

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 13, No. 6

October 17, 2021

A Magazine Devoted to The Living of the Higher Life

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HARMONY—SOME REFLECTIONS

HARMONY means concord or agreement between people or things. When two or more people live together without fighting, they are said to live in harmony with each other. It is this peaceful co-existence of groups of people that gives rise to social, religious, cultural and even spiritual harmony. To have harmonious life we should be able to strike a balance between various aspects or areas of life. We need to harmonize our home duties with career, and also social, emotional, financial, personal and physical aspects of our lives. There is an inner struggle when two different areas require equal attention, and that is when we must be ready to make some kind of sacrifice. Thus, when we need to make a choice between visiting a sick person and meeting a dear friend we have not met for ten years, then we should be able to give priority to visiting the sick person by sacrificing the personal pleasure of meeting the friend.

The basis for establishing harmony in family, office, society or nation, is *personal* or *internal* harmony. Often, what we think we do not speak, and what we speak we do not translate into action. For instance, we see a lot of immoral behaviour going on around us, we condemn it in words, but seldom take steps to remedy the situation. An emotional and spiritual discord or disharmony arises when our thoughts, feelings, words and actions are not in harmony. When we pretend to be concerned about another's problem outwardly but are actually indifferent, *or*, we pretend to like a person

but carry an intense feeling of dislike within for that individual, then it creates a divide within us. “When the outside is pleasant but the inside is false, then it is a hollow shell and all the good magnetism is cut off,” writes Mr. Judge. Therefore, in order to establish a harmonious human relationship, one must not only have a “pleasant manner on the outside but also have a pleasant and sweet feeling inside.”

A pretender is a hypocrite and one cannot be a hypocrite without denying or being deaf to the “still small voice” of one’s divine nature, which ultimately may stop guiding. Generally, when one genuinely repents, the link that was broken with the divine nature, when one committed a sin is established again, but it appears that the same would be extremely difficult in the case of a hypocrite who has knowingly alienated himself from his divine nature.

“With each morning’s awakening try to live through the day in harmony with the Higher Self,” writes H.P.B. That in turn leads to integrated character. *Sheela* has been defined as “the key of Harmony in word and act, the key that counterbalances the cause and the effect, and leaves no further room for Karmic action.” Harmony in word and act means, we must not allow our good intentions to remain mere intentions but act on them. As Carlyle says: “The end of man is an *action* and not a *thought*, though it were the noblest.” Psychologists say that each thought has energy, and if good intentions, plans, wishes, etc. remain in your brain and are not translated into actions, it gives rise to nervous tension.

When we act, so as to pass the burden of our karma to others, we are not balancing the cause and the effect. For instance, while we are standing in the queue for a ticket it may happen that just when it is our turn to buy the ticket, it is time for the ticket-window to close. In such a case, we should accept the situation that comes to us under karma. Instead, if we plead with the clerk on the counter to keep it open a little longer and issue us the ticket, we have created fresh karmic debt, and failed to “counterbalance the cause and the effect.”

Karma is the law of action and reaction; cause and effect. The

law of Karma adjusts every effect to its cause and restores the disturbed equilibrium in the physical world and broken harmony in the moral world. When a stone is thrown into the calm waters of a lake, it creates disturbing waves that oscillate forwards and backwards till they converge back to the point of disturbance, bringing the waters to a state of calm tranquillity. All actions, on every plane, produce disturbance in the balanced harmony of the universe and that harmony is restored when the disturbing forces converge back to the point of disturbance. This process of adjustment results in happiness or pain, and we call this reward and punishment. If in one case we find a person having opportunities and happiness, and in the other, total absence of these, then we say that these are exact consequences of having preserved the harmony of nature in the former, and disturbance in the latter case. “The only decree of Karma—an eternal and immutable decree—is absolute Harmony in the world of matter as it is in the world of Spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we, who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we work with, through and along with nature, abiding by the laws on which that Harmony depends, or—break them.” (*S.D.*, I, 643)

Are we really working with, through and along with nature? Are we not guilty of disturbing the harmony of nature in various ways? Man is the crown piece of evolution and kingdoms below man look up to him for their evolution. Instead of helping, we seem to hinder their progress. Instead of working on with nature, we have only sought to conquer nature for selfish ends. An article, “Morality and Pantheism” that appeared in the magazine *The Theosophist* (November 1883), expressed the Theosophical views regarding the man-nature relationship thus: “If an individual attempts to move in a direction other than that in which Nature is moving, that individual is sure to be crushed, sooner or later, by the enormous pressure of the opposing force,” which manifests itself in the form of earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and epidemics.

Harmony means acceptance of people and situations. *The Voice*

of the Silence says: “Accept the woes of birth....Teach to eschew all causes; the ripple of effect, as the great tidal wave, thou shalt let run its course.” At first sight it appears to be a counsel of despair. But actually, it is patient resignation. It is a dynamic, positive precept. It requires the courage and the stoicism of the brave to accept the woes of birth in a spirit of true resignation. It implies surrendering our personal will to the Divine will. Instead, we always want things to go our way. In the Ninth discourse of the *Gita*, Shri Krishna says that “Unto thee who findeth no fault,” he will make known the most mysterious knowledge, coupled with its realization. The words “Unto thee who findeth no fault,” imply a person who understands that Karma rules in everything and every circumstance, and that nothing can come to him, whether good or evil, of which he himself was not the cause. He accepts good without exultation and evil without complaint. Such “acceptance,” leads to equanimity, where the person is ready to enjoy or suffer whatever the Higher Self has in store for him by way of experience and discipline.

Harmony among student-workers and disciples is of utmost importance. This harmony is not to be achieved by force. “Too much, too much, trying to force harmony. Harmony comes from balancing of diversities, and discord from any effort to make harmony by force,” advises Mr. Judge. We might say harmony is a concept of dynamic sharing. It is unity in diversity. Confucius said, “A gentleman gets along with others, but does not necessarily agree with them.” He tries to achieve harmony even in disagreement, and thus showing that one should acknowledge differences, but also work towards harmony and balance by “adding what is missing and reducing what is excess.”

The Voice of the Silence says: “Disciples may be likened to the strings of a soul-echoing Vina....The string that fails to answer ‘neath the Master’s touch in dulcet harmony with all the others, breaks—and is cast away.” When a disciple refuses to adjust, and persists in being separate and assertive, then like an overstretched string which breaks, he may find a crack developing in his inner consciousness

and the silver string that binds him to his divine nature might be stretched unduly, making it difficult for him to get guidance from the Master within. Being in harmony is very important. We may not agree with another, and yet acknowledging his uniqueness, we may accept and absorb peculiarities of his nature.

Friction is the opposite of harmony. Mr. Crosbie speaks about “personal friction,” among student-workers. This may come as a result of differences of opinion, and also on account of the behaviour of some person. One method is to tell the person directly on his face, in as kind a manner as possible. However, no student can be sure that he has made the correct judgement as to right or wrong. Hence, it is better to state the *principle*. It is very important that there should be a basis for justifying our stand, views or criticism. When we directly point out the error or fault there is a great chance of creating disharmony. Instead, when the “principle” is mentioned and the other person is left to make its application, it may result in an inner change and no resistance has to be faced. Besides universal ethics and universal brotherhood, etc., the “principle” could also be the basis on which U.L.T. functions, such as, impersonality, the spread of original teachings, etc.

“Before the Soul can see, the Harmony within must be attained and fleshly eyes be rendered blind to all illusions,” says the *Voice of the Silence*. Being encased in different bodies and personalities, the true light is obscured and we are led to believe that each one of us is separate from others. Arjuna, too, was under the same delusion. It is only when he is made to realize that in the heart of every creature there is Master *Iswara*, that he says that his *moha* or delusion was destroyed and that he had regained his (*smriti*) memory. To reach that state, all our efforts at realizing harmony at various levels must culminate in purifying our lower nature and bringing it in harmony with the higher, Divine nature. The lower four principles or quaternary must vibrate in unison with the higher Trinity or three spiritual principles.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT THE MORTAL IMMORTAL

THE MORTAL IMMORTAL is a short story written by Mary Shelley, in 1833, and first published in *The Keepsake* for 1834, a literary annual. It is the story of a young man named Winzy, who drinks an elixir which makes him immortal. All through the story Winzy recounts the events that led him to drink an elixir at the age of twenty, when he worked with Cornelius Agrippa, a famous German physician, writer, theologian, and an alchemist. At first immortality appears to promise him eternal tranquillity. However, soon it proves to be a curse, as he has to endure psychological torture of watching his loved one grow old and die, while he is cursed with an eternal life. The story begins on July 16, 1833 with narrator, Winzy, saying that on this day he has completed his three hundred and twenty-third year! He once again repeats the question, “Am I, then, immortal?” and even after so many years, cannot answer it. On that day, he detects one grey hair amidst his brown locks.

He begins to tell the story of his life and recollects that at first, he did not accept the employment offer by Agrippa, the alchemist. He was afraid to accept because he had heard that Agrippa’s former assistant had unknowingly “raised the foul fiend during his master’s absence, and was destroyed by him.” However, his childhood sweetheart and love of his life, after being orphaned, had been adopted by a wealthy, childless lady, and she encourages him to accept the offer in hopes that the money he made could be sufficient to provide them a comfortable living.

As Winzy works for Cornelius Agrippa, he watches him spend many days working on an elixir. There is a phase when Agrippa works more rigorously and requires greater assistance from Winzy. One day, Winzy is unable to keep his date with Bertha which angers her and she vows that “any man should possess her hand rather than he who could not be in two places at once for her sake.” From that time onwards she begins to pay attention to rich young men

and is seen more frequently in the company of Albert Hoffer. Winzy begins to feel that Bertha has left him for Albert Hoffer. He becomes jealous, miserable and angry.

Just then, Agrippa, who was still working on the elixir, and has been awake for three days and nights, wants to sleep and asks Winzy to watch the glass vessel, which contained the liquid of soft rose-colour. Winzy has been asked to awaken Agrippa when this liquid begins to change its hue. However, he also said, “Winzy, my boy, do not touch the vessel—do not put it to your lips; it is a philter—a philter to cure love” and as Winzy certainly would not want to cease to love Bertha, he should never try to drink that potion. But that is exactly what Winzy desires, and so when the potion changes colour he drinks it. He drinks half of it, and the remaining is dropped by accident. But to his surprise, Winzy wakes up the next day rejuvenated, and does not know what exactly he has consumed. He is full of youthful vigour. He sets out to meet Bertha, who hastens to meet him and receives him warmly. She pleads with him to take her to his house, away from detested luxuries and wretchedness. Soon the two of them are married. Winzy feels that the elixir instead of curing him of love had inspired him with courage and resolution and succeed in winning Bertha’s love.

Meanwhile, Agrippa begins to work again to make elixir, but unsuccessfully, this time. Five years later, Agrippa is on his deathbed and calls Winzy. He reveals to him the purpose of elixir. Winzy realises that he has to live with the fact that Bertha is getting older while he continues to look twenty years old. Bertha is confused, but does not know the reason behind Winzy’s continual youthful look. She believes that it is the spell that he must break in order for him to get old with her. They are shunned by the village people. Winzy confesses the truth and tells her that he must leave her so that she may continue with her life. Bertha accepts the situation and tells Winzy that they should start a new life in some remote part of western France, where no one can recognize them.

As they begin their new life together, Winzy witnesses the slow

death of Bertha. He looks after her, but she dies ultimately. When she dies, he realizes that there will not be another woman that he can love the way that he has loved Bertha. He also discovers that despite the fact that his outward appearance continues to be that of a twenty-year old, the old age takes physical toll on him. The elixir does not prevent the aging process, but only keeps the drinker from dying. He longs for death and expresses his agony in these words: “I have lived on for many a year—alone, and weary of myself—desirous of death, yet never dying—a mortal immortal.” And yet, though on the one hand he desires death, he also fears death. The author puts very significant words into the mouth of narrator who says that when he finds one grey hair, he laments. “Yes, the fear of age and death often creeps coldly into my heart; and the more I live, the more I dread death, even while I abhor life. Such an enigma is man—born to perish—when he wars, as I do, against the established law of his nature.”

By drinking an elixir of immortality, he breaks, quite unknowingly, the law of nature, and acquires eternal life, and exists in an unnatural state, outside the bounds of nature, as a mortal immortal. Frances Sheridan published *The History of Nourjahad* in 1767. The story describes a Persian youth, who wishes for riches and immortality, is tricked into believing that a mysterious “guardian genius” has granted him the extravagant wish of endless riches and of the immortality. However, in his case the period of sleep lasts for several years at a time. In one sense it was a blessing which freed him from uninterrupted passage of time. In Winzy’s case the tragedy of immortality is everlasting life and time. Therefore, he is made to say, “Am I, then, immortal?... Forever! Can it be? To live forever! I have heard of enchantments, in which the victims were plunged into a deep sleep, to wake, after a hundred years, as fresh as ever: I have heard of the Seven Sleepers—thus to be immortal would not be so burdensome: but, oh! The weight of never-ending time—the tedious passage of the still-succeeding hours! How happy was the fabled Nourjahad!—But to my task.”

The Bhagavad-Gita advises a meditation on birth, death, decay, sickness and error. Can we not live the life without meditating on death? Life and death, is one of the pairs of opposites in the manifestation. It is difficult to appreciate or understand “good” without “evil,” “pleasure” without “pain,” and “life” without “death.” We are afraid of death because we are identified with the body and the personality, and physical death implies separation from everything that we depend upon for our sense of “I.” But what would it be like if life were to go on and on without any break? In a *Greek mythology*, Tithonus was the lover of *Eos*, the goddess of the dawn. When Eos asked Zeus of a boon, for Tithonus to be immortal, she forgot to ask for eternal youth. Tithonus indeed lived forever. The poem *Tithonus*, by Alfred Tennyson, is a dramatic monologue from the point-of-view of Tithonus. He laments his unnatural longevity, which separates him from the mortal world as well as from the immortal, by saying: “The woods decay, the woods decay and fall...Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath, and after many a summer dies the swan. Me only cruel immortality consumes; I wither slowly in thine arms.” This is exactly how we would feel if life were eternal. In Simone de Beauvoir’s novel, *All Men Are Mortal*, the Italian ruler, Raymond Fosca, who was afraid of death, found that time on earth was too short for achieving anything great for the glory of his city. He drinks the elixir of life, bought from a Jew, and becomes immortal. In the two centuries that he lived, he waged wars, built new buildings, but did not achieve anything spectacular, nothing which he could not have achieved in a few years. He came to the conclusion that those only, who must die, are capable of truly loving life, undertaking great works and running risks. The author suggests that meaningful human existence depends upon the prospect of death and its attendant joys and anguish, without which freedom and action have no value. In fact, a story or a poem must also have a moving and conclusive end. Are we not bored when a television serial drags on endlessly?

Death is only a passage or bridge that takes us to the other side.

Death is not dying, it is waking into another life, say the Upanishads. A Master of Wisdom writes that it was observed during famine in China that in places where people recognized that death is not the end, the multitude died with utmost indifference. However, among those who did not believe in rebirth and had greatest dread of death, the mothers devoured their own children, in an attempt to keep the body and soul together.

The *Gita* says, “Death is certain to all beings and rebirth to all mortals.” “All that lives must one day die, passing from Nature to Eternity,” writes Shakespeare. Life is related to form, and form must die. Death of a physical form is a necessity. The permanent spiritual aspect in us—the soul—feels imprisoned during life. For the soul, “Death comes as a deliverer and a friend.” Sleep is called twin brother of death. Sleep is essential for the body to be rested. Our soul is rested in a state after death, called *swarga*, heaven or *devachan*. In fact, it is said that if the average man returned at once to another body without passing through this restful and beneficial state, his soul would be completely tired out and also deprived of the needed opportunity for the development of the higher part of his nature.

H.P.B. mentions that philosopher’s stone and elixir of life are not just allegorical (applicable at spiritual level) but real physical realities. The elixir of life can prolong life and renew youth. H.P.B. quotes some writer who expresses that just as nature can rejuvenate herself by drawing upon the source of energy or vitality, man can do the same and can also extract from the earth itself the juice with which to replenish his own forces. If the circulation of fluids in man is stopped, it can result in stagnation and death. If the alchemists had discovered some chemical compounds that can keep these channels of circulation unclogged, it should prevent decay and death. So also, there are mineral springs, bathing in which is supposed to cure disease and restore physical vigour. Why should there not be chemicals in the bowels of the earth that can restore youth and prolong life? Robert Boyle mentions a wine that was tried on an old woman producing wonderful results. (*Isis*, I, 502-3)

For ages, men have sought immortality or deathless existence through “elixir of life.” “The same term, more fully *elixir vitae*, was given to the substance that would indefinitely prolong life—a liquid that was believed to be allied to the Philosopher’s Stone. Chinese Taoists not only sought the ‘pill of immortality’ but developed techniques (meditation, breathing exercises, diet, etc.) that were thought to confer immortality by internal alchemy” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). Little do we realize what horrible results can ensue such perpetual existence without proper moral basis of life. Mythologies have shown what happens when powerful but evil men acquire a boon that makes them *almost* immune to death. They spread such terror in the three worlds that finally a divine being has to fight and destroy them. Hence, the emphasis is on the *quality* of life and not its length.

It is death which can open the door to new life, new body, new environment, new experiences and new possibilities. From life to life, man moves on, going through different experiences, learning the lessons and progressing, unfolding his timeless potentialities. There are various stages in the spiritual evolution of man. The journey often starts with a realization that life is transient. The best and even the most beautiful things in life come to an end. Nothing lasts forever. As long as one has not realized this grave fact of life, one goes on living as though life was never going to come to an end. Then, time and energy is spent in worldly pursuits. But, a little reflection shows us that all our worldly achievements drop at the threshold of death. Name, fame, wealth, power are all left behind at death while the real man moves on to the heaven world and then to another life of worldly existence, until some experience of life awakens us. It is then that the quest begins. Then comes a realization that it is possible for man to reach the deathless state. It is possible for man to become immortal. It is possible for him to become like Buddha, Jesus, Shankara—by following in their footsteps. The great ones have attained *Moksha* from the rounds of life and death by their own efforts.

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS TESTS, TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS—I

THIS SUBJECT of test, trial and temptation is very important. In *Isis* H.P.B. gave a significant hint. Look up Vol. II, p. 280: “Personal virtue could claim no merit, unless it had passed through the furnace of temptation.”

It is time that you looked into this topic for personal self-examination and preparation for any and every temptation. At this hour you will not find much to worry about of a serious nature; but I ever believe in being ready to meet the devil and say “good morning”! Therefore it may be well for you to read H.P.B.’s article on “Chelas and Lay Chelas,” especially pp. 5-7 of the book *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*. Then turn to Judge’s *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* and read between the lines pp. 18-20, about our two foes. Note what he says about why and how others in our vicinity attack us for achieving that which they know to be right but are not able to achieve themselves. This you have already experienced and are now experiencing. Watch your Karmic connections and psychic precipitations which cause what Judge calls a kind of heat, a psychic ailment. One very fundamental aspect of it has to do with our Theosophical affinities. Master K.H. in one place refers to “the converging lines of Karma” bringing us into this Esoteric Movement. Crosbie’s *Friendly Philosopher* puts it in his usual simple way on p. 27—the first paragraph of Letter 10.

Believe me, the Path of the aspirant has traps to ensnare the ego in numerous ways. One can never come to the height of devotion unless one remains true to one’s Inner Ruler and to the Lines laid down. Of course you will be assailed and tempted, but your earnestness and sincerity are there to guide you. You are preparing yourself by gathering within yourself spiritual stamina. If you calmly “search the scriptures” in an hour of test you will come through. Be confident. It is your good Karma that you are not ambitious and that your personal self does not want to shine in public. Along what

particular line your attack will come and the form in which it will come is impossible for us to determine; only the Master knows.

It is good that you aspire to prepare yourself so as to have fortitude. Is it not said: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”? This very feeling which puts you on your guard is a good sign. There are people who never think that they are under trial! Do not be apprehensive about the future. You make use of the present; grow in strength and stamina; have peace established within and render service in the without; add to the quota of knowledge; love humanity by loving some members of it, but loving in a true sense—thus make yourself invulnerable. Just as the physical body grows to its full height, so also our astral body has to grow to *its* full stature, which does not mean perfection, but it does mean bringing out to the full all our Karmic possibilities. Once that is done the creative Brahma aspect changes and we have to sustain the Vishnu aspect. Use and enhance the spiritual stamina, *i.e.*, knowledge and love. So you see, you have to grow; you have to bring forth what is slumbering. In doing so you will meet your *natural, i.e., prakritic* tests and trials. So, you have nothing to fear; but you have to be watchful. “He who is humble need fear no fall,” says *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (did you ever read that? A wonderful book!). You have humility and you are working at your life in secrecy and silence. Your chosen line, thanks especially to U.L.T. principles, enables you to serve in silence, to pour out your devotion in secret. Keep it up, dear neophyte. In the Movement of the Great Lodge of Masters there are struggles always and so also strifes. We have to learn to hold grimly on. Not tomorrow but today:

Lord, for tomorrow and its needs I do not pray:

Keep me, my God, from stain of sin, just for today:

Let me no wrong or idle word unthinking say:

Set thou a seal upon my lips, just for today.

So work on and watch—confident, hopeful, and banish apprehension. You will get through.

Faith and devotion to the Great and Blessed Holy Ones mean that we are unfolding strength and serenity of the mind. Our ideation of and about Them implies keeping company with Them, however indirectly. To forget Them from time to time, in the incidents of the day and the events which occur from hour to hour, means that we are weak to that extent. But we will be tried. Trials and tests must come and later temptations also. This force of temptation is another big subject. There are outer and inner aspects to all trials, tests and temptation. “Great Sifter is the name of the Heart Doctrine.” The sifting process of Karma takes new aspects as man aspires to be a chela, studies for self-improvement and says, “Let me be tried.” Unselfishness is the protector against temptation and we must resolve never to be overthrown by doubt or by despair. It is best to go on watchfully, hour by hour, and not have anxiety. If you read pp. 68- 69 of the *Voice of the Silence* about every failure being a success, you will recognize that we know of no failure. We will fight on. Mother Nature is mercy incarnate and the Great Ones are embodiments of Wisdom. Our service of Them and Their Cause will never be forgotten by Them. So go on with faith in the Inner Ruler and in Them.

People do not recognize tests and opportunities when they come. The preliminary step is a correct understanding of Karma. People’s scientific and religious training dies hard. Bias and prejudice and superstitions persist. Self-induction is not understood. In this as in all else one has to begin with one’s own self. We, each one of us, must live undaunted by our limitation or by adverse talk of friends and kin. We are nervous about added labour and especially a new responsibility. We have to make sure that the new line of activity is pure from the motive point of view and is executed unselfishly, with no axe of our personal nature to grind. A proper understanding of Karma would rid us of our fears. Especially for aspirants and practising aspirants like you there need be no nervousness about the future. You may not be able, at this hour, to act up to all you say, but you are saying it. Affirmation in words carries its own potential

force. Our thoughts when articulated are objectivized. We see them and the incentive to act arises. Look at the definition of the *Shila* virtue with a penetrating gaze.

Well, this is your opportunity to face defeat, not only gracefully on the outer plane, but to turn the evil to good account, for your Ego’s real benefit. There *is*, of course, a lesson for you in this defeat or set-back and that learnt the defeat must turn into victory. Look for the real reason of this event. It is a precipitation and will bring out of you real good if you calmly ponder over it in the silent sanctuary of your own heart. A greater humility will be born of a dispassionate meditation on this defeat. Humility is a grand *Shakti*, and, while greatly regretting your defeats, I for one hope that you will lead your personality to a deeper realization of the nature of this *Shakti*. Always count on the forces of test and trial to intervene. Do your duty, brighten your conscience, persist in feeling devotion to the Holy and Enlightened Lords, and things are bound to succeed though seeming failures show themselves.

So, do not be dejected. This is an Arjuna’s experience. Remember you are preparing yourself for the Service of the Blessed Masters. Nothing less than your very best in health of body, purity of mind, cleanliness in conduct, spiritual energization, all the time, has to be offered. Masters “try to make the best of the worst” and “we never whine over the inevitable.”

(To be continued)

PRAYER is often a temptation to bank on a miracle of God instead of on a moral issue, *i.e.*, it is much easier to ask God to do my work than it is to do it myself. Until we are disciplined properly, we will always be inclined to bank on God’s miracles and refuse to do the moral thing ourselves. It is our job, and it will never be done unless we do it.

—OSWALD CHAMBERS

SUICIDE—SOME REFLECTIONS

II

IF A PERSON committing suicide is responsible for disturbing harmony, then are we all not responsible for his suicide? We say that if there is a criminal, a murderer or a suicide, we are responsible for that person because just as there is individual karma, there is also collective karma. Since we are connected on the inner planes of our being, we are responsible for the total situation as we find it in a family, society and a nation. Even in the present, we are giving certain impulses to others, when we encourage in us the tendency to run away from the situation or contemplate suicide. It is true that we have created such a society, in which there are so many allurements, there are so many material things which attract people to buy them. We know how to arouse desire but we do not know how to help them to fulfil those desires, and therefore there are crimes and if not that, then there is taking of loans and living beyond one's means, and so on. We, as individuals, and also as collective groups are identified with name, fame, position, power, money or success, and if any of these are gone, we think we have ceased to exist. The other reason for increasing rates of suicide is strained human relationships or too much self-absorption and self-centredness, or plain insensitivity. Often, we are not aware of what is going on in the minds of those near to us, our friends, parents, sisters, brothers and neighbours. If we have concern for them then it is likely that we may become aware of their inner turmoil and have a chance to dissuade that person from taking any extreme step.

Pain needs to be seen from the right perspective. An ordinary person shuns pain, he almost wishes that God should take away the pain, and bring in pleasure, like a magician making things appear and disappear with a magic wand. Growth involves change, and there can be no change for the better, without proportionate suffering. But "growth does not depend on the *amount* of pain or pleasure that is endured, but on our *attitude of mind* towards all that may

meet us on life's journey," writes Mr. Judge. We can learn to experience pain and pleasure with a detached concern. Ordinarily, we get completely involved in both our pleasurable and painful experiences. However, in order to evaluate the experience, we must become an observer. A person is able to maintain his balance while he is standing or walking because the perpendicular from the centre of gravity of his body falls within the base of support—between his feet. When we bend forward or backwards too much, the perpendicular from the centre of gravity no longer falls within the base of support, and we fall down. Our psychological base of support is our higher nature, which gives us a true sense of "I am I." When there is a sudden surge of emotion, such that it is all centred in one feeling, then our awareness of "I am I" goes awry and falls, so to speak, outside the base of support. We begin to identify ourselves with the thing we are contemplating. Thus, when some calamity happens, such as grief at the loss of a loved one or reputation, dismay and disappointment at not getting something, the soul loses its hold over the divine nature, and temporarily, our sense of "I" is centred in that one emotion, namely, "I have failed," "I lost my reputation," etc.

Suicide is a sin because it defeats nature. Nature exists to give the soul experience and self-consciousness. It is through painful and pleasurable experiences that we evolve, when we are able to draw the lessons that they have to teach. By ending our life, we feel that we are able to escape the pain but actually one is only leaving one well-known house with familiar surroundings to "go into a new place where terror and despair alone have place." It involves a change of mode of existence and "perhaps more active form of misery," says *Through the Gates of Gold*. For, suicide is not death. The one committing suicide is able to put an end only to his physical body. But man is sevenfold. These seven constituents are: Physical Body, Astral Body (*Linga Sarira*), Life (*Prana*), Desire (*Kama Rupa*), Mind (*Manas*), Wisdom (*Buddhi*) and the Higher Self (*Atma*).

The death of the physical body marks the "first death," but the

process of death continues in *Kama loka*, the purgatory of the Christians, wherein there is a separation of the astral body, desire nature and lower mind from the higher trinity of *Atma-Buddhi-Manas* or the Real Man, which goes to *devachan*, *swarga* or paradise, after the separation. This is termed as “second death.” After the separation from the Real Man, the astral body, desire nature and the lower mind integrate with each other to form an entity, called *Kama rupa* or the *Desire body*. This Desire body is akin to the “soiled garments,” thrown away by the Real Man while going to *devachan* and hence our ancestors termed it Satan or Devil. It is variously termed *bhuta*, *pisacha* in India, and as spook or ghost in the West.

The separation of the lower principles from the higher is comparatively quicker in case of natural death. During life, these principles are bound together by a power of cohesion, which begins to weaken as death approaches. Hence, natural death has been compared to the falling of a ripe leaf or a fruit from a tree. It appears that as the time of death comes near, there is normal destruction of the cohesive force which holds together the lower and higher principles. Thus, for instance, we read that in case of natural death a good clairvoyant would be able to see disintegration or breaking of the astral body, at least two years in advance. In the case of an averagely good person dying a natural death, after the physical separates from the other principles, the Real Man almost immediately releases the Kamic body and enters practically at once into a *Devachanic* state.

But in case of violent or unnatural death such as suicide, death by accident or murder or that of an executed criminal, the cohesive force holding together the remaining principles has not come to a point of natural destruction, and hence such a person enters the *Kama loka* state, only partly dead. If the person committed suicide at the age of thirty, and if the natural life span was of seventy years, then minus the physical body, the partly dead person waits in *Kama loka* for the remaining period of forty years, during which nature slowly

brings about the separation, and the personal man, mostly in case of suicides and executed criminals, being conscious, has to suffer and feel the pain. Thus, many years of the lifetime of an Ego are wasted in case of unnatural death.

Moreover, the state of the ego in *Kama loka* depends upon the quality of life led on earth. Some suffer during their stay in *Kama loka* while others may remain in a dreamy state. “The suicide has cut himself off on one side from the body and life which were necessary for his experience and evolution, and on the other, from his Spirit [Real Man], his guide,” writes Mr. Judge. He is composed of the astral body, informed and inflamed by desires, and also a portion of his mind, so that he can think and perceive. Whereas, he was familiar with the earthly life and surroundings, he is completely unfamiliar with his surroundings in *Kama loka* plane or purgatory, and does not know how to use the forces of that plane, without the guidance of his Higher nature or Real Man, in case of suicides.

However, for those dying in an accident, if they are *good and pure*, then in their case, the lower and the higher principles are mutually attracted, and so to speak, the lower remains under the protection of the Higher, divine nature. “They fall into a state of quiet slumber, a sleep full of rosy dreams, during which they have no recollection of the accident, but move and live among their familiar friends and scenes until their natural life-term is finished.” However, in the case of those who are wicked and impure, they suffer the tortures of a horrible nightmare. The person, whether good or bad, dying in an accident is a victim and irresponsible for his death, even though the death was the result of some past karma. In this case, the person or *personal* Ego did not deliberately do anything to end life.

Such is not the case of a person, who commits suicide. In his case, although the higher nature is not completely separated from the lower, there is a gulf between them, so that communication will not take place. These higher principles will remain passive and negative. It appears that *Kama rupa* of a suicide is more likely to be

drawn to séance rooms, where there is communication with the dead, though not *all* of them are drawn to séance rooms. There are exceptions to every rule. Thus, for instance, the one who ends his life in a fit of temporary insanity, is *not* a suicide, and he is not left a prey “to the temptations of the *Kama loka*, but falls asleep like any other victim.” (*The Path*, November 1889)

Those who commit suicide, consciously and deliberately, are alive and awake in *Kama loka* or plane of desire, with all their cravings and desires that were experienced during earth life, but find that they do not have a body through which these can be enjoyed or satisfied. Such a suicide continually repeats mentally, the act by which he or she brought an end to his life. Some of them try to project into the minds of those on earth, who are sensitive and susceptible, the thoughts and pictures of suicide that they had committed, and thus influence the minds of such people on earth to likewise commit suicide. They also are able to see the people and places they have left behind but are not able to communicate with them. Thus, in their case suicide has not only failed to help them to escape their suffering but has intensified it. It should therefore be considered how far it is proper to commit suicide to escape the sorrows and difficulties of the world, or to kill others for some reason.

Can we say that the person, committing suicide creates one more wrong tendency, which he or she will have to overcome some day, or else they are likely to continue to repeat that error? We might say that a suicide seems to add to his psychic make up the tendency of *escapism*, in a wrong way. It is quite all right for a person, to find out legitimate ways and means of coming out of a situation, such as taking divorce if the person is a victim of domestic violence, or preparing oneself to hear taunts of other people if one has failed in an exam, etc. Karma puts us in a situation, but does not hold us there. We are not expected to remain poor, in the state of disease, or grave difficulties, saying, “it is my fate,” but exert to change the situation, and come out of it.

Is it wrong to try communicating with such beings by their loved

ones? Suicides and victims of accidents, sometimes though *rarely*, can communicate with us through mediums. During this period of waiting, for their normal life-span to come to an end, before going to *Devachan*, *the less they are disturbed the better it is for them*. Every attempt to communicate with the dead drags them back into the world of the living and tempts them to assuage their thirst for life. Those who meet with accidental death, but were good and pure during life, are not likely to get disturbed, as they remain outside the regions of this earth-life and its attractions. Such entities remain in a dreamless sleep or plunged in a slumber full of golden visions. Though normally such shades are not drawn to the séance rooms, the *possibility* is always there. Tired of waiting and thirsting for life, amusements, and vanity, they may be drawn to the séance room—like an idle young man, tempted to visit a pub. Such communications are disastrous for the departed entity as well as those on earth. It is said that further disaster may overtake the shells of suicides and victims of accidental death when their Karma is such that they are attracted to mediums. Assisted by the medium, they develop a fierce thirst for life, which in turn produces a new set of *skandhas*—tendencies and passions far worse than those belonging to the body they lost at physical death. When they thus live an artificial life, they *overload their Karma*.

The séance room atmosphere is described as diffused with moral poison which affects the mind of all those who are present. For those who have lost their dear ones, there is solace in the fact that every night we communicate with our dear-departed ones, in a deep sleep state, but we are not always able to bring back the memory.

The aim of Theosophy is to put before people the right ideas. It is true that contrasted with the physical help, which when given, show definite results, the work of giving the right ideas, may not show any tangible result but works silently and effectively to bring about change in man for lasting benefit. And yet, as the *Gita* says: “Let, then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event. Do not be incited to actions by the hope of their reward.”

(*Concluded*)

CIVILIZATIONAL IDEALS

THE IDEA of civilization is complex because it is constituted by human beings whose nature is complex. No single definition encompasses all that it connotes. It comes from the root word “citizen” (*civis*) and “city” (*civitas*). A citizen is an individual who is a natural or domiciled member of a city, and it extends to a country as a whole consisting of many cities, called urban, as well as to the much larger parts of the country beyond towns and cities, denominated as rural. A civilization may be called a large body of people who have common ethnic or racial descent, share a common history, culture, and language or languages, political and economic system, traditions, and customs, which gives it a distinct national identity.

How and when did civilization originate is a question on which there are differing views. The general idea among anthropologists and social scientists of the Western schools of thought is that humans evolved from the animal kingdom and at a certain stage of development diverged into *homo sapiens* from an ancestor common to ape and man. The consensus among anthropologists is that the primitive man began his career some two or three million years back as a savage in the stone age as a nomadic hunter-gatherer and gradually settled down, first as pastoral people, and then as an agrarian society, and finally progressed to be a refined city dweller. Industrialized urban economy perfected in mechanical arts is considered at the present time to be the index of the highest civilization. Such a conception of civilization is the logical outcome of the premise that physical matter is the basis of human life which evolved from the animal world, and that this evolutionary progression has neither design nor purpose. Holding thus to materialistic conception, ignoring the deific potentialities latent in man, our civilization has no worthier ideal than the acquisition of material wealth and luxuries, and intellectual development devoted to that end.

Ancient Wisdom-Science called Theosophy, postulating the real man to be not merely a physical creature but a spiritual being who is undergoing experiences in embodied existence for a great purpose, points to a loftier and nobler ideal of civilization. It teaches Monadic evolution in conjunction with the physical and Manasic (Intellectual) evolution which culminates into conscious divinity through Karmic and cyclic law.

Man did not begin his career on earth as a savage, but as a spiritual being, as a Monad incarnate in physical body evolved by the Lunar divinities, and then as thinking or Manasic being, when the Solar divinities lit up the principle of mind, thus linking the animal body below and the divine Monad above. Man, then, became aware of his divinity, communed with his celestial divine progenitors, and at the same time felt himself under the sway of the animal nature of his incarnate life. Thus, man was born on earth as a thinking spiritual being. The portion of humanity which conquered and subjugated the physical and psychic principles to his Divine Self became Adepts and joined the gods. The other portions who lost the battle between the higher and the lower natures of their being lost the Wisdom Eye, which they could regain only through initiation into Mysteries. (*S.D.*, II, 272)

We learn that the first civilizations began with the advent of divine dynasties, the perfected men from prior Manvantaras who watched over the childhood of humanity. Some portions of mankind took to nomadic and patriarchal life, and, others, by their Karma, were helped by divine intelligence, and they built cities and cultivated arts and sciences, while some, by Karmic provision, and unequal development, had been primitive savages. Civilization and savagery coexisted on earth from the beginning.

“Nevertheless, and civilization notwithstanding, while their pastoral brethren enjoyed wondrous powers as their birthright, they, the builders [of cities], could now obtain theirs only gradually; even these being generally used for power over physical nature and selfish and unholy purposes. Civilization has ever developed the physical

and the intellectual at the cost of the psychic and spiritual.” (*ibid.*, 318-319)

This trend is evident even today. Rural people who are not much exposed to the sophistication of urban ethos are more true to nature in their simple and rustic ways of life; unspoiled by modern education devoted as it is to intellectual development at the expense of the moral and the spiritual, the simpler rural people preserve in their folklore and beliefs many occult truths which the skeptical educated would perhaps dismiss as superstition. The apparent refinement and sophistication of the urban culture conceal vices of human nature.

Civilization needs necessarily not be evil. It depends on the ideal it pursues. Good and evil are relative and are not outside of us but are reckoned by the effects our thoughts and actions produce—whether they are productive of harmony or discord. If material nature predominates in man his spiritual nature is eclipsed, and, consequently, the object of human existence will be the pursuit of material concerns alone, as is the case with our modern civilization. Nations will pursue their national interest at any cost. Balancing the rivalries of economic and strategic interests of powerful nations through trade agreements and military alliances will characterize the tenor of international relations which at any time might disrupt through avarice and ambition leading to catastrophic wars and bloody revolutions. Social inequality and injustice will reign. Nature becomes unfriendly to man, giving him back in exact measure as he acted towards her through such catastrophes as climate change brought on by man’s irresponsible actions.

If, on the other hand, the spiritual nature of man predominates over the terrestrial animal self, Spiritual Wisdom and ethical considerations will be the ruling principle guiding the intellect. Social harmony, international co-operation, equity, and justice will prevail, and nature becomes friendly to man. This is the one and the only road to individual happiness, social well-being, and world peace. Civilization must produce spiritual fruit. Else all the material progress and innovations made come to naught.

Albert Schweitzer in his work, *The philosophy of civilization*, observes that the world crisis was from losing the ethical idea of civilization. “The sum total of all progress made by man in every sphere of action and from every point of view in so far as the progress helps towards the spiritual perfection of individuals as the progress of progress.” This indeed is the keynote of true progress, “Progress of progress,” the hallmark of a great civilization which leaves behind, when it passes away at the end of its cycle, spiritual pabulum, inspiration, and an ideal for posterity to emulate. The priceless spiritual culture of ancient India holds out even in this dark cycle true knowledge and the sublime ideal of human perfection. For ancient Greece it was Real Knowledge—the pursuit of “the knowledge of the *really existing*, in opposition to mere seeming [objects of perception]; of the *always existing*, in opposition to the transitory; and of that which exists *permanently*, in opposition to that which waxes, wanes, and is developed and destroyed alternately”—which was the object of life and the ideal of civilization (*S.D.*, II, 555). Platonic philosophy continues undiminished to this day to inspire modern-day thinkers, one of whom said that disquisitions of modern thinkers and philosophers are but mere footnotes to Plato.

True knowledge is perception of the true Self, of the verity of the universal brotherhood of humanity, and of the laws of Karma and Reincarnation. If knowledge and conviction are rooted in us that no man can hurt us if we have no thoughts of hurting him; that no man can live to unselfishly benefit his fellowmen, full of goodwill to all and ill-will to none, without his own life becoming filled with happiness and peace, then will come into being a new world order in which nations would work in union and harmony for mutual benefit and for the good of all. It is through individuals striving towards the ideal of human perfection, to strive to bridge the chasm between the ideal human perfection and the practical mundane life that the national and the world reform can ever come about, as Theosophy teaches that the Karma of every individual has an effect on the destiny of the race.

In the article, “The Fall of Ideals” H.P.B. writes: “Yes; there are still men, who, notwithstanding the present chaotic condition of the moral world, and the sorry *debris* of the best human ideals, still persist in believing and teaching that the now *ideal* human perfection is no dream, but a law of divine nature; and that, had Mankind to wait even millions of years, still it must some day reach it and rebecome *a race of gods*.”

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RIGHT EFFORT

MEN, even the most slothful of them, constantly make effort. The act and the endeavour begin at birth. They will end only at death. The child strives to familiarize itself with the functions of its senses and organs. The young man puts in labour to train himself in the art of acquiring a keen intellect. The man of mature age looks back over his past performances and perchance tries to give a wholly different orientation to life. At each such effort his endeavours are centred on himself. The reasoning animal usually seeks its own felicity. This is endeavour in one of its aspects—one with which at any rate all human beings are familiar.

But there are motives for endeavour which do not necessarily revolve round oneself. The fanatic will go through torture and smile at it for what he considers to be right; he sacrifices his own well-being, prostrates and even immolates himself for unworthy causes and for the propagation of false beliefs and fragile ideologies. In such modes of endeavour, there is an underlying sacrifice—a readiness to suffer torture and willingness to face death through undreamt of agonies. To the average man the act may appear laudable. To the thinker, it but portrays a waste and a sacrilege, because the goal aimed at and the means adopted are both of them a denial of universal brotherhood and of the true essence of charity. Such is yet another aspect of endeavour and definitely the more dangerous, since it seeks to subjugate human minds, to liquidate those who are not of one’s fold, and to divide humanity into mutually warring camps. For such, Divinity is a mere word and Brotherhood is invoked in hypocrisy.

There is yet another aspect of endeavour which is relatively harmless. There are men who succumb to the urge to do good and rush into it without acquiring the necessary expertise. Their ideas of goodness are coloured by the tints of a limited consciousness. Their concepts of charity and tolerance wax and wane with their own reactions towards men, matters and things. They judge another’s

necessity by their own limited standards, so that appearances come to be overvalued. They fail because the deeper insight into the hearts of men is not assiduously cultivated. They remain flowers without fragrance, or herbs that have lost the property which medicates and heals.

The resolve to do acts of self-sacrifice, the searching of the right modes by which such acts can be performed as also the proper selecting of those who are to be benefited by the acts, have all to be dwelt upon and consciously as well as cautiously envisaged. Many a hasty heart has rushed in either to keep up appearances, or to climb impressive heights, or even to impress somebody whose pleasure has a value and whose sympathy is the chief desideratum. It is well to remind oneself that, if the motivating force was generated in the regions of the lower mind (which itself is mortal), the effect of the sacrifice will not transcend its source and must under law end up on the perishable side of experience and effect.

Self-effacement and self-sacrifice have their motivations in thought and ideation, so that as the meaning of the “self” expands for the student, he finds that within him there are distinct layers of consciousness which can motivate sacrifice. But whatever be the stratum and source of energization, sacrifice becomes something more than the mere act of offering. It connotes an abnegation or a surrender of rights, rewards and dignities. It serves the weaker soul and strengthens and invigorates it to carry on its quest of the true, the good and the beautiful. Sacrifice is seemingly fraught with pain, yet is pleasurable. It is denuding oneself of something that is dear, and yet finds its moments of fulfilment in the joy, the freedom and the solace of another. And this is true even for that sacrifice which is initiated on the lowest plane of consciousness where the objective is to foster and promote human brotherhood. Each of the *Paramitas* needs for its growth and flowering such acts of loving sacrifice as the aspirant can visualize, plan and propel to action from such height of his own Self as he has gained. A selfless desire generated in the lower mind can be a stepping-stone to nobler heights. The inquirer

can become the student, and the student, the practitioner, by constant assiduity in devotion.

To initiate a truly self-sacrificing endeavour it is necessary that the initial preparatory work on oneself be undertaken. It requires, among other things, that the man canalize his time, money and work in the effort to overcome, control and master his own lower nature at all levels of its manifestation. This exercise is to be so undertaken that it does not harden him against those who stumble and fall and fail. It is a duty cast upon him that he fight his own lower nature and yet at the same time be charitable to all those who remain still under the domain of emotions and desires. Until this control is in some measure achieved, it would be risky for him to reach out his hands to help another overcome similar faults and foibles. It is true that in trying to reform himself he is putting in Herculean efforts which to some may appear selfish. But these endeavors become invested with nobility for the reason that the forces that attend them are used to forge those divine weapons which are to be used in the cause of human brotherhood and the elevation of the race. Without this preliminary sacrifice of the self for the Self, no act of redemption is possible. The first act of “martyrdom” which the neophyte undertakes is ridicule and calumny and torture which he consciously invites when he tries to disentangle himself from his dark garments of illusion and writhes in the struggle to stifle the voice of the flesh.

When after great effort and untold suffering the man attains an equilibrium that no personal equation can shake, then is he fit to breathe the new atmosphere and view the world and himself from a higher eminence. He has climbed a plateau of thought and the view and perspective of once familiar sights assume new and significant dimensions. Friends and enemies, elders and erstwhile teachers, the favoured and the oppressed, are seen from a radically new angle and for the first time given appropriate values. The norms by which the higher mind judges are different.

It is only when the state of selflessness is attained (the higher mind can function and come into its own in such a state only) that

the aspirant can invest his work with a new and hitherto unaccustomed force. To help one's neighbour on to the right path is laudable. But it is often painful to realize that help given in moments when unknowingly the lower mind is in control produces results which neither bless the one nor redound to the credit of the other.

Since for long years the neophyte has to continue to struggle against his own lower nature, it is but natural that he tries to seek avenues of Theosophical endeavours suited to his efforts as a beginner. If he has benefited aught from the philosophy, it becomes his act of gratitude to pass on the knowledge to those who are in need of it. If this duty is faithfully performed, then the conjoint efforts of the whole body of students will be effective enough to check the progress of materialism, the increase of dangerous self-indulgence and the tendency of the many toward spiritual suicide. A concerted unselfish effort does not merely add up to a sum of the effort of each individual unit. Altruism is a tremendous force and once aroused in the consciousness of the masses is strong enough to shake continents. Such impersonal forces for good are powerless unless suitable channels in human material are made available for their expression. He who would be of the band of self-sacrificing volunteers has to take extra care that neither by word, act, thought or feeling he pushes a fellow-worker out of the charmed circle, or plants in his mind a seedling of doubt and despair. "Learn that you may teach, acquire spiritual knowledge and strength that the weak may lean upon you, and the sorrowing victims of ignorance learn from you the cause and remedy of their pain," was the advice given by a Master to a devoted pupil.

Finally, for the one in whose heart aspiration marks the beat, the following words of the Master will be found useful: "The degree of success or failure are the landmarks the Masters have to follow, as they will constitute the barriers placed with your own hands between yourselves and those whom you have asked to be your teachers. The nearer your approach to the goal contemplated—the shorter the distance between the student and the Master."

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

How important is questioning? It appears that questioning can help you to not only understand yourself and your life, but also empower you to emerge a victor rather than a victim. Tony Robbins goes to the extent of saying that the quality of your life is determined by the quality of the questions you ask. If we wish to solve a problem, we should learn to ask the right questions. The author, Anouchka Blessed says that as a student she asked, "Why am I so hopeless in maths?" and it helped her to improve herself in that subject. As a grown-up person she asked, "Why do I keep attracting the wrong guys?" The process of finding the answer revealed that "others" were not at fault, nor could she blame the situation, but that she was herself responsible for all the failed relationships. At the end of rigorous questioning and honest answering one becomes clear as to who is responsible for a given situation. When we are ready to accept our responsibility, it enables us to move through difficult situations and initiate personal change. "When you take radical responsibility, you stop blaming others—your parents, careless drivers, the tax system, politics, your ex-partner, your nasty-boss, or even your negligent colleagues, your inconsiderate neighbours."

Taking responsibility does not mean indulging in self-reproach for all our past mistakes and faults, saying, "Why do I always put myself in such situations? Why am I so bad at judging people?" but demands a certain sophistication and balance. It involves the ability to change every circumstance of life into an opportunity for growth, so that "responsibility" becomes "response-ability" or the skill of responding instead of reacting. The process involves self-enquiry, putting questions to one's inner self and bringing about the necessary changes within, which can then reflect outside. The self-enquiry may consist of crucial questions, such as, "How am I contributing to my happiness or unhappiness?" "What do I truly desire from my life?" etc., so that ultimately they enable us not only to learn but to

turn the situation to our advantage, and help us emerge a victor, writes Anouchka Blessed, who works as a transformational coach. (*Life Positive*, September 2021)

Self-enquiry leads to self-mastery. Questioning is one of the methods by which one can obtain spiritual knowledge, teaches the *Gita*. But we must know what to ask and when to ask. Self-study and self-reliance would help us cultivate intuition. “Man, Know Thyself,” says the Delphic Oracle, and that knowledge depends upon obtaining the right answer to the question, “Who am I?” Getting an answer to such metaphysical questions is an ongoing quest. Mr. Judge says that we must not get overshadowed by scriptures or any authority, and leave aside the teachings we do not understand as *fruit not yet ripe* because unripe fruits get ripe in the course of time, as we rise in our level of perception.

We must avoid asking unnecessary questions. By unnecessary questions we make another person drag his mind to a mundane level and waste his vitality. Getting a ready answer is like a miner giving a nugget of gold and that is all we get at that time. But when we make an effort, or dig out the knowledge, we drag out of our mind rocks and debris and thus become aware of our thought processes and contents of our mind—useful and useless, says Mr. Judge. Our questions must arise from the heart, which is the result of having undergone suffering or having made an application of the principles.

Theosophy teaches that our race as a whole is passing through a transition period, wherein the Mind is being developed more and more till we reach the stage of complete development of Mind. The race mind is changing by enlargement as dogmatism is being replaced by the “age of inquiry.” These inquiries will grow louder, year by year, and the answers will be required to satisfy the mind as it grows, until at last all dogmatism will end, and those who will overcome the animal nature will attain to perfection, writes Mr. Judge.

In the Pythagorean School, *Akoustikoi* or Hearers (*Shravakas*) were allowed after a period to become *Asketai* (*Shramanas*),

Practitioners. In the Pythagorean School initially, the person was not even allowed to ask questions, but only listen. We see the same at our Theosophical Meetings. Those who attend the meetings with earnestness, move on from being listeners to the stage where they now question. That is because the person sees the importance of questioning, not only the philosophy, but also his own basis of thought and does not mind their stability crumbling.

According to a study published in the American journal *Science*, recent research shows that humans settled in North America long before the last Ice Age. Footprints dating back 23,000 years have been discovered. The footprints were left in mud on the banks of a long-since dried up lake, which is now part of a New Mexico desert. “Sediment filled the indentations and hardened into rock, protecting evidence of our ancient relatives, and giving scientists a detailed insight into their lives.” The number of footprints belonging to teenagers and children is greater than large adult footprints, probably because adults might have been engaged in skilled tasks while the teenagers and children were left with the work of fetching and carrying. Researchers also found tracks left by mammoths, prehistoric wolves, and giant sloths, which appear to have existed at the time when humans visited the lake.

The Americas were the last continent to be reached by humanity, and for long it is held that settlers came to North America from eastern Siberia, across the land bridge which is today’s Bering Strait. Archaeological evidence shows that there was a settlement, some 13,500 years old, associated with Clovis culture, and it is considered to be the forerunner of groups that became known as Native Americans. But new discoveries have pushed back the date of the first settlements. (*The Times of India*, September 25, 2021, courtesy AFP)

In the article, “Cyclic Impression and Return and our Evolution,” Mr. Judge speaks about America, as we know now, being called

“New World,” to which people from Europe, known as “Old World” came and settled. But he says that in this America, many years ago, there was a glorious civilization, and that civilization must have been even before the Egyptian civilization. This civilization disappeared, and the land of America was left uninhabited for many thousands of years. Then it was discovered by the Europeans.

“The development of the American nation has a mysterious but potent connection with the wonderful past of the Atlanteans,” writes Mr. Judge in *Echoes From the Orient*. In the article, “Sources of Early American Civilization,” that appeared in *Theosophy* magazine (October 1927), we read that civilizations of Persia, China and Egypt are rooted in the Atlantean Race. We feel that American history began with the discovery of America by Columbus. It is, in fact, called New World. But geologically this New World is older than Europe, “the continent having risen from the ocean bed during the palmy days of Atlantis, which began to sink millions of years ago. Does it seem probable that any land would remain uninhabited for millions of years?”

In the same article, we read that the scientists accept the existence of the continents of Lemuria and Atlantis and that there was a connection between these continents and America. People from these continents could have migrated to the American continent. In fact, the Mayas and the Toltecs of Central America speak of their ancestors coming from the East. Likewise, Peruvians speak of their ancestors coming from the South. We are reminded that some portion of Lemuria was in the Antarctic region, while the remaining portion could well have been adjacent to the Southernmost portion of South America. Also, there are cyclopean structures found on the American continent just like those found on Easter Island, showing that those giants might have existed on the American continent.

It is also believed that early America was connected with ancient Aryavarta. In the Hindu works, America is referred to as Patala or antipodes. Arjuna is supposed to have gone to Patala and married the daughter (Ullupi) of one of the Nagas, or Serpents of Wisdom.

The Fourth or Atlantean Race became “black with sin” and this portion of humanity was gradually transformed into red-yellow, of whom the Red Indians and the Mongolians are descendants (*S.D.*, II, 250). The article points out that “Arjuna and the race of Nagas must have been an Aryan infusion among a people which in course of time became a distinct type—Fourth Race Americans, known by the general name now of Red Indians.”

Why we are imperfect judges and how we can fix that problem. We often see that two people that have committed an identical crime, their punishments differ significantly. For one person it is probation, and for the other, it is many years of imprisonment. The judgment might be influenced by factors such as the mood of the judge, or simply the weather condition, writes Devon Frye.

Such unwanted variability in judgments in the justice system is termed “noise.” Researchers Daniel Kahneman, Oliver Sibony and Cass Sunstein explore in the book, *Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment*, the consequences of “noise” and how to reduce it so as to arrive at fairer decisions.

They point out that apart from the legal system, “noise” is present in many other fields, that involve judgment, and where there is no “right” answer. For instance, it is present when doctors make diagnoses or when a social worker has to decide whether to put the child in foster care, and so on. Such “noise” can be on account of cognitive biases or owing to confirmation bias or the halo effect. Each of these biases tends to pull the decision in a different direction. The other source of “noise” is differences in individual values, and that tends to make one person more lenient and the other person a bit strict and harsh. “The human cost of a noisy justice system is perhaps incalculable. But for organizations, noise often comes with a measurable economic cost.”

It is possible to reduce “noise,” by assessing separate elements. Thus, for instance, while recruiting a candidate for a job, he can be

assessed first, for his problem-solving ability, his inter-personal strengths, etc., before reaching a decision. “An intuitive judgment made after evaluating each element separately is often more valid than one made at the beginning,” says Kahneman. (*Psychology Today*, May 2021)

People in certain professions develop an instinctive cautiousness and readiness by training and habit. People who are expected to respond during emergencies, like firemen, security officers, surgeons—who are expected to make a quick or instant decisions will have no time to evaluate different options. They feel something familiar that calls up the memory of earlier experiences, and respond accordingly. Their judgment is based on a hunch or gut feeling. When the mind works in conjunction with spiritual nature, it is creative or intuitive mind, guided from within to make the right choice. If our mind is not completely receptive to the guidance from the divine nature, then we would experience what is known as a *hunch*, which is partial reception on part of *manas*. Some of us have gut feelings or a hunch as to the right course of action, even though we are not able to explain why. We just *know*.

Psychologically, false perceptions could arise due to our biases. Each one of us carries with himself the background of his culture, education, religion, and tends to look at the world and people through bits of these coloured glasses. Our judgments, more often than not, are biased. Our faulty perception or illusion could be because of the limitations of our senses or it could be the result of false conceptions, inherent in our built-up, carried from the past. To correctly judge mind must be prepared, before it can receive the light of higher nature. It could be prepared by observation, experiments, analysis and use of intellect. The mind must also be purified. It has been compared to a mirror, which gathers dust of desires, attachment, false ideas, and biases, which we need to clean.