of suffering, going through it and learning from it. There is joy in facing difficulties, in winning over an enemy, in fighting adversities. In his book *The Other Side of Happiness*, Brock Bastian, a social psychologist, draws attention to the attitude in our days to regard a good life as consisting of nothing but positive experiences, and to consider unpleasant experiences as worthless and even harmful. He seems to suggest that our constant pursuit of pleasure is actually making us miserable. And above all, without pain, we

have no real way to achieve and appreciate the kind of happiness that is true and transcendent. “To conquer a desire brings more joy than to satisfy it,” said The Mother. This can come when our lower nature is in proximity to our higher nature. When it unites with higher nature, then we experience *Ananda* or unconditional bliss.

In an article, “Joy beyond pleasure,” Shri B. P. Wadia writes that the highest attribute of Deity is called *Ananda*—bliss. Life originated in *Ananda*; it moves and has its being in *Ananda*. Real happiness is an inherent quality of the Soul; which is called “an enjoyer” in the *Gita*. In spite of being so near, happiness appears to many of us to be afar off; for we are apt to judge *Ananda* or real bliss by the ephemeral sense pleasures and deceptive allurements of mundane life which gladden us in their coming and sadden us when they depart. He tells us that to enjoy life in a real way, we have to go to the core of every incident and try to learn its lesson. It is because we do not look deep enough that we miss the meaning and purpose of life, and hence its joy. In all events we must look for the hidden meaning, the hidden beauty, the hidden good. The Joy of Life is ours only when we are able to distil out of all experiences, pleasurable or painful, the perfume they contain. Real happiness is above pleasure as it is above pain, for it is made of the essence of both.

We are likely to experience true and lasting joy when we endeavour to perform little duties of life, carefully and cheerfully. If we look back in our lives, we find that we experienced deep joy, which came unsought, when we performed a loving deed, or in one way or another tried to promote the happiness of others. There is an eternal bond uniting all human souls, and therefore, in a sense, an individual can hope to attain the “deep joy” only when the whole of humanity has attained happiness, and that happens when he realizes that he is an inseparable part of the whole. “Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer?” asks *The Voice of the Silence*.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE ROCKING-HORSE WINNER

“THE ROCKING-Horse Winner” is a short story by D. H. Lawrence, first published in 1926. The story describes a young middle-class English woman, Hester, who dreams of living a luxurious lifestyle which she cannot afford. She lives with her husband and her three children, two girls and a boy. She feels that she “had no luck,” because her family is running out of money. She adores her children, but never really loves them. Though outwardly successful, she is haunted by a sense of failure. The family’s expenses exceed their income, and unspoken anxiety about money permeates the household. The house seems to be haunted by the unspoken phrase: “There must be more money!” One day when the young boy, Paul, asks his mother, why they did not have a car of their own, he was told that they were poor, and that was because “your father has no luck.” She has no luck because she had married him. The boy wants to know, “What is lucky?” His mother says, “It is what causes you to have money. If you are lucky you have money. That is why it is better to be born lucky than rich.” The boy, looking at anxiety and bitterness in his mother’s eyes, asserts, “I am a lucky person.” But his mother does not believe him, so he is determined to prove his luck to her. He has, in a way, accepted the responsibility of fulfilling his mother’s dreams of happiness.

Paul eventually rides his toy rocking-horse, madly, which he has received as a Christmas gift, looking into its wide glassy eyes and asking it to take him to luck. He is sure that the horse can take him there, so he whips the toy into submission. Paul gets to know about horse racing by talking to Bassett, the family’s gardener. He tells his uncle Oscar Cresswell about betting on horse races with Bassett. He has been placing bets using his pocket money and has won and saved three hundred and twenty pounds. Uncle Oscar begins to take his nephew to horse races. Once he asks Paul which horse he should bet on for the upcoming horse race. Paul suggests betting on

Daffodil, a relatively obscure horse. Paul is helping Uncle Oscar because he has given him the ten-shilling note which he used for his first successful bet. He tells his uncle that sometimes he was absolutely sure, while at other times he had an idea, and then sometimes he does not even have an idea. The boy has no clue as to what makes him “sure,” though the gardener says, “It is as if he had it from heaven.” Paul, his uncle and the gardener are three partners, and the whole business of horse racing and betting is kept secret from Paul’s mother.

After more winnings, Paul and Oscar arrange to give the mother a gift of five thousand pounds, but the gift only lets her spend more. Disappointed, Paul tries harder than ever before to be “lucky.” It is evident that Paul’s mad riding is because in addition to proving to his mother that he is “lucky” he also wants to stop the voices in the house, which whisper that they do not have enough money. These voices cause him a lot of anxiety. Little does he realize that greed is an endless cycle.

All this frightens Paul terribly. In the subsequent races he is unable to “know” and loses, first a hundred pounds and then fifty pounds. His mother notices how overwrought he was. The boy is all set to “know” for the Derby (big horse race) which is fast approaching. He has become very frail. His mother is extremely anxious about him. Two nights before the Derby, when the parents are away at a party, Paul begins to frantically ride his rocking-horse. His mother feels a sudden anxiety about him that was almost anguish. On coming back home, she enters the bedroom of her son, and on switching on the light of the room she sees her son, madly surging on the rocking-horse. He has been spending hours riding his rocking horse, sometimes all night long, until he “gets there,” into a clairvoyant state where he can be sure of the winner’s name. She cries out, “What are you doing?” He screams in a powerful strange voice, “It is Malabar!” Saying that he falls with a crash to the ground, and she rushes to gather him up. But he is unconscious, and remains so with brain-fever. “What does he mean by Malabar,” asks the

heart-frozen mother to his brother Oscar. “It is one of the horses running for the Derby,” he answers. He and the gardener put a thousand on Malabar: at fourteen to one.

In the evening, the gardener seeks permission to come and see Paul. He sits near the dying child and says, “Master Paul! Malabar came in first all right, a clean win. I did as you told me. You have made over seventy thousand pounds.... You have got over eighty thousand.” Paul asks his mother if she thinks that he is lucky. He says that if he rides his rocking-horse hard enough he becomes lucky. His mother says that she did not know this. Paul dies that night. Uncle Oscar tells Paul’s mother that she is better off than she was before, losing a “poor devil of a son,” but gaining in exchange eighty-thousand pounds. “He is best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner.”

This short story is about money, greed, luck and success. The title of the story applies mainly to the boy Paul, who has been using the rocking-horse to “know” the name of the winning horse at the race, and does manage to get for his mother a huge sum of money at the Derby. He and his mother are “winners” and at the same time “losers,” as he loses his own life, while his mother loses a young son. As some critics remark, the author is silent about Paul’s mother’s reaction to his death, as to whether the death of her son has any impact on her greed. Paul’s uncle weighs Paul’s life and death in terms of gains and losses. But when he remarks that it was better that the boy had gone out of life where he would ride a rocking-horse to find a winner, he seems to understand that this world was too harsh and greedy for someone as sensitive as Paul, and that Paul would never have been able to be healthy or happy.

The author seems to suggest that external things like money and luck cannot bring happiness, instead happiness must come from within. “Lusts are never satisfied, not even by a shower of gold.... Contentment is the greatest wealth.” teaches the Buddha. Desire grows on what it feeds.

The mother of the boy evaluates her plight based on the idea of

luck. Is everything in life a matter of luck—good or bad? Are “riches” an advantage in life? To begin with, “lucky” people are those born in favourable circumstances. There is a feeling that he/she is favoured, failing to realize that the “luck” which manifests in advantageous surroundings or in having all things going smooth and right is the result of Karma of this or previous lives. Often, it results from the attitude of complete resignation to whatever comes in life. “Lucky” people are often those who are not anxious but display faith in the law. “Anxiety” puts an invisible obstacle in the path of what we want done. In the absence of anxiety, there is clarity of perspective and it facilitates to turn the tide in a favourable direction.

Often, an obvious setback proves to be an opportunity in disguise, and *vice versa*. While it is true that so-called luck or advantages are the result of Karma, whether they are conducive for spiritual progress or not is determined by the way we handle them. It appears that seldom have we the wisdom to use the advantages beneficently. Many are the anxieties of the man of possession. Often, money alone is enough to corrupt the character by leading one to pamper the body and giving over to alcohol, drugs, smoking, gambling, and many other sensual pleasures. “Poverty has no natural tendency to engender selfishness, but wealth requires it,” writes Mr. Judge.

Clairvoyance is “clear seeing.” There are seven distinct planes of matter of which the physical is one. True Clairvoyance is the ability to see clearly on all these planes. There is a difference between psychic clairvoyance and spiritual clairvoyance. In psychic clairvoyance one sees on the astral plane with astral senses, often without proper training. Hence, Mr. Judge points out that there are very few genuine cases of clairvoyance that could be relied upon. The cultivation of the psychic senses is more difficult than any physical gymnastics. True Clairvoyance involves the ability to see as well as to *interpret* correctly what is seen on the astral plane.

When a person is able to go into a trance state, which could be induced at will, or by extraneous means, then he or she can look

into the astral and know about the past, present and future. H.P.B. describes a “medium” as a “sick sensitive,” born with a peculiar organization. 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.

In a 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. H.P.B. observes that a medium needs extraneous means to overpower his physical and mental parts, and induce a 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)

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 questions put to them. The boy in the story, while riding his rocking-horse, back and forth, envisions the winners. Paul proves to be unnaturally talented at divining the winners of the races, and he 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. It seems to be a case of a trance state induced by the rocking movement, resulting in psychic clairvoyance. And hence, the boy is not always “sure” of what he sees.

GANDHIJI'S IDEAL OF GOD

ON THE SECOND day of the month of October every year birth anniversary of Sri M.K. Gandhi, the Father of the Indian Nation, is observed as *Gandhi Jayanti*, all over the country. If India is to be regenerated to recover her past glory as a model of spiritual and humanistic culture and civilization the invaluable and seminal ideas of Gandhiji on all aspects of social, economic, political and religious life should be diligently studied and inculcated through an education system thoughtfully designed for the purpose.

Gandhiji was a deeply religious person. His faith in God, as he understood the ideal of God, was unshakable, and more dear to his heart than his own life, honour or reputation. The question which naturally arises in the mind in considering this statement is, can a mere firm belief in God bring on such benevolence which Gandhiji's life exemplified, when human history is replete with leaders of men perpetrating heinous crimes against humanity motivated by the same firm belief in God? The answer to this question lies in the fact that there must be a fundamental qualitative difference between the ordinary ideas of God, and those held by men given to tyranny and injustice, on the one hand, and that which Gandhiji held and was inspired by, on the other. Therefore, it is of educational value to consider a few of Gandhiji's statements, born of his deep conviction and inner experience, on his ideal of God.

Whatever good or bad happens to man because of his belief in God depends on his conception of God. A little reflection is enough to show us that belief in a God—as some theologies hold—extraneous to man and nature, who may be prayed to, obtain favours from, is highly pernicious, being illogical, unnatural, unphilosophical, contrary to the law of justice. Such a belief warps the intellect, perverts moral and mental nature of the believer. "It is this theological and dogmatic anthropomorphism which has begotten and is the legitimate parent of materialism." (*Theosophical Articles and Notes*, p. 197). When Gandhiji speaks of God in his writings one is likely

to misunderstand the meaning he attaches to the word, and imagine that his conception is one of ordinary personal God idea. This misinterpretation at once takes away the spirit of his philosophy. It must be borne in mind that his conception of Deity is Theosophical. Theosophy postulates an impersonal and Absolute Principle, omnipresent, eternal, boundless, and immutable; indeterminate, unknowable; being All and in all. Every individual may feel the Presence within himself and merge his self with the supreme.

It is not merely a philosophical idea but a practical ideal in which, like the philosopher's stone of the alchemists, issues and problems relating to every aspect of human life find their highest and most harmonious resolution. By God, Gandhiji meant, in his own words: "A self-existent, all-knowing Living Force which inheres every other force known to the world, and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living Light" (*The Mind of the Mahatma*, Navjivan publishing house, 1967, p. 253). There is no connotation of a God extraneous to man and universe in this conception. For him God is a living Force which resides in all but it is not the body. Denial of it, he said, is to forego the use of that inexhaustible Force, and that the life of such a denier or one ignorant of it, is like a rudderless ship, tossed about here and there, soon to perish.

Gandhiji shows that in the ideal of God as Absolute Principle the mystery of existence of Evil is resolved without any contradiction. If God is Absolute then evil is part of the whole, as It includes all, good and evil alike. "I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method," says Gandhiji. "To want to do so is to be co-equal with God. I am, therefore, humble enough to recognize evil as such; and I call God long-suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Him and yet if there is evil, He is the author of it and yet untouched by it" (*ibid.*, p. 48). In the Tenth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* this is plainly stated. Having stated divine virtues and qualities, such as

spiritual knowledge, right judgment, patience, truth, self-mastery, as coming from Him, the Supreme Principle, Sri Krishna also includes the great duality of nature among His *Vibhutis*, such as, pleasure and pain, birth and death, danger and security, prosperity and adversity, glory and ignominy.

Evil is and will always be as long as manifested universe lasts, as manifestation is pervaded by duality, as pairs of opposites; but woe to the one who chooses evil. This is an occult axiom, which Gandhiji expressed thus: "I know, too, that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself." (*ibid.*, p. 48)

Though Gandhiji had a clear idea of the Ideal of God which he incessantly strove to be united with, through service of humanity, he was nevertheless magnanimous and tolerant of ideas others held about God and of ways of worship. His reasoning is faultless. "What matters then," said he, "whether one worships God as person and another as Force? Both do right according to their lights. None knows and, perhaps, never will know what is the absolutely proper way to pray. The ideal must always remain the ideal. One need only remember that God is Force among all forces. All other forces are material. But God is the vital force or spirit which is all-pervading, all-embracing, and, therefore, beyond human ken." (*ibid.*, p. 89)

Though impersonal, formless, undefinable, for the sake of convenience of communication with fellowmen he called It "God," and gave it the gender, "Him." As no one can know God in truth and reality everyone is free to seek, address, and relate to God according to his or her taste and inclination. "He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply *is* to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us." (*ibid.*, p. 50)

For Gandhiji, God is Truth; but, he said that it is more apt to say Truth is God. (*ibid.*, p. 51). But what is Truth? For Gandhiji Truth is the Voice of divine conscience. "Truth is not to be found by anybody

who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth, you must reduce yourself to a zero" (*ibid.*, p. 42). That means non-violence should be consummated in the life of the devotee of Truth. "Truth and Love—*ahimsa*—is the only thing that counts. Where this is present, everything rights itself in the end. This is a law to which there is no exception." (*ibid.*, p. 42)

Gandhiji's conception, "Truth is God," is full of deepest wisdom. For Gandhiji Truth is sovereign principle of all principles; not only is truth truthfulness in thought, in word, in conception, but also the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God; manifestations of God are innumerable, so are His definitions, but he said he worships God as Truth only. He said he is a seeker after Truth to realize which he is ready to sacrifice his life itself. "But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, and my shield and buckler" (*ibid.*, p. 43). This is precisely what H.P.B. said in her article on "What is Truth?": "There is no room for absolute truth upon any subject whatsoever, in a world as finite and conditioned as man is himself. But there are relative truths, and we have to make the best we can of them." How do we approach Absolute Truth through relative truth? Gandhiji says that the seeker must become humbler than the dust, should be so humble himself that even the dust could crush him (*ibid.*, p. 43). Gandhiji's prayer and worship of God was to implicitly and unconditionally obey and follow the dictates of the "still small voice" of Divine Consciousness which spoke to his inner consciousness and to give himself entirely and unconditionally to the service of humanity without distinction of caste, creed, race or gender. He said even in his darkest despair His Name inspired him and put all doubts and despair to flight.

He said that his aspiration was to see God face to face—self-realization—and that it was an unbroken torture to him that he was still far from that consummation. "We must ever fail to perceive

Him through the senses, because He is beyond them. We can feel Him if we will but withdraw ourselves from the senses. The divine music is incessantly going on within ourselves, but the loud senses drown the delicate music which is unlike and infinitely superior to anything we can perceive or hear with our senses" (*ibid.*, p. 54). "Listen to the song of life," teaches *Light on the Path*: "Life itself has speech and is never silent. And its utterance is not, as you that are deaf may suppose, a cry: it is a song. Learn from it that you are a part of the harmony; learn from it to obey the laws of the harmony." Gandhiji did that and that is evident from his writings. He confessed he heard the voice within him and obeyed it implicitly and that whatever action he initiated in his private and public life, in the service of his nation and the world, was in obedience to it.

Gandhiji felt the presence of God whom he saw in all humanity and his worship of God was to serve Humanity. "I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in everyone. I am part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity....I recognize no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognize His presence; I do. And I worship the God that is Truth, or Truth which is God through the service of these millions" (*ibid.*, pp. 52-53). Service of Humanity is the highest and noblest worship of God. This is highest and purest practical Theosophy. How can one sacrifice oneself to the Absolute Abstract Principle, the Eternal, except through Its highest representation on earth—Humanity?

In these few gleanings from the extensive writings of Gandhiji on his ideal of God, among many other subjects, about which he shared with public his deepest thoughts, his experiments and experiences, we can discern the true conception of Deity and the practical means for self-realization through selfless service of collective spirit of life; which commends itself for emulation to any seeker after Truth.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

LETTERS OF PERSONAL COUNSEL—II

WHEN difficulties overtake us we grumble, but in and through them there is self-revelment, and there cannot be Self-realization without that. We have to proceed, curbing the animal tendencies and then transmuting the human tendencies, so that the divine may show forth. Our capacity to take pains with our tasks and even chores becomes an encouraging adventure as our "pots and pans" shine because cooking and cleaning are attentively done.

Of course, you are right—we cannot disregard difficulties and such a course often develops cynicism. A courageous facing of them is the only course. But what is that? Facing implies perception, attentive seeing, and we need courage, which again implies dispassion, *Vairagya*. Without dispassion we are apt to make mountains out of molehills or to go to the other extreme and generate cynicism. Then, in overcoming them we must learn the art of turning the forces of evil to good. And how very correct is your estimate regarding our good fortune to be in the company of the knowledge of Theosophy!

I am sure things will be right for you in due course. The worst thing you can do is to feel a sense of hopelessness. You are passing through the interim stage before settling down in your new inner life which Theosophy has opened for you. But it is no use worrying and feeling despondent if you are not yet able to adjust your life in terms of your inner aspirations. What you need is a firm reliance on the Law and a doing of your duty as it comes along from day to day, cheerfully, and putting your whole heart into it. All your difficulties and inner conflicts are bound to resolve themselves if you will only do what you see before you and trust Karma for the rest. Above all you need to have calmness and patience, and that can be reached by taking the firm position that nothing can possibly overwhelm you, that you are brave and strong enough to endure anything that comes to you and that it is all a necessary part of your

training. “If the candidate has faith, patience and confidence, verily he will not have to wait too long.”

If life seems to you vague and somewhat like a dream it is because you have not yet found a proper footing. I am sorry to know that things are not moving forward to your satisfaction in your own life and that as a result you find yourself getting very irritable and feel frustrated. Difficulties need not deject you. We are all Arjunas and like that great warrior we have to rouse ourselves from our mood of despondency and fight our battles. Obstacles and difficulties are bound to arise, are in fact necessary to some extent, for without them we would stagnate. But if we persevere, always keeping in mind the true purpose of our life, and putting forth the necessary effort to fulfil that purpose, we shall surmount all obstacles. Have you ever tried to look into the true purpose of life? Whence do we come and why have we come here? Men have asked these questions down the ages, and on their solution depend the moulding and shaping of each one’s life.

You will find it a great help to you in the living of the life if you take up the study of Mr. Judge’s and Mr. Crosbie’s writings. Some of Mr. Judge’s articles are reprinted in *Vernal Blooms* and *The Heart Doctrine*; but above all his *Letters That Have Helped Me* is full of practical guidance and instruction. Mr. Crosbie’s *Friendly Philosopher* is also a very useful book. Daily reading of these books and reflection on what you have read will prove beneficial to you.

You have within you great potencies. Correspondentially you will find numerous obstacles. With patience, tact and calmness, you will be able to conquer them all. Patiently search our scriptures; tactfully make use of the knowledge in helping others; retain your calmness as much as you can manage. Above all have love in your mind, which purifies that mind of all dirt, especially violence.

Do not fear anybody; have strength and courage; have a calm mind and an energetic heart. Our Karma is ours to learn from; Karma compels us to go to *Dharma*—we study it as Law, we apply it as Religion, we act it all out as Duty. Let us face difficulties and they

will not seem such if we go to the lessons they can impart and so prove them to be beneficent opportunities. Grow in Goodness, Truth and Beauty like a flower. May you be sustained hour by hour!

Purge yourself of the pair of opposites of love and hate. Let your love be dispassionate and pure compassion. Do not allow yourself to be caught in the web of details. Make your inner Centre a citadel which is strong and the calmness of which is unattackable. A study of Judge’s letters—the first volume—especially Nos. 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, will help. There is nothing to be worried about, or even to be concerned about. When others see that in you personal feelings are transcended and only soul-affection and soul-aid remain, they will themselves be benefited. You must, you have to, “kill” in your mind and consciousness personal attachment, but that is only one aspect; that is negative and less than half the requirement. You have to unfold detached affection and impersonal attachment. I repeat—the best weapon is the sword of knowledge which is compassion.

Our philosophy has the *consolation of Knowledge* to offer—the greatest consolation. Once we understand the nature and cause of our troubles and woes, they cease to be troubles and woes and become experiences from and through which we learn and grow strong.....

Living the life implies quiet study and then reflection; also work for others—*Dana, Tapas, Yagna*; Krishna’s special acts of *Dharma*, Karma or no Karma. So it seems to me your very first task is not to allow yourself to be disturbed within yourself, whatever others say and do. Do not answer, and then you will not retaliate. Listen—it entails only a loss of time—and then go on the Right Way which is self-chosen. Inner living is your most pressing need. Without that you will be caught in the maze of irritation, depression and defeatism; you will be lost. So it is imperative that you deepen your present effort at living the Life. Go to the Inner Ruler more and more; even a few minutes of repeated inner retirements will prove a source of strength.

When your Inner Centre becomes strong and streams forth Light

and Peace more and more, those who criticize you are bound to weaken by observation of your example. Our bow and arrows are gifts from the Blessed Lords of Light and Peace whose grand Philosophy is our nourishment for mind and heart. “Great man is he who is strongest in the exercise of patience,” one of Them has said. What we need is this third *Paramita* sprouting from *Vairagya*. Of course you have to be true to your own self, and your solemn duty to the Higher Self which is YOU must be performed according to “Masters’ Programme” as H.P.B. told Judge.

Let us do our duty, guard our plane of speech, and let the Law work. Of course it is trying not to retaliate and it is hard to “resist not evil,” but it is our *Dharma*, our Way, and we have to walk that Way. To be true to our own Inner Self is the highest *Dharma*; if we observe that we will learn how to walk the way of non-resistance and of active compassion.

Saddening, is it not, that _____ should keep themselves at this boiling temperature! It is injurious to their health. You will not help them and may harm yourself by becoming moody and irritable. Take it as a test for yourself. You might see in their moody and tarnished consciousnesses your own lower self, but you should not come down to their level. Let us understand what happens; look at it from the point of view of elementals. Theirs pounce upon you and then go back with your strength to them. These elementals enjoy the vibrations of irritability; it is food for them. If continuity of such exchange persists a common “dweller” will spring into existence. The demolishing of that “dweller” is ten times harder than stopping the present situation. But let us follow the “dweller” to its end. Strengthened, it will become the home for an “elementary,” and the “dweller” will become, so to speak, self-conscious. Next, one of the parties will become obsessed by that “elementary.” Now I don’t think that all this will happen. But *you* must learn from the situation. You take the higher viewpoint.

(To be continued)

ARYANS—WHO ARE THEY?

III

REGARDING the second sub-race of the Aryan race, we read in the *Secret Doctrine* that “the archaic records show the Initiates of the second Sub-race of the Aryan family moving from one land to the other for the purpose of supervising the building of *menhirs* and dolmens, of colossal Zodiacs in stone, and places of sepulchre to serve as receptacles for the ashes of generations to come. When was it? The fact of their crossing from France to Great Britain *by land* may give an idea of the date when such a journey could have been performed on *terra firma*.” (II, 750)

H.P.B. points out that “the modern archaeologist, though speculating *ad infinitum* upon the dolmens and their builders, knows, in fact, nothing of them or their origin. Yet, these weird, and often colossal monuments of unhewn stones—which consist generally of four or seven gigantic blocks placed together—are strewn over Asia, Europe, America and Africa, in groups or rows. Stones of enormous size are found placed horizontally and variously upon two, three, four, and as in Poitou, upon six and seven blocks....Such dolmens and prehistoric monuments are met with in almost every latitude...in the Mediterranean basin; in Denmark...in Shetland, and in Sweden...in Germany where they are known as the giant tombs...in Spain...and Africa; in Palestine and Algeria; in Sardinia...in Malabar, in India, where they are called the tombs of the *Daityas* (giants) and the *Rakshasas*...in Russia and Siberia, where they are known as the *Koorgan*; in Peru and Bolivia, where they are termed the *chulpas* or burial places.” (II, 752)

In the article, “The Celtic Branch of the Aryans and India” (*Aryan Path*, December 1937), the author, Hon. Mr. Erskine hints at the analogies between Druidism and the religions of the East. *The Secret Doctrine* teaches, “They (the Druids) were connected, in their esoteric teachings, with the universal Wisdom Religion....Their priests were the descendants of the last Atlanteans, and what is known of them

is sufficient to allow the inference that they were eastern priests akin to the Chaldeans and Indians.” (II, 756)

The Druids never entrusted their sacred verses and scriptures to writing, but, again like the Brahmins of old, committed them to memory. The Celtic religion considered it blasphemy to represent any god, even of a minor character, under a human figure. Its three chief commandments were “Obedience to divine laws; concern for the welfare of mankind; and suffering with fortitude all the evils of life.” Like the Brahmins, the Druids of the Celts practiced magic in the silent crypts of their deep cavern.

The third sub-race of the Aryan Race seems to refer to the period when after the submersion of the Atlantean continent, “the first three ‘divine or astronomical Dynasties,’ who taught the Third Root-Race; and after having abandoned the Atlanteans to their doom, returned (or re-descended, rather) during the third Sub-Race of the Fifth, in order to reveal to saved humanity the mysteries of their birth-place—the sidereal Heavens. The same symbolical record of the human races and the three Dynasties (Gods, Manes—semi-divine astrals of the Third and Fourth, and the ‘Heroes’ of the Fifth Race), which preceded the purely human kings, was found in the distribution of the tiers and passages of the Egyptian Labyrinth.” (*ibid.*, II, 435-36)

“Man’s size was reduced from 15 to 10 or 12 feet, ever since the third sub-race of the Aryan stock, which sub-race—born and developed in Europe and Asia Minor under new climates and conditions—had become European. Since then, as said, it has steadily been decreasing.” (*ibid.*, II, 753)

H.P.B. points out that the fourth sub-race witnessed the destruction of the last remnant of the Atlanteans—the Aryo-Atlanteans in the last island of Atlantis, namely, some 11,000 years ago.” (*ibid.*, II, 433)

We are in the fifth sub-race of the Fifth Root-Race and it appears that our fifth sub-race has been in existence only for a few thousand years. H.P.B. writes, “History—or what is called history—does not

go further back than the fantastic origins of our fifth sub-race, a ‘few thousands’ of years” (*S.D.*, II, 351). On pp. 470-71 (*S.D.*, II) we read, “The Aryan Hindu belongs to the oldest races now on earth; the Semite Hebrew to the latest. One is nearly one million years old; the other is a small sub-race some 8,000 years old and no more.” The footnote on page 471 explains that to begin with humanity of the Fifth Root-Race was divided into seven primitive types, but of these there remain only three types. Professor W. H. Flower is quoted as saying that the three types are, “Caucasian of Europe, the Mongolian of Asia, and the Ethiopian of Africa, and that all existing individuals of the species can be ranged around these types.” Jews are an artificial Aryan race, born in India, and they along with the Armenians and the Parsis belong to Aryan, Caucasian type.

The historical account of Aryans in India goes back only a few thousand years. We read that in 1921-22, the existence of pre-Aryan civilization, called the Indus Valley civilization, with its two urban centres at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa became known, based on archaeological evidence. The Harappa culture dates from c. 3000 B.C. to c. 1500 B.C. The Indus Valley civilization declined in the second millennium B.C. and had almost completely disintegrated by 1500 B.C., when the Aryans entered the north-west of India. The Aryans or Indo-Aryans—the descendants of the Indo-Europeans—had remained for some time in Bactria and the northern Iranian plateau, but by 1500 B.C. they migrated into northern India through the passes in the Hindu Kush mountains. At first, they wandered across the plains of the Punjab, and gradually took to agriculture. “Archaeological evidence to corroborate Aryan culture has not yet been conclusively indicated,” writes Romila Thapar. (*A History of India*, Vol. I, pp. 29-30 and fn.)

Theosophy teaches that ancient or archaic India is generally described as ancient *Aryavarta*, which was a wider and larger country as compared to modern India. There was Upper, Lower, and Western India, the latter of which is now Persia-Iran. Tibet,

Mongolia and Great Tartary also formed part of ancient India (*Isis*, I, 589). It is this ancient *Aryavarta* that was known as the “Alma-Mater” or the cradle of civilization. H.P.B. points out that Egypt owes her civilization, especially the art of building, to pre-Vedic India. Similarly, Babylonian civilization was imported from ancient India.

The knowledge possessed by ancient Indians is divided into *Sruti* or Revelation; *Smriti* or Laws and Tradition; *Itihasa* and *Purana*, i.e., History and Mythology. *Itihasa* or History consists of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in which are narrated actual historical events, having also philosophical and mythical aspects. H.P.B. points out that the “*Ramayana* is the mystic narrative in epic form of the struggle between Rama—the first king of the divine dynasty of the early Aryans [Fifth Race]—and Ravana, the symbolical personation of the Atlantean (Lanka) race [Fourth Race]. The former were the incarnations of the Solar Gods, the latter of the lunar Devas.” (*S.D.*, II, 495)

The *Mahabharata* war marked the closing epoch which the *Ramayana* War opened, for “the Aryan races had never ceased to fight with the descendants of the first giant races.” The *Mahabharata* war began in 3102 B.C., “It is from the Fourth Race (Atlanteans) that the early Aryans got their knowledge of ‘the bundle of wonderful things,’ the *Sabha* and *Mayasabha*, mentioned in the *Mahabharata*, the gift of *Mayasur* to the Pandavas. It is from them that they learnt aeronautics, *Viman Vidya* (‘the knowledge of flying in air-vehicles’), and therefore, their great arts of meteorography and meteorology. It is from them again that the Aryans inherited their most valuable science of the hidden virtues of precious and other stones, of chemistry, or rather alchemy, or minerology, geology, physics and astronomy,” writes H.P.B. (*S.D.*, II, 426)

The Sixth sub-race is being formed on the American Continent, which is described as the crucible or refining pot where men and women of every race are found to be living together and attacking problems of life together. A process of amalgamation is going on so that in the course of many generations there will be produced on the

American continents, an entirely new (sub) race—with new bodies, new powers of the mind, curious and unheard of psychic and physical powers. The transition from one Root Race to the next or one sub-race to the next is very gradual and there is always the overlapping of the races.

(*Concluded*)

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APHORISMS ON KARMA—SOME REFLECTIONS

XVII

APHORISM 28: “*No man but a sage or true seer can judge another’s Karma. Hence while each receives his deserts, appearances may deceive, and birth into poverty or heavy trial may not be punishment for bad Karma, for Egos continually incarnate into poor surroundings where they experience difficulties and trials which are for the discipline of the Ego and result in strength, fortitude, and sympathy.*”

In *The Key to Theosophy*, written by Madam H. P. Blavatsky, it is stated that Karma is the unseen and unknown law which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer, and that though the Law itself is unknowable, its action is perceivable. The Teacher explains that Karma being the ultimate law of the universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws, synonymous with Absolute Life, none, not even the highest Dhyan Chohans, can know this LAW of all laws *in its essence*; yet, it is said, that it is possible to know how it works, and that great Adepts and Seers have investigated and ascertained with accuracy its mode of action from remote antiquity. Others, however otherwise learned, can only infer a man’s past Karma from his present circumstances, with a general understanding that present life of everyone without exception is the just outcome or effect of the actions done in his or her past life or lives. For instance, all that one, who is not a *true* Seer, can ever know why some people are placed in pleasant circumstances in life is that it could be either the just reward for meritorious action done by them, or because of proportionate compensation for the suffering endured by unjust treatment meted out to them by others, in a past life.

One of the perplexing paradoxes of good and evil in society, in the absence of a rational explanation of which drives some to rail against life, and others to atheism, is the spectacle of men of loose character in positions of power and influence doing much evil to

the hurt of many, and yet enjoying the privileges of such as are favourites of fortune; and of the virtuous and deserving individuals in dire straits. “Virtue in distress and vice in triumph make atheists of mankind,” was the conclusion to which John Dryden came, after having found no explanation which satisfies the principle of natural justice for the great paradox. He was perhaps unaware of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation. But the student of ancient Wisdom, or Theosophy, discerns in it, perfect justice. He knows that this could not be otherwise than the unavoidable effect flowing from one of the two kinds of Karmic causes set in motion, in respect of the awful spectacle of “vice in triumph”: as said above, it could be due to the Law of Karma compensating the individual for harm done to him by others, whether by individuals or by societal laws or customs, irrespective of the kind of offence committed by him, which attracted the penalty of human laws upon his head; or due to the manifestation in the life of the person in question the reward for acts of merit done by him in one or more of his many past lives.

The other scenario of “virtue in distress,” which is inexplicable and vexing to philanthropic activists, however has its rationale in the working of the Law of Karma and its corollary, Reincarnation. This is again due to two possible Karmic causes: firstly, it may be the working out in that incarnation the effect of discordant causes created by the Ego by wrongful acts committed in a prior life on earth; which could only be expiated and balance struck by the Ego by experiencing painful but just Karmic retribution which follows, though the person may be virtuous and good. Karma, the impersonal law and absolute justice, is no respecter of persons.

Secondly, as mentioned in the aphorism, the ego might have consciously chosen to be incarnated amidst poverty, or difficult and challenging circumstances, in order to experience first-hand the abject condition of the deprived and marginalized sections of society so as to develop virtues of patience, frugality, strength of will, broad sympathy, discipline—qualities necessary for advancement in spiritual life. Teachers say that advanced souls often consciously

choose to incarnate in families in humble circumstances in order to lift as much as possible their heavy Karma by personally experiencing it, and aid them in living life of higher purpose.

Thus, we can only infer, approximately, with a broad philosophical understanding of the working of the Karmic law, what possible moral cause could account for the character, condition, relationships, behaviour, etc., of people. Only a Sage or a perfect Seer, who can read unmistakably the pages of the book of life of individuals and nations, can tell which particular cause, or combinations of causes, produced by the individuals or the nations concerned in the past incarnations by their actions, resulted in the condition in which they are at any given point of time in the present existence. For instance, Gautama Buddha recalled his past incarnations in the chain of cause and effect going back to five hundred lives. In the Second Chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita* Sri Krishna says that he remembered his past lives on earth whereas Arjuna did not remember his because Sri Krishna was a perfect Sage, an *Avatar*, and Arjuna was still a mortal and imperfect. Sri Krishna in the Eleventh Chapter of the *Gita* reveals his aspect of Cyclic and Karmic Law (*Kala*) in saying, “I am Time matured come hither for the destruction of all these creatures; except thyself [Arjuna] not one of all these warriors here drawn up in serried ranks shall live....They have already been slain by me; be thou only the immediate agent.” Arjuna was afforded a prevision of this prophecy of Sri Krishna in that he saw the inevitable destruction of the warriors against whom he had to contend as a result of their own prior evil acts.

A question often raised by inquirers is that if sages know the Karma of individuals and nations why do they not openly speak of it and reveal the mutual relationships in past incarnations of the actors on the stage of life in the present, and the precise details of deeds done by them in past, the Karmic effects of which they are now reaping. The contention of the querists is that revealing past causes helps in understanding the better, and in the resolution of, the

difficulties and perplexities they are experiencing. But the Exalted Ones maintain scrupulous silence in this regard. Wise Teachers say that instead of helping in resolution of present difficulties, revealing relationships in past incarnations of people, would only compound their difficulties. It would be subversive of the great aim of life, which is to overcome the illusion of the sense of separateness of personality, through realization of true Self. It is only when liberated from the illusion of personality that man may know his past births without danger. “Tell him, O Aspirant, that true devotion may bring him back the knowledge, that knowledge which was his in former births.” (*The Voice of the Silence*, p. 41)

Similarly, when those who have fore-knowledge of future events, which are fixed in the Astral Light by the causes produced by souls in long past cycles of life, speak about them, they awaken into activity certain powers causing great disturbance. Hence Sages are very reticent and speak of the coming events only when it is warranted and in a very general way, as broad hints. For instance, H.P.B. prophesied in the last quarter of the 19th century that not a few scores will be settled between nations in the 20th century, which was certainly a hint of the coming of the devastating world wars in the latter century which convulsed the whole world. Speaking of the evil consequences which will follow if details of future events already delineated in the Astral Light is spoken out by Seers, except indirectly in a very general way, Mr. Judge says: “We must not break the silence of the future, lest we raise up unknown and difficult tribes who will not be easy to deal with.” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 39)

In the aphorism on Karma under consideration is implicit a deep moral principle which has profound implication for us. One of the most common and deep-seated defects of human nature is unwarranted criticism of conduct, of acts of omission and commission, of others. This is however considered innocuous, and even a legitimate, norm in the ordinary social intercourse because the evil consequences which devolve not only on the one who is

given to this habit of fault finding but on the society as a whole is not understood. The injustice and hypocrisy are implicit in the act of our needless criticism of the act or conduct of others. We are ignorant of the unseen impelling power of Karmic cause and tendency under the influence of which everyone without exception is circumstanced, and thinks and acts in ways one does. If we, then, indulge in criticism of a person for his or her action, when it is not our duty to sit in judgment, we incur double demerit—of having to face Karmic retribution for violating the law of Karma, the law of Absolute Justice, and of having to share the very defect of the other which we condemned in the person. One who makes uncharitable criticism of persons for their actions which do not accord with his norm of behaviour is a foolish person who presumes, in his ignorance, to pit his puny self against the universal law of Absolute Justice, and thereby draw upon himself retributive Karmic penalty. Entry into Higher Life is barred for one who is lacking in charity. Great Teachers have always warned against uncalled for criticism or condemnation of others. “Judge not, that ye be not judged,” warns Jesus; “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again” (*Matthew*, VII:1). One who condemns will in his turn stand condemned. “We would be self-righteous to judge others by our own standard,” cautions Mr. Judge. “Are we so wise as never to act foolishly?” (*Letters That Have Helped Me*, p. 113). He points out the hypocrisy in us when we criticise others while forgetting the beam in our own eyes. Meddling in the life and duty of another is full of danger. “Criticism should be abandoned. It is no good. Cooperation is better than criticism. The duty of another is dangerous for one whose duty it is not. The insidious coming on of unbrotherly criticism should be warned against, prevented, stopped. By example you can do much, as also by word in due season.” (*ibid.*, p. 127)

(*To be continued*)

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

We won our freedom, nearly seventy years ago, from those who colonised our land, India. Now it is time to become free from the insidious practice of thinking too much and too hard. It appears that we have become slaves and mortgaged our freedom to the tyranny of thought. Probably we, humans, acquired this tendency of excessive thinking in the early days when we were defenceless against the wild animals, and the only weapon with which we could fight was “thinking.” Our ancestors must have concluded that the more they thought the better were their chance of not getting devoured by the wild animals. “What began purely as a self-defence mechanism seems to have ended up becoming the main business of our lives,” writes Jairam Menon, saying that things have changed now and there is no need to think so much anymore. Today, we find it very difficult to break this habit, which has been boosted by remarks from philosophers such as, Descartes, who said, “I think, therefore I am.”

As a result, we find ourselves thinking all the time and over-analysing what has been said or done. We think and think, trying to get at the hidden or deeper meaning of people’s remarks or behaviour, such as, why did he say that, or was her smile superficial? Just as we tend to accumulate junk in our cupboards and need to dispose it off, so also, much of what we think about is actually meant for disposal. We have the workaholics who have narrowed their mental horizon by thinking only about their work and workplace; the religious zealots think only about their faith, and the self-centred ones think only about themselves.

Many of us mistakenly believe that we can solve our problems by the power of concentrated thought and then experience lasting happiness. American novelist Jonathan Safran Foer says, “I think and think and think, I have thought myself out of happiness one million times but never once into it.” The persistent problems can be solved if we can only learn the art of peaceful coexistence.

But this does not imply that we should cease thinking. We should apply the golden principle of moderation. “Think whenever it is necessary, and then hold yourself back before your thoughts sow the seeds of worries that will soon grow into the poison ivy of anxiety. Let us face it, no amount of anticipatory thinking will help you understand the workings of fate or solve the problems that may crop up in future. As wise men have said, let us not allow our today to be held hostage to either yesterday or tomorrow,” writes Jairam Menon. (*Bhavan’s Journal*, August 15, 2020)

What distinguishes man from an animal is the power to think and choose, besides self-consciousness or “I-am-I” feeling. The power to think is man’s prerogative. In the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says, “No man resteth a moment inactive,” *i.e.*, even when inactive on the bodily plane, we are all the time acting on the thought-plane. What is the nature of our thoughts? Mostly self-regarding—what shall I cook? What shall I wear tomorrow? *Or* getting anxious about things which are clearly beyond our control. There are sensuous thoughts and wicked thoughts of harming another. How often do we find ourselves thinking about another’s sorrow or reflecting upon some verses from the scriptures? What we need to work on is the quality of thoughts. We should learn to think away from ourselves, and desist from unwholesome thoughts of anxiety, anger, jealousy and even regret. Instead let us “think” about who we really are. “Every day and as often as you can, and on going to sleep and as you wake—think, think, think, on the truth that you are not body, brain or astral man, but that you are THAT, and THAT is the Supreme Soul,” writes Mr. Judge.

The key to our character and happiness lies in thoughts translated into action. We intellectually theorize and want to have complete explanation by “trying to see, trying to hear, trying to ‘think’ it all out, instead of applying what we *do* see.” If we have understood fundamental ideas and their ethical implications, even a little, we must get ourselves to practice it at once. “The end of man is an *action* and not *thought*, though it were the noblest,” says Carlyle.

The discipline of “becoming” is at first, a transition from thinking to action. “All that we are is the result of what we have thought: all that we are is founded on our thoughts and formed of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought happiness pursue him like his own shadow that never leaves him,” teaches the Buddha.

A team of astronomers led by Jane Greaves at Cardiff University, United Kingdom, looked at the planet Venus using two of the biggest telescopes on Earth and have found signs of phosphine gas in the clouds of Venus, some 50 to 60 kilometres above the surface of Venus, leading to the conclusion that clouds of Venus may contain life. Phosphine gas that is present in the Earth’s atmosphere is produced by microbes and also by human technological processes. By testing on Earth a variety of non-biological processes, such as, atmospheric chemistry, volcanism and delivery by meteorite, that could happen on Venus, the team found that none of these processes created enough Phosphine gas to account for the amount of gas seen on Venus. Only two possibilities remain: “either there is something going on in Venus’s clouds that we do not understand, or whatever is producing that phosphine is alive,” says Leah Crane. Earlier when people argued that Venus may be habitable, it was merely a conjecture, but the discovery of Phosphine suggests the possibility. It is felt that to be certain about the source of Phosphine gas and the possible life on Venus, we will probably have to send a spacecraft to Venus to sample the atmosphere and chemically analyse it, says science reporter Leah Crane, answering questions from *New Scientist* readers on Twitter. (*New Scientist*, September 19, 2020)

Astronomers have always been fascinated by Venus, which is nearest to earth, and perhaps that makes it one of the brightest objects in the night sky. Researchers believe that Venus might have once been Earth’s twin planet, complete with giant rivers, deep oceans and teeming with life.

Life of the sort we know may not be present on Venus; but how

much do our scientists know of the type of life that exists on other planets? Mr. Crosbie remarks that it is not wise to conclude that because a planet is nearer the Sun than we are, its climate and condition will make sustaining of life thereon impossible. Life always adjusts itself to whatever conditions exist. Hence, bodies and ideas connected with that state of matter will exactly fit those existing conditions. The Wisdom of the Ages asserts that “wherever there is an atom of matter, a particle or a molecule, even in its most gaseous condition, there is life in it, however latent, and unconscious (*S.D.*, I, 258). Quoting Camille Flammarion, the well-known French Astronomer, H.P.B. writes that Venus would be less adapted for life such as exists on earth, because on Venus there are sudden changes of temperatures and its seasons are more extreme. But some forms of life as we know are possible on Venus, Mars and Mercury. All the three planets have very dense atmosphere. Their poles are covered with snows and their surfaces are hidden by clouds. The geographical configuration of their seas and continents, the variations of their seasons and climates are closely analogous. (*S.D.*, II, 707)

It is well known that Venus receives from the sun thrice as much light and heat as the earth, and gives to the earth one-third of the supply she receives. Hence the earth and Venus are called “Twin-sisters.” In the article, “The History of a Planet,” H.P.B. approvingly quotes Reynaud, who writes in *Terre et Ciel* (p. 74): “Venus is a second Earth, so much so that were there any communication possible between the two planets, their inhabitants might take their respective earths for the two hemispheres of the same world. ... They seem on the sky, *like two sisters*. Similar in conformation, these two worlds are also similar in the character assigned to them in the Universe.”

It appears that forgiveness helps us to be free. Forgiveness therapy can help a person to gain perspective and move on, instead of being stuck, writes Nathaniel Wade, a professor of psychology at Iowa

State University, who is interested in the psychology of forgiveness and religion, more in the context of counselling and therapy. Being in relationships often means being offended, hurt or betrayed, and one of the ways that we have developed to deal with such pain is through forgiveness. But what is forgiveness and how does it work? Firstly, we must distinguish between forgiveness and condoning, *i.e.*, excusing or overlooking an offence. Forgiveness does not necessarily include reconciliation which involves re-establishing a trusting relationship with the person who has hurt. It is an internal process which helps to overcome feelings of bitterness and hurt, and instead engender the feeling of empathy and love for the offender.

The author points out that in their forgiveness programmes, participants felt that the most helpful part was the opportunity to share with others and knowing that others had similar struggles, and being able to get things off one’s chest. It can help people see the offence in a different perspective and open the door for forgiveness. The next major part of forgiveness journey is building empathy for the offender.

In addition to helping people, researchers have also begun exploring the ways to help the offenders to forgive themselves and overcome the guilt. The steps involve helping the person to take appropriate amounts of responsibility for the offence or hurt, express the remorse they feel, make amends to the person hurt, so that finally the feelings of guilt and self-condemnation are replaced by feelings of self-respect and self-compassion.

Forgiveness of others and one’s self can be a powerful, life-altering process and opens possibilities for healing and growth. It is an effective way to manage moments of conflict, disappointment and pain in our lives. “Forgiveness encourages a deeper, more compassionate understanding that we are all flawed in our different ways and that we all need to be forgiven at times,” writes Nathaniel Wade, in an article that appeared in *Aeon* magazine.

Forgiving the person who has wronged us is the most difficult

thing because it runs totally contrary to human instinct. What helps in forgiving is keeping in mind examples of other people who have forgiven the worst of offences, and remembering that forgiveness brings healing and liberates both the forgiver and the forgiven. Lord Buddha says that when our mind is tied with the intention of retaliation our consciousness is in a non-integrated state. Condemn the act and not the actor. It is useful to watch how quickly are we able to forgive an insult or injury. Some of us cannot forgive and forget for many months and many years. Slowly we may learn to forgive in few days and then within few minutes and so on. Forgive, forgive and largely forget, advises Mr. Judge

The Sermon on the Mount says, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others who trespass against us.” We are continually being forgiven by the good Law. We are not *excused* for our wrong actions but *forgiven*, and that means we are given one more opportunity to mend our ways. “The very fact that the oppressor, the unjust, the wicked, live out their lives is proof of mercy in the great heart of Nature. They are thus given chance after chance to retrieve their errors and climb, if even of the ladder of pain, to the height of perfection,” says Mr. Judge.

A French proverb says: “To understand is to forgive.” If we have taken care to understand the experience with all its implications, *i.e.*, what caused it; what was the lesson to be learnt; what in our nature needs changing, etc., then there results conscious acceptance. If we have learnt to take smaller experiences in our stride, then the bigger losses do not throw us off-balance—even when they do, we are able to bounce back. We are especially vulnerable in some parts of our psychological make-up, and that may be the result of similar experiences in the past. We need to cultivate detachment. The more we remember that we are not the personality and stop identifying with its experiences, the less is the force of those experiences.