

Vol. 15

October 2023

Rs. 3/-

No. 6

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

“MAN, KNOW THYSELF”	3
FOOD FOR THOUGHT	11
THE WISH HOUSE	
THE RIGHT TIME	17
EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS	20
DEVACHAN—II	
PASSIVE RESISTANCE	23
REPENTANCE AND ATONEMENT	29
IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY	32

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सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 15, No. 6

October 17, 2023

“MAN, KNOW THYSELF”

“KNOW thyself” is a philosophical maxim, inscribed upon the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. It has been attributed to the “Seven Sages of Greece” or to the God Apollo. Alternatively, it is considered to be the advice or prophecy spoken by the Delphic oracle and thus represents the wisdom of the God Apollo. An oracle means a priest or priestess acting as a medium, through whom advice or prophecy was sought from gods. However, this maxim has been variously analysed and interpreted. To begin with, the principal meaning of the phrase was, “know your limits” in the sense of having limited abilities and the knowledge of one’s mortality. Plato, however, interpreted the maxim to mean “know your soul.” During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the phrase acquired several new associations. It was compared with one of the Hindu *Mahavakyas* or Great Sayings, “*tat tvam asi*” or “That Thou Art” because it indicates that each individual entity in the universe is in its essential nature, *Atman*, the true Self; the personality being an illusion. After Plato, the knowledge of the soul was more specifically equated with the knowledge of one’s own character, so the maxim came to imply “know your faults.”

Among these diverse opinions, we can come to a correct understanding if we are able to interpret the term “self.” There are two selves in man, which the *Mundaka Upanishad* describes as: “Two birds, inseparable companions, perch on the same tree. Of these two, one eats the fruit (suffers and enjoys); the other looks on

“MAN, KNOW THYSELF”

without eating.” The first bird is our personal self, feeding on the pleasures and pains of this world, the other is the Universal Self, silently witnessing all. *Atman* or Higher Self is described as inseparable from the Universal ONE SELF, like the sunbeam is inseparable from sunlight. *Buddhi*, *Manas*, body, etc., are various vehicles (*upadhi*) which reflect the light of *Atman*, giving rise to the sense of self. T. Subba Row, in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, gives an illustration. When the sun is reflected by a mirror, and the rays reflected by the mirror fall upon a polished metallic plate, and these rays reflected from the plate in turn fall upon the wall, three different images of the sun are created. We may compare the mirror to *Karana-sarira* (*Buddhi-Manas*), the metallic plate to the astral body, and the wall to the physical body. In each case, the *bimbam* or reflected image that is formed is for the time being considered as the self. The reflected image in the astral body gives the idea of self apart from the physical body, and the one formed in *Karana-sarira* gives rise to the prominent form of individuality. The lustre of these reflected images is not the same and if we compare this lustre to man’s knowledge, then we see that it grows feebler and feebler as the reflection is transferred from a clear *upadhi* to the one less clear, till we come to the physical body. Our knowledge depends upon the condition of the *upadhi*. The image on a clear surface of water may be disturbed or even made invisible by the motion of the water, so also by our passions and emotions we may make the image of our true self disturbed and distorted in appearance, and even make it so indistinct as to be altogether unable to perceive its light. (pp. 31-32)

It is the higher mind which enables us to say “I am I” and in conjunction with *Atma-Buddhi*, becomes the *Individuality* or Reincarnating Ego or “Hidden Self.” It is termed as the “Soul” and “Perceiver” by Patanjali which is not dependent on body and brain but works through and feels sublunary things through its *alter-ego* the (lower) mind. At every rebirth, the Higher Manas sends out a Ray to function through the body and this ray may be called the

“MAN, KNOW THYSELF”

“incarnated mind.” The incarnated mind, functioning through the body, is in essence, identical with the Higher, Divine Mind, but when it incarnates it forgets its divine origin and becomes of dual nature. The incarnated mind can choose to turn towards the higher, divine aspect or gravitate towards *Kama* or passions and desires. It is this incarnated mind which identifies itself with the body, ideas, desires, possessions, emotions, etc. which forms our complex sense of “I” which is ever-changing and transitory. It is our personal “I” or personal self.

The word “identity” is derived from the Latin *idem ficare*, which means “to make the same as ‘I.’” Thus, to begin with, our body, feelings or our possessions are not “I.” But as we grow, we tend to equate them or associate them with “I.” We identify ourselves with the ever-changing perishable body, with its conditions and relations, which are also ever-changing. We say, “I am happy, or I am sad,” “I am sick, or I am well.” These expressions are due to the self-identifying attachment to some form or conditions which are changing. We were likewise attached to other form and conditions in the past, and in the future will be attached to another set of form and conditions. But through all these conditions and forms, which are changing continually, there is that in us, the “I,” which has remained unchanged and unchanging. “If we can grasp this idea and hold to it, we will have taken first step towards right knowledge and freedom,” writes Mr. Crosbie. (*Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita*, pp. 189-90)

The maxim “Know Thyself” is asking us to be aware of and understand two selves—lower and higher or Personality and Individuality, to have a balanced view of oneself. Each one of us is “limited” in our personality, but each of us possesses unlimited potentiality which flows from our Higher Self. How shall we be proud, when we are so small? How dare we be humble when we are so great? In both, we blaspheme. But between these two extremes there is a place, “neither too high nor too low,” and *there* we may stand calmly, not overshadowed by any man however great, because

“MAN, KNOW THYSELF”

each of us contains potentialities of every other, writes Mr. Judge.

David Hume writes that when an attempt is made to identify the “I” in the “I am” only a conglomeration of thoughts, sensations and wishes are found. But Kant, pondering over the answer of Hume asks, “But who is it that is carrying out this scrutiny?” Whose memory is at work permitting self-identity? Are there not two selves in man? Thoreau replies in the affirmative. He says, “I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which is as it were, really no part of me at all, but a mere spectator sharing no experience but taking note of it. When the play of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of imagination only, as far as he was concerned.” H.P.B. explains that the Ego or Individuality plays, like an actor, many parts, on the stage of life. As the bee collects its honey from every flower, so does our Ego or *Sutratma*, which collects from every personality it incarnates into, the nectar of noble or spiritual qualities, till at last, it has reached the stage of self-conscious godhood, while in the body.

To reach this stage, we need to be less and less identified with the personality and become aware of that aspect in us which is unaffected by praise or blame, adversity or prosperity, and pleasure or pain. In a practice recommended by Mr. Judge, he says: “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.” In order to “know” the Higher Self it becomes necessary to know the lower, personal self. To know the Higher Self is to become IT or to manifest the Light, Power and Wisdom of that Self. Robert Browning puts it beautifully, saying that there is an Inmost Centre in us all, where “Truth” abides in fullness, but wall upon wall of gross flesh hems it in. And “to know,” consists in allowing the divine splendour to escape, and not in trying to make the entry of the light which we think is outside. For this to happen we need to know the lower, personal self and purify it. Hence, “Know Thyself” may be equated with the knowledge of one’s own character, or “know your faults.”

“MAN, KNOW THYSELF”

It is as difficult to know the lower self as it is to know our true Self. “Then there is the lower self, great in its way, and which must first be known. When we first see it, it is like looking into a glove, and for how many incarnations may it not be so? We look inside the glove and there is darkness; then we have to *go inside* and see that, and so on and on,” writes Mr. Judge. There are insidious ways in which personality asserts itself. Mr. Judge cautions us to observe how *each* of us has the habit of pushing ourselves forward, which arises from personality. In a conversation, we must allow the other person to speak about himself and his experiences and when they have finished, we should be able to resist the temptation to tell everything about ourselves, our opinions and experiences. “Try to recollect that you are a very small affair in the world, and that the people around do not value you at all and grieve not when you are absent. Your only true greatness lies in your inner self and it is not desirous of applause of others.” If we follow these directions for a week, we will discover that it is not at all easy—to suppress the personal self—and we will begin to “discover a part of the meaning of the saying, ‘Man, know thyself.’”

We are also advised to follow the injunction “judge not.” When applied to oneself, it is good to remember that progress cannot be made either by self-condemnation or by self-esteem. And yet one of the implications of “know thyself” is “know your faults.” To practice it in the right way, one must cultivate awareness of one’s limitations which can be used to determine the strength of one’s capacities. Becoming aware of one’s weaknesses can lead to humility. When it is combined with the faith in the powers of the Inner Ego, it may result in true calmness which is not disturbed by pain or pleasure. It is very important to become aware of our weaknesses, otherwise we will try to find fault and blame others and our environment, for our failures, missing out on the opportunity to improve ourselves and, in fact, may become sour and bitter in our disposition, and close the door to our inner, Higher Self, the source of peace and wisdom. When we condemn instead of seeing the

“MAN, KNOW THYSELF”

good points and beauty of another’s character, we weaken our soul-perception or the capacity to see things and people correctly, as they really are. Mr. Crosbie writes: “When our lives are ended, what will count? Our defects? Not at all. It will be the efforts we have made to destroy the causes of all defects among our fellow-men.”

Therefore, when one notices any fault in oneself, it is advisable to shift the attention from the personality, the instrument, and remind oneself that one is not body, emotions or intellect. What needs to be done is to place one’s consciousness on Higher Self, and *then* study the instrument in order to find out the true cause of bad habit-forming tendency. One is then able to find a correct way of removing that tendency, slowly and gently, instead of by force. The injunction in the *Voice of the Silence* is: “Restrain by thy Divine thy lower Self, Restrain by the Eternal the Divine.”

The purification of the lower self prepares it to know the Higher Self or experience Self-Realisation. Sri Adi Shankaracharya’s *Nirvana Shatakam* is a work composed of six verses in which he has expressed his own direct experience of the Absolute Bliss of Self-Realisation. As explained in Introduction to *Nirvana Shatakam*, by Swami Tejomayanand, according to Vedanta Philosophy the lower self or the embodied soul is full of impurities (*mala*), distraction (*vikshepa*) and the veiling of ignorance (*ajnana avarana*). To remove impurities of mind one should perform one’s daily duties with dedication, while the worship of the Lord can enable one to overcome disturbance. To remove the veil of ignorance the scriptures advocate practice of *sravana* (listening), *manana* (reflection) and *nididhyasana* (meditation). When there is identification with the Not-Self it leads to the bondage of doership, enjoyership, ego and the various relationships, which in turn produce a karmic bondage. In the six verses of *Nirvana Shatakam* there is a negation of all that is Not-Self, such as, gross body, subtle body, mind, intellect, ego, memory, five organs of perception, five elements, and so on. In each verse, there is repeated affirmation “I am pure Consciousness and eternal Bliss, I am Siva, auspiciousness itself.”

“MAN, KNOW THYSELF”

When the universe grows “I,” and there is the realization that “I am verily that *Brahman*,” it is described as *Samadhi* state, when the higher spiritual consciousness of the Initiate is entirely absorbed in the ONE ESSENCE, which is *Atman*. In *Samadhi* the ascetic loses consciousness of every individuality, including his own. He becomes—the ALL. We are far away from reaching this stage, and yet each one of us “knows” the Higher Self in terms of the guidance received from within, in the form of “Voice of conscience” and Intuition. When the lower mind is receptive, freed from lower desire, we become aware of the presence of the Higher Self in all aspirations of the soul for spiritual things—for truth and righteousness, to lead purer life and to help others. Self-knowledge is the child of loving deeds, teaches the *Voice of the Silence*. Hence, Mr. Judge writes that we advance most rapidly on the path of Self-knowledge “when we stop to help other wayfarers. We receive most when we sacrifice most....We become one with the Supreme most surely when we lose ourselves in work for Humanity.”

Children, ye have not lived, to you it seems
Life is a lovely stalactite of dreams,
Or carnival of careless joys that leap
About your hearts like billows on the deep
In flames of amber and of amethyst.

Children, ye have not lived, ye but exist
Till some resistless hour shall rise and move
Your hearts to wake and hunger after love,
And thirst with passionate longing for the things
That burn your brows with blood-red sufferings.

Till ye have battled with great grief and fears,
And borne the conflict of dream-shattering years,
Wounded with fierce desire and worn with strife,
Children, ye have not lived: for this is life

—SAROJINI NAIDU

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THE WISH HOUSE

THE WISH HOUSE is a short story by Rudyard Kipling that was first published in *MacLean's Magazine*, in October 1924. According to some critics it brings together the ordinary and the Divine. The central idea of the story is how the intense love of a woman makes it possible for her to bear the suffering of someone else. The story begins with a conversation between two old ladies, Mrs. Grace Ashcroft and Mrs. Elizabeth Fettley. "The two had been friends since childhood; but, of late, destiny had separated their meetings by long intervals." Mrs. Ashcroft is a Sussex woman who has retired there, after working on and off as a cook in London since the death of her husband. Both are now grandmothers. They meet over a cup of tea and do some knitting in the sunshine. Mrs. Ashcroft had a long-standing ulcer on her shin, which needed regular care from the Village Nurse, who boasted that she had dressed it one hundred and three times already during her term of office.

The two women share with each other their past and the men they have loved and lost. Mrs. Fettley talks about a man she loved and who had died recently, saying "they read his death-notice to me, out of the paper last month." It is now Mrs. Ashcroft's turn to talk about her past. She recalls that her husband was bedridden and died many years ago. She had been through a very unhappy marriage for which both sides carried their share of blame. Her husband had warned her on his deathbed that retribution lay in store: "I can see what is coming to you."

After her husband's death, Mrs. Ashcroft goes to London and gets a job as a cook in an upper-class home. She lived a comfortable life there for a year and then moved back to Smalldene, a village in Sussex, where she worked on a farm. It was there that she met Harry Mockler. She was desperately in love with him, recognising in him her "master"—the love of her life. She confesses that she loved Harry far more than she had ever loved her husband.

Eventually Harry was tired of her and went after other women. She suffered greatly. When Mrs. Fettleby asks, “What did you get out of it?” She replies, “The usuals. Everything at first—worse than naught after,” having been disillusioned about romantic love.

Then one day Mrs. Ashcroft suffers from a bad headache and becomes irritable when she is with a young girl, Sophy Ellis, the daughter of the local charwoman. When Sophy discovers the reason for her irritability, she promises Mrs. Ashcroft that she will be able to relieve her headache. Sophy then leaves the house and when she returns after ten minutes Mrs. Ashcroft’s headache has vanished. Sophy tells her that she was responsible for the cure because she was now suffering from the headache herself. Sophy explains that she had visited the Wish House, which was a deserted house in which a spirit, known as Token, lived. Sophy had conveyed her wish through a slit in the letterbox to a “Token” who had the power, when asked, to transfer an affliction from one person to another. However, this spirit would only transfer the bad and not any good wishes. Mrs. Fettleby knows that a Token is “wraith of the dead or, worse still, of the living.”

After a few months, Mrs. Ashcroft goes to London and then to Smalldene where she meets Harry, by chance. She still loved him. She found that he had been suffering from a bad leg injury and blood poisoning. He was not expected to live for more than a few months. When he refuses to see a doctor, Mrs. Ashcroft decides to visit the Wish House. On reaching the place she rings the bell and hears footsteps which reach the front door and then stop. Mrs. Ashcroft then leans forward to the letter box and says, “Let me take everything bad that is in store for my man, Harry Mockler, for love’s sake.”

After several months Mrs. Ashcroft learns that Harry has fully recovered and returned to his job. A little later she discovers that she has developed a boil on her shin that refused to heal. She becomes aware of the connection between her bad condition and Harry’s recovery later, when Harry is kicked by his horse and he suffers.

This time also while her own wound gets worse, Harry gets better as if by drawing the strength out of her. It is then that she feels triumphant and prays: “You will take your good from me without knowing it till my life’s end. O God, let me live long for Harry’s sake!”

When the wound appeared to clear up, she knew that it indicated that Harry was in good health. When the wound got worse, she knew that Harry was in need. Then one day she discovers that her wound has turned cancerous. She is slowly dying. She says, “But the pain *do* count, don’t ye think, Liz? The pain *do* count to keep Harry where I want him.” In a moment of uncertainty, she seeks reassurance from her friend that the pain she endures is not wasted, that it keeps her Harry safe, “where I want him,” *i.e.*, with his mother and not with another woman. Mrs. Fettley shudders but kisses Mrs. Ashcroft with sympathy. The story ends on this note of compassion for the dying woman who has taken on the troubles of a man who has given her nothing in return.

Rudyard Kipling was an English short-story writer, poet and novelist. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. A number of his stories revolve around the relations between a man and a woman. According to some critics, unlike his earlier stories, in this story Kipling shows a moving imaginative sympathy for the physical pain and psychological suffering of women. *The Wish House* is considered by some to be Kipling’s most successful short story. It is described as a story with a “supernatural element,” and a story of fierce, possessive love of a person whose will to endure is as strong as their desire. Grace Ashcroft’s love is seen as an intense, self-sacrificing love, but tinged with selfishness because she takes on Harry’s suffering with the hope that he will never marry and find happiness with anyone else.

The concept of taking on oneself the suffering of another has been compared by some with the Christian doctrine of Atonement. In his *Kipling: The Glass, the Shadow and the Fire*, Philip Mason writes: “The sacrifice of substitution can only take place where there is love

and where the victim himself accepts the burden; it is at the heart of the Christian doctrine of Atonement...”

Vicarious suffering may refer to the suffering a person “shares” with another or with others. Empathic suffering is a good example of vicarious suffering which involves “sharing” another’s suffering. The phenomenon of *stigmata* may be considered an example of this. People who have *stigmata* exhibit wounds that duplicate or represent those that Jesus is said to have endured during his crucifixion. Mr. Judge explains that women and men in fanatical hysterical ecstasy, by brooding over the wounds on the body of Jesus, seen in a picture, could produce similar wounds on their own bodies, “by internal impression and stimulus projected to the surface, all the marks of crown of thorns and wounded side.” It was self-hypnotization. As a result of constant brooding, the picture was imprinted deeply on the astral body; “then the physical molecules, ever changing, became impressed from within and the *stigmata* were the result.” Thus, the picture or idea is first impressed on the astral body, “and that controls all the physical nerves, sensations, currents, and secretions. It is done through the sympathetic nervous plexus and ganglia,” explains Mr. Judge. (*W. Q. J. Series No. 16*, pp. 32-33)

Vicarious suffering may also refer to the suffering that a person endures with the effect that another or others do not have to suffer the same. It is suffering in place of and for the benefit of others. Karma is the law of cause and effect or action and reaction. In individual karma, the effects of good or bad actions come back to the individual who was responsible for the action. One of the aphorisms on Karma reads: “*The effects may be counteracted or mitigated by the thoughts and acts of oneself or of another, and then the resulting effects represent the combination and interaction of the whole number of causes involved in producing the effects.*” One way to understand this aphorism is that there is something like taking upon oneself the karma of others. In the case of intense love or pure love, when one tends to identify oneself with another or others, it is

possible to take on oneself the karmic suffering of another or others.

Emperor Babar, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, is believed to have sacrificed his life for his son, Humayun. When Humayun was still a young man, he fell seriously ill. His condition was worsening day by day in spite of physicians' best efforts, and death seemed imminent. During that period, it was widely believed that sickness could be transferred from one person to another or to an inanimate object by means of prayers. Babar, who deeply loved his son, folded his hands and prayed to God requesting to take his life in place of his son. Then while Humayun's health gradually improved, Babar's deteriorated and finally he died in the next few months. Some historians do not believe in this claim of transfer of illness.

There are incidents of saintly people taking on themselves the illness of their devotees or suffering of their disciples on account of having taken upon themselves their sins or karma. For instance, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa suffered and died of throat cancer. According to one view, he got cancer because he took upon himself the sins of his disciples to hasten their spiritual evolution.

It appears that the question of the transfer of disease from one person to another arises when karma is too strong and therefore the disease cannot be cured. Buddha and Jesus—two great teachers—performed cures. When they cured wicked people they told them: “sin no more.” They were able to cure when the karma had ripened and they were being “instrumental” in bringing about the cure. However, in some cases, they could not cure because “the causes working on the sufferer were too strong for them.” In such cases, it appears that the sufferer can be given relief if the effect of causes is experienced by another.

“Let all sins that have been committed in this world fall on me that the world may be delivered,” exclaimed Gautama, the Buddha (*Isis*, II, 547). The great beings have often asked for the karma of the whole of humanity to fall on them, and it is possible for them to take upon themselves some of the “collective” karma of humanity

because they identify themselves completely with humanity. “H.P.B. was asked and she consented to take upon herself the burden of others’ Karma....We are all learning to be Universal Beings, aspiring to serve Humanity without any distinctions....Every accredited chela gets his share in learning to take upon himself the Karma of others. Theosophical students make a jump and a shortcut, so to say, from personal Karma to universal Karma, taking in their stride family, community, national and race Karma,” writes Shri B. P. Wadia.

We have these very poignant words from H.P.B. showing her relation to the Theosophical Society and her sacrifice for the same. She writes: “I am the Mother and the Creator of the [Theosophical] Society; it has my magnetic fluid...Therefore, I alone and to a degree . . . can serve as a lightning conductor of Karma for it. I saw the T.S. [Theosophical Society] would be smashed or that *I had to offer myself as the Scapegoat for atonement*. It is the latter I did. The T.S. lives—I am *killed*. Killed in my honour, fame, name, in everything H. P. B. held near and dear.”

Azazel, says the *Theosophical Glossary*, is the scapegoat for the atonement of Israel. This has been borrowed by the Jewish people from the Egyptians, wherein laying hands upon the head of the live goat, the sins or iniquities of the children of Israel are confessed and then the goat is sent into the wilderness.

However, the real meaning of vicarious atonement and scapegoat has been explained by H.P.B. In an individual, it is his Higher Ego (Divine nature) which is the scapegoat for atonement. In *Transactions* (pp. 67-68), H.P.B. explains that in Indian Philosophy, the “Higher Ego” is called *Kshetrajna*, or that which informs the body. If we etymologize this word, we find that it contains the term *aja*, which means “first-born” and also the “lamb.” The lamb symbolizes the Higher Ego in man. This is because though during life the higher and the lower self in man are separate, after the death of the body and the personality, the sins of the personality are, as it were, fastened upon the “Higher Ego.”

THE RIGHT TIME

O MASTER, how is it that you are firm yet gentle, kind though just, always serene, always patient, always finding time to help others yet never in a hurry? I am gentle sometimes, firm at other times; weak sometimes, hard at other times. I am kind to some but not to others; when I have work to do, I am impatient at interruptions; I hurry to get to work and to get it done in order to get to the next job. There is always so much to do and so little time to do it! Please help me, for as it is I am gentle when I should be firm; kind when I should be just; impulsive when I should use discrimination; slow when I should be aware of the fleeting time. Though I try, things do not come right!

O Friend, such has always been the cry of the probationer! Let us first make a fundamental approach to this question. A knowledge of Time, in Eternity-duration, is necessary. Once we grasp that, we never hurry. Hence one of the first things we are taught is punctuality, which is a recognition of the fact that there is a right time for everything in life. But how to learn to be punctual?

Have you ever thought why it is that some people are never late? The answer is simple. They are punctual by force of habit. Habit is the building up of an attitude towards something which results in its working almost without conscious thought. We train our fingers to write, our feet to walk, and then the rest of our life we are able to write and walk without conscious thought. How was this achieved? By constant practice for months and months the habit was established. The little “lives” which make up our vehicles of matter have been trained to do a certain job; our higher mind has given them noetic impulse (see the article “Psychic and Noetic Action” reprinted in the book *Raja-Yoga or Occultism*); therefore, they are habituated to act in a certain manner. So, punctuality can become a habit by constant practice, until in time we find that we cannot be unpunctual!

Sometimes life itself makes us form this habit. If we are late for

work we may lose our job; sometimes our sense of duty towards others makes us punctual; sometimes we are moved by baser motives—we might lose something if we are unpunctual!

By the law of analogy and correspondence we can learn to apply this principle of punctuality to all the virtues and we see that there is a right time for practising these also. There is a time to be gentle and a time to be firm, and a time to be both at once. To determine what is the right time—that is, time at which any action will produce such repercussions in the environment as will be beneficial all round—discrimination is needed all the time. If we hurry, we may choose the wrong moment; if we delay we may lose the right moment. If we realize that duration eternally *is*, then we can neither hurry nor delay, for our thought emotion is not fixed on the *doing* of an action but on the *right* performance of action. Hence, we see that knowledge is necessary in order to perform the *right* action, in the *right* way, at the *right* time.

Yes, Master, I can see this, but I still seem to be mixed up. I feel that the virtues, even if acquired by practice, will not be so assimilated as to become a portion of myself, but will remain a kind of possession. How can I *become* them?

Friend, make a synthesis of your knowledge. What is life for? What is the goal we strive after? How is it attained while still in a body? Can you not see that while always keeping the goal in view and striving to reach it you alter the character of the “lives” that make up your physical body and brain as also your inner body, and put them under your control? Once these lives are controlled, you will also have gained control over Nature’s forces; you will have freed yourself from matter while retaining the power to use it; you will have given a noetic impulse to matter, and thus you will have made your vehicles perfect instruments, and Nature your “material ally, pupil and servant.” “One common vital principle pervades all things,” and that you will have controlled. That is the aim and goal of the human kingdom. What is the difference between the saint and the criminal? Is it not, as H.P.B. has told us, that their vehicles

THE RIGHT TIME

are different? In the one case, the vehicles are pure and controlled; in the other case, impure, dark, coarse and uncontrolled. Thinking along this line, while you practise the whole gamut of virtues in your daily life, you will succeed.

Thank you, O Master. But it will be a long journey!

Friend, the journey of life knows no end. Any end achieved is merely the beginning of a further achievement. The brook flows into the river, the river into the ocean, the ocean water is drawn up into the air by the sun and forms clouds, only to be dropped down again, drop by drop, upon the thirsty earth. What is *time*? Eternity. There is no such thing in reality as past, present and future. Is not the very unending nature of life an opportunity and a hope? To learn as we go, gives joy, purpose, satisfaction.

What is a man? A bit of clay
The rain dissolves and floats away;
A diamond of lustre rare,
Forever firm, forever fair;
A bubble dancing on the stream,
An empty film, a bursting gleam;
A king upon a dateless throne,
With all eternity his own;
A mockery of love and hate,
The play of time, the sport of fate;
The conqueror of endless life,
Victorious in every strife;
Compact of virtue and of sin,
Creation's matchless harlequin;
And each of these, in devious plan,
Discernible in every man!
Why, what Superior Scientist,
What Erudite Anatomist,
Could pick these creatures from the bog,
And classify and catalogue?

—AMOS RUSSEL WELLS
“Difficult Definition”

EXTRACTS FROM UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

DEVACHAN—II

THE LIVES of the body disintegrate with the disintegration of the corpse; therefore, cremation sets free the lives of the gross body quicker than does burial. *Tanhaic* lives or elementals which are unsuited to the Ego's requirement in *Devachan* make up the *Kama-Rupa*. This *Kama-Rupa*, in the progress of time, disintegrates; the period of its life is dependent on the vital strength and the power of cohesion which inhere in the *Tanhaic* elementals. After the *Kama-Rupa* is disintegrated, the *Tanhaic* elementals await the returning Ego on the threshold of *Devachan* and go to make up the new personality.

Evil last thoughts go to form the *Kama-Rupa*; they cannot enter *Devachan*. We might assume that the thoughts suited to the *Devachanic* condition, which are retained by the Ego, are of differing strength, and those strongest become the starting point of *Devachanic* ideation, which is blissful.

Why does not a rank materialist, or a thoroughly material thinker, have a *Devachanic* experience? *The Key to Theosophy* gives two important aphorisms which are the real key to understand the whole subject. If a person, however good and/or learned (*e.g.*, a fine humanist) does not believe in the survival of the soul after the death of the body, then he does not experience survival. Now apply that aphorism (but study carefully *The Key to Theosophy* on the subject) to a student whose thought, will and feeling make it impossible for him to give up *Devachan* or even to be pulled out of it.

You could and do reason in the subjective condition: how else the unfoldment of seed ideas in *Devachan*? Reason is *not* wholly dependent on the brain—thank the good and merciful law; where would we be if it were!

I can well understand what you feel about the death of a loved one. We can go through that experience mentally, as Crosbie says, and prepare ourselves for the physical precipitation whenever it

comes. Who is there among us who never feels void and frustrations? We would not be human but super-human Adepts with power and knowledge not to feel the gaps caused by death. Here I am daily, nay, hourly, feeling the absence of——. His virtues not admired and fully appreciated are now revealing themselves. Such an experience enhances one's love for him. So, at our stage, we cannot expect not to feel, not to know about the gaps and gulfs of death. But we have to try to learn from these and gain from experience.

Ordinary personal love feels a void and frustration when we lose, say by death, our dear friend. Nature is slow but sure; powers unfold, oh! so slowly—even the faculty of true love. Parting from friends can be constructive instead of mostly destructive as it now is for almost everyone. When a disciple is sent out for a piece of service by his Guru, the disciple feels a void of a particular kind, but not frustration, for he is on his Guru's service—on my Father's business, said Jesus. Quarrels between friends, the death of a relative or of a friend, leave voids, but these too are overcome.

As to Judge's quotation [“those who are now with us will be reincarnated in our company on our next rebirth”] and reincarnating all together: it does not mean that in every life we all meet. We meet A in one life and B in another; and in still another, A and B together. The phrase Master K.H. has used contains a hint: we shall meet again when the “converging lines of Karma” bring us together. It is like planetary and starry conjunctions. The planets come together on varied bases of astronomical cycles; some settings occur after *Kalpas*, but in the meantime the planets have been moving and different configurations are formed.

True soul-companions are always together as Egos and in their minds and hearts. In the process of evolution, a cycle will be struck when they may not meet bodily for a long time. But they will never be separated. And in bodies too they will meet some time, like the Great Ones are together always as Egos and often as personalities. The present builds the future; we cannot be separated from our loved ones, and our lines of Karma are bound to converge. Karma is not

only just but also merciful. Why should we who love Them and Their Humanity and work for Their Cause suffer in the bond that enables us to do all that? Let us remain true to our soul-companions and to our own Egos, and above all to Them—our Blessed Lords of Light, Purity and Holiness. Let us live in and enjoy our Security and our Refuge.

We do carry the real memory of our past kinship. How many debates and conversations had we to determine our kinship? It sprang into visibility. How? Did we force it? Did it not assert itself naturally, for the force was there? Memory in its inner or *Akashic* aspect is very different from remembrance related to the Astral Light. But again, what you say is accurate: there are our affinities now, let us say, in *Devachan*; others, in other lands unknown to us. But as we go on and our affinities become less and less personal and more and more egoic, more and more we are together, till we come to the stage where one Master is with all other Masters, every hour, for there is the same Will, Knowledge and Compassion. For impractical purposes we may in the next incarnation forget each other, but not for truly practical ones. Have you read as a philosophical treatise *The Dream of Ravan*? Read how from *tamas* we rise to *rajas* and then to *sattva* in the company of affinities.

(Concluded)

YOU must give some time to your fellow man. Even if it is a little thing, do something for those who have need of help, something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it. For remember, you do not live in the world all your own. Your brothers are here too. Above all matters of the intellect, above philosophy and theology is the will to help one another, the task of being brothers.

—ALBERT SCHWEITZER

PASSIVE RESISTANCE

AS the quiet days of independent agrarian living give way to the pressures of post-industrial clamour, where people jostle with each other for space, rights and acquisitions, the ever-present problem that besets the modern philosopher is the right response to evil. But evil, then seems, like her equally perfidious sister—beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. Plainly the perpetrator does not see his actions as evil, nor do we readily admit our mistakes when pointed out, let alone attribute them to evil motives within us. As such, evil is entirely subjective and only approaches general agreement, and hence statutory law in the degree to which it tangibly impacts others' wellbeing. When seen in this light, evil is both relative and subjective and hence temperance in reaction to the *perceived* evil is immediately obligated. But no justifiable response to evil can be considered without first understanding its origin and nature.

The problem of the existence of evil, perceived or otherwise, in a world supposedly created by an omni-benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient god is an indefensible indictment of Abrahamic religions that hold this world to be created directly by such a god and animated by his will. Lest our intelligence be insulted by further childish stories of an equally powerful Satan, we will have to look for our answer outside of such religious dogmas. If we turn our sanguine gaze towards modern Science, we will find the Abrahamic god replaced by an equally miraculous creator—Stochasticity or random chance. Here, evil will also be made the unfortunate progeny of this capricious creator who will be credited with engendering psychopathic behaviour due to random genetic mutations, a doctrine that goes against our natural sense of justice. Having thus met with disappointment on both ends, we will have to humbly look for our answer in the *synthesis* of both science and religion, namely Theosophy.

In the *Secret Doctrine* (II, 95-96) we see that “Perfection, to be fully such, must be born out of imperfection, the *incorruptible* must

grow out of the corruptible, having the latter as its vehicle and basis and contrast. Absolute light is absolute darkness, and *vice versa*. In fact, there is neither light nor darkness in the realms of truth. Good and Evil are twins, the progeny of Space and Time, under the sway of Maya. Separate them, by cutting off one from the other and they will both die. Neither exists *per se*, since each has to be generated and created out of the other, in order to come into being; both must be known and appreciated before becoming objects of perception, hence, in the mortal mind, they must be divided.” We see a similarly startling statement in the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, a non-canonical text, wherein Jesus declares that “there is no sin” and that evil arises out of the false sense of identification with matter which he calls “adultery.” But if good and evil do not have ontologically independent existences, then on what do we base our moral yardstick?

No value judgements of any kind, let alone claims of morality, can be made without first understanding the purpose of life or Telos, as the Greeks call it. From the third fundamental proposition of the Secret Doctrine, we can obtain the teleological argument for existence, upon which a moral landscape can be erected. We see there that every soul originates from the Universal Over-Soul, first achieving individuality and having attained the Man stage, strives to regain its lost estate, self-consciously. Spirit is involuted into Matter on the downward arc and evolves through it first by natural impulse and then consciously, by self-induced and self-devised effort, in the upward arc, after reaching man’s stage. By living and reaping life experiences within this stupendous cyclic journey, it garners Soul Wisdom, the most rarefied Spiritual Essence of life which offers it the opportunity of ever-increasing perfection. Humanity in general is now on the upward arc and our purpose in life is to redeem the Spirit through flesh and aid nature in this work. With this macro-perspective in view, the two extremes of our moral landscape become clear. Given that we are going from individuality to universality: separateness, heterogeneity and selfishness become regressive while

oneness, homogeneity and impersonality become progressive. For this reason, the bedrock of Theosophy is Universal Brotherhood. Similarly, in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Krishna mentions on numerous occasions that the ultimate emancipation for man is the reaching of his abode, status or nature. And the essence of his nature is fully encapsulated in the first appellation of Vishnu in his *Sahasranama*, namely, *Vishwam* or universality.

In this moral landscape, selfishness is the root of all evil. Here selfishness is not used in the colloquial sense, of it being a deviant condition, but rather in the connotation of self-interest which, in modern times, is considered socially normal, nay, necessary for survival. As such, we all partake of it in some measure and hence all the evil we perceive is, in varying degrees of potentiality to actuality, reflected within us. This irrepressible self-interest manifests itself in a Gaussian distribution (Normal distribution) of compassion expressed towards oneself and others. At the statistical mode, or point of highest expression of compassion, is our personal self! We implicitly have the highest compassion for ourselves. But just as we move ever so slightly away from this point, to even our closest family members, our compassion drops precipitously. And it continues to drop as we move further away from our attenuated sense of “self on a pin-head” as expressed in *Light on the Path* and forms a bell-shaped curve. Not only that, this bell-curve can even turn negative. We may express hatred towards specific people or certain group identities. Upon further introspection, we find that *what* we perceive as evil and *how* we deal with it, are both unconsciously predicated on where along this bell-curve that evil is seen to originate.

We see absolutely no evil in ourselves and hence in our actions. This is the universally recognized Fundamental Attribution Error, wherein we judge others on their perceived character but ourselves on the situation. We never attribute our own mistakes to evil motives within us, but in an effort of utmost charity, we always attribute them to circumstantial compulsions. However, when we see mistakes committed by others, we as readily attribute it to evil motives,

as is their distance on the bell-curve from ourselves. For instance, it is attributing a co-worker's lateness to the fact that they are unreliable rather than that they got stuck in traffic. In turn, one would give oneself grace if one were late because one knows that it was due to one's child taking too long to get ready. This is clearly a cognitive bias and a logical fallacy that ought to be corrected. In our moral landscape, we established that expanding our sense of self moves us towards the desirable state of universality and homogeneity. Incidentally, it also progressively flattens the bell-curve to embrace the golden rule. With this, we finally have an answer to our query of how best to respond to evil: we ought to deal with *exogenous* evil (originating outside), exactly as we deal with it *endogenously* (originating from within).

So, let us first consider how we deal with endogenous evil. Can we actively resist evil tendencies within us? If we find ourselves giving in to anger, can we resolve it by getting angry at ourselves? If we find ourselves entertaining violent thoughts, can we inflict violence against ourselves to stop it? Such active resistance to endogenous evil which meets it at its own level, only results in an overall compounding of evil within our own system. It is completely counterproductive. So, we can resist endogenous evil, only passively. This can be accomplished in one of three ways:

Firstly, we can *withdraw consent*. Any thought that arises within us, does so on the playground of our mind, over which we have complete sovereignty and hence it arises *with* our consent. If we withdraw our consent, any such thought must necessarily collapse, as the very basis of its existence stands negated. This is a form of passive resistance that dissolves the very foundation of evil, any time it arises. In order to do this effectively, we need to recognize and assert sovereignty over our mind. Always remembering, "thou shalt not let thy senses make a playground of thy mind" as we are taught in the *Voice of the Silence*. We can think of this form of passive resistance as benignly *tamasic* in nature.

Secondly, we can passively resist and *counteract* negative

emotions by engendering emotions of the opposite kind. Given that our attention span and mind-space of conscious thought is limited, engendering emotions of the opposite disposition must necessarily starve and crowd out the negative ones. Here, we are not only withdrawing the energy and basis of negative emotions but also transferring it into that of an opposing character. As such, this type of passive resistance can be thought of as being *rajasic* in nature.

Finally, we can *sublimate* evil thoughts into Soul Wisdom by shining the light of higher reason on them. This is true Alchemy, where the lead of unprocessed emotions can be sublimated into the gold of life lessons through knowledge, reason and introspection. To do this effectively, we need to deeply study the philosophy of Theosophy and have it ingrained in our very being, so it is readily available at hand even in the most dire of situations. The seeds of wisdom need to be first planted before the sunlight of life experiences can sprout and nourish it. We can think of this form of passive resistance as being *sattvic* in nature.

As we expand our sense of self from that on a pin-head, to ever-increasing concentric circles of people around us, we will naturally extend the same compassion we express for ourselves to that group of people. The ultimate goal is for that circle to be boundless and consequently for the bell-curve to be flat with the highest degree of compassion for all. At that point, one would “become Compassion Absolute,” for whom, conceptually, there are no “others.” As we approach this ideal, let us see how the three ways of dealing with endogenous evil translate to the exogenous.

Our first and foremost duty on perceiving exogenous evil is to not participate in it. But those who condone evil are as culpable as those who commit it, from the *Subhashita* in *Samskritam* which goes:

**kartā kārayita prerakaśchānumodakāḥ I
sukṛte duṣkṛte chaiva chatvāraḥ samabhāgināḥ II**

So, “withdrawal of consent” takes on the hue of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and *Satyagraha* as exemplified by Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian freedom struggle.

PASSIVE RESISTANCE

“Counteraction” to exogenous evil can be illustrated by an anecdote in which a person driving his car on a busy arterial road in the Bay Area, in the U.S.A., was aggressively cut off by a pickup truck and had to brake to avoid a collision. The car driver displayed his indignation by honking and flashing his headlights. To his surprise, the pickup truck moved over to the neighbouring lane and allowed him to pull up next to them. The driver signalled the car driver to lower his window, and when he did, the truck driver merely smiled and said, “I hope you have a wonderful day!” Those words had a soothing effect on the car driver, who let out a loud laugh and sincerely wished the best for him as well. That day the truck driver set an example of how to passively counteract road rage that managed to replace the choicest insults and harsh words of the car driver, by the opposite. We have these inspiring words from *Matthew* (5:39): “But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

Finally, just as endogenous “sublimation” requires seeds of wisdom to have been sowed within our being, an expansive sense of self requires the same seeds to be broadcast to all of Humanity. As one approaches the state of Absolute Compassion, one progressively dissolves one’s sense of Self into the collective. It then becomes our *responsibility* to educate through study, promulgation and exemplification of the fundamental principles of Theosophy, thereby becoming the means of salvation for the many. This here is the Heart Doctrine of the LAW which recognizes no God outside Man and hence posits responsibility for the whole in our hands.

THERE is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound for shallows and miseries.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

REPENTANCE AND ATONEMENT

SCARCELY is there anyone who has not suffered pangs of regret for having performed some or the other act of omission or commission. It is but natural for man to err for he is a spiritual being who has descended into matter, tied to the body and bound to material life through a long series of reincarnations by his own karma. Real Self, *Atma*, is perfect but cramped, limited and bound on the material plane where it is incarnate indirectly through its emanation, the personal self. Though man lives in and surrounded by matter the spark of divinity still burns in his consciousness, and is endowed with Reason and Will, by exercising which he can save himself from losing his way in the long journey to perfection. Hence all human actions are invariably involved in fault. The voice of conscience always speaks to us warning us against wrongdoings, and yet we often heedlessly do wrong, impelled by the motive of personal desire or passion, or through delusion. As we are essentially moral beings, we regret the wrong we do and try to make amends to compensate for the outcome of the wrong done. We do not so much err in committing mistakes as in compounding them by wrong ways of regretting and by mistaken idea of atonement.

The term Religion actually means *to bind*, or *unite* oneself with one's true nature, which is the source of all good; implying that when our deeds are not in accord with it; pain and regret must necessarily follow. All religions preach the virtue of repentance and ways of atoning for wrong doing. In Islamic religion, Ramadan is the month of repentance and forgiveness. Devotees are enjoined to sincerely repent for sins committed, vow not to repeat them, and atone through fasting, prayers and charity throughout the month, seeking forgiveness. *Manu Smriti* gives in detail various evil acts and the painful consequences which follow them. Manu, in the eleventh chapter of the text recounts severe, weird austerities practiced by ascetics in olden time as atonement for sins committed, but prescribes ethical means for recompensing wrongdoing, and

recommends, avoiding misdeeds by means of exercising reason, discrimination, and forethought:

By confessing, by repentance, by austerity, and by recitation (the Veda) a sinner is freed from guilt, and in case no other course is possible, by liberality.

In proportion as a man who has done wrong, himself confesses it, even so far he is freed from guilt, as a snake from its slough. In proportion as his heart loathes his evil deed, even so far is his body freed from that guilt.

He who has committed a sin and has repented, is freed from that sin, but he is purified only by (the resolution of) ceasing (to sin and thinking) “I will do so no more.”

Having thus considered in his mind what results will arise from his deeds after death, let him always be good in thought, speech, and actions.

He who, having either unintentionally or intentionally committed a reprehensible deed, desires to be freed from (the guilt of) it, must not commit it a second time. (*Manu Smriti*, Chapter 11, verses 228-233)

Some of the religious prescriptions and practices in regard, among other things, to repentance needs to be carefully examined as to whether they have any basis in truth, for such as those which have no basis in truth, and even ordinary standards of human justice, lead to moral decline of the believers. For instance, the Christian Church has proclaimed as one of its fundamental dogmas that the sins of its faithful follower are washed away and the sinner saved if he confesses his sins, repents, and affirms his belief that Christ has atoned the sins of mankind in advance in his martyrdom by shedding his blood on the cross, and that the official priest is believed to have been conferred by God the power to forgive sins of penitents.

The belief that one can escape adverse consequences of one's evil deeds is contrary to the law of Absolute Justice, Karma, the immutable law of our being, which Jesus taught when he said, “With what measure you mete, it will be measured unto you again.” The

false belief that God or priest can forgive one's sins by prayers and confession insidiously promotes individual irresponsibility, and immorality in society. As the effect of an evil deed is not confined to the individual alone who commits it but is far reaching, affecting many, the disturbed equilibrium can only be restored by the evil doer himself by experiencing corresponding pain and suffering at the hands of the just retributive Karma. No amount of regret or the fond belief that God or the priest can forgive the sincere penitent can deter by a hair's breadth the ever-active unerring justice of Karma. Retributive Karma which follows us when we break the harmony of life, provides opportunity for us to make adjustments to restore the broken harmony and learn from the experience. It is merciful law that leads us on to true happiness and highest human perfection if we but put our whole trust in divine justice.

Therefore, unless the manner in which we regret and atone for the wrongs we may do is in accordance with the cyclic and Karmic law to the best of our knowledge and understanding we will be only compounding our errors. Mr. Judge points out that one such mistake, which people commonly make, is to constantly recur in thought and imagination with regret for the wrong done, which will only result in our suffering much loss by compounding our regretful act and wasting precious moments of our life. Energy of our thought dwelling on past errors act on the seeds of past actions that remain as mental deposits and enliven them, impelling us to err again, thus compounding our mistakes. Mr. Judge shows that instead we should be sowing seeds of right thought and action for a better morrow.

Right repentance for errors of the past, then, is refraining from frittering away precious moments of life in the present in vain regret, accepting individual responsibility for the misdeeds, vow never to repeat it again, and drink to the last drop without complaint the bitter draught from the cup of life when retributive Karma visits us to restore harmony we disturbed, profit by the lesson learnt, and move on. Thus, we grow in wisdom.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

America's Declaration of Independence which was drafted by Thomas Jefferson, speaks of rights of people, and includes a phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," of which "the pursuit of happiness" appears in the writings of the British philosopher John Locke, which has been borrowed from ancient Greek philosophy. For Jefferson and Locke "the pursuit of happiness" was "the freedom to choose the right action or path, which would enable us to lead fulfilling lives," but today we find that it has been interpreted to mean "a ceaseless quest for physical, material, or emotional gratification." We look upon happiness as a goal to achieve or a destination we must reach, and so we say, "I will be happy when I get promoted or when I get married," etc. It is something we do not possess at present but will possess in the future. Happiness is something which needs to be "pursued like a fugitive," and we end up creating unhappiness in this endless pursuit of happiness.

It appears that our predecessors who had to ceaselessly guard themselves against predators, remained in the stress-inducing "flight-or-fight" mode of vigilance and they passed on to us their genetic disposition of discontent. This "restless discontent" is both bane and boon.

Is "happiness, like a rose, or a poem, not about something but is just itself, what the German Transcendentalists termed an 'in-itself'?" The Buddhist say that happiness is the result of detachment, which is echoed in Iris Murdoch's concept of "unselfing." Unselfing takes us away from our egoistic preoccupations, and connects us to the Good in the world. Love is a form of unselfing, illustrating how close attention to another takes us out of a narrow focus on the self. "Happiness eludes entrapment by its pursuer. And the most elusive thing about happiness is that it is an experience we might already be living without realising it, so busy are we in quest of it," writes Jug Suraiya. (*The Speaking Tree, The Times of India*, September 14, 2023)

From the Theosophical viewpoint, our happiness or unhappiness depends far more on the way we meet the events of life than on the nature of the events themselves. Real happiness is an inherent quality of the soul and is above pain and pleasure. That is why we are asked to regard pleasure and pain with an equal mind and to rise above both.

Happiness and sorrow are inseparable, and manifest in alternate succession. As a result, man oscillates between joy and sorrow. It is by emotion, by insatiable desire and thirst for sensation that the man violently pushes the pendulum into oscillations. Possessions that are finite and ephemeral can never give lasting happiness. One of the reasons for unhappiness lies in the fact: “Impermanent are all conditioned things.” In the quest for happiness, we lose sight of the fact that happiness is not an end in itself. It is an effect that follows upon each progressive awakening of the soul, as one tries to walk the spiritual path.

Happiness truly lies in “unselfing,” *i.e.*, in being content with what one possesses; in being more concerned as to what kind of a human being one is; in being more concerned about whether one is becoming more honest, sincere, forgiving and truthful; being more concerned about one’s fellowmen and being ever ready to make any sacrifice for their sake. A truly happy person is due to his moral superiority over material adversity, *i.e.*, no hostile conditions or misfortune can disturb his peace of mind. A truly happy person has learnt to “accept the woes of birth.”

Happiness can result by taking the wider view of life, by lifting the consciousness above self-pity, by dwelling upon high ideals, by acquiring an understanding of the purpose of life and preparing oneself to attain it. Altruism may be said to be the best foundation for personal happiness. “A useful result of training ourselves to cultivate altruism is that it diminishes the magnitude of our own problems. When faced with a calm and clear mind, problems can be successfully resolved... To be happy oneself, one must help others; and to do this, a genuine feeling of compassion must be developed,” writes Dalai Lama.

If aliens, creatures from different planets, ever did make contact with us how would we make ourselves understood by them, and *vice versa*? In science fiction the question of how humans are able to communicate with aliens is often “glossed over or magicked away. The TARDIS translates for the Doctor and his companions; the Babel fish facilitates conversation as Arthur Dent hitchhikes across the galaxy.” writes Devon Frye. The author is referring to a British science fiction television series, *Doctor Who*, which is all about adventures of an extraterrestrial being called the Doctor, who appears to be human. The Doctor explores the universe in a time-travelling space ship called the TARDIS (Time And Relative Dimensions in Space). Likewise, in Douglas Adams’ novel “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy,” he presents a magical creature called the Babel fish, a small fish, which when placed inside someone’s ear, will provide them with instant translations of any dialect across the galaxy.

Linguist Sheri Wells-Jensen, who investigates extraterrestrial languages at Bowling Green State University, wants to ensure that when aliens arrive, we should be ready to talk to them, taking into consideration the promise and perils of alien communication. How to study an alien language even before meeting one? She suggests that we could study a variety of languages on Earth and when we do encounter an alien language, we can compare if it is like “Italian” or “Hawaiian,” etc. It would help if one is a science fiction writer to think about the possibilities.

Sheri Wells-Jensen works with METI International, which periodically sends out messages that aliens might intercept. Is that risky? She is of the view that it all depends upon “how do you want to be in the universe?” Do we wish to remain insular and hide, or do we wish to reach out? According to her an interstellar message could be built “from the simplest pieces, ones and zeros—they are super easy to send on a radio wave.” She feels that aliens must be already listening to the pulses we send into space, but we should send something intentional, writes Devon Frye. (*Psychology Today*, September 2023)

For a number of years, astronomers around the world have been searching for evidence of extraterrestrial life, and even intelligent life. Astronomers' search tends to assume that the aliens would be superior to humanity on earth, perhaps evolved beyond Earth's ability to comprehend them. "The whole of antiquity believed in the Universality of life" (*S.D.*, II, 703). Hence, intelligent, conscious life, must exist on other worlds than ours. However, an error hitherto commonly made by science-fiction writers as well as by some scientists themselves is to take the conditions of life on earth as the standard by which to determine the degree to which other planets were adapted for habitation by "other humanities," a mistake which is now being admitted. The ordinary human being has no experience of any state of consciousness other than that to which the physical senses link him.

If we restrict ourselves to the planets belonging to our own solar system, then just like our earth each of them consists of seven globes, which pertain to four different planes of matter and consciousness. We are on the fourth globe of our planetary chain. Just as we can see the fourth globe of Moon, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, so also, the beings on these planets or globes can see us. Their matter and consciousness differ from ours only in some degree (*S.D.*, I, 166). Other globes are on different planes of consciousness and matter, which are described as superior planes. Only an adept can see these globes by...raising his consciousness to that plane.

"Even great adepts...trained seers...can claim thorough acquaintance with the nature and appearance of planets and their inhabitants belonging to our solar system only. They...are also aware how difficult it is, *even for them*, to put themselves into full rapport even with the planes of consciousness *within* our system, but differing from the states of consciousness possible on this globe; *i.e.*, on the three planes of the chain of spheres beyond our earth. Such knowledge and intercourse are possible to them because they have learned how to penetrate to planes of consciousness which are closed to the perceptions of ordinary men." (*S.D.*, II, 701)

Even before communicating through speech, Theosophy teaches that in earlier races, there was, as it were, a telepathic transfer taking place. It is as if the whole of humanity consisted of clairvoyants and sensitives. Considering that humanity on other planets must be more evolved than human beings on earth, their mode of communication may also be superior to ours and beyond comprehension of ordinary people.

Do saints commit sin if they consume meat? We hear that consuming *rajasic/tamasic* foods such as, junk food and meat, alcohol can not only harm one's health but also hinder *moksha* or liberation. If consuming meat can have such serious consequences, then how some highly realised sages consumed meat? It is important to understand that spiritually realised people or *Jeevan Mukta* have risen beyond three *gunas* or qualities and hence what they eat does not affect their spiritual state or mind. In some cases, such beings smoked or consumed meat to take on bad karma or sins of certain devotees under exceptional conditions. Also, they intended to liberate the animals. The *Gita* (XVIII, 17) says that the one who is devoid of ego and free from any worldly desires and acts selflessly for the betterment of humanity, is not bound by karmic reactions of deeds that may look sinful. However, till such time that one reaches the state of spiritually realised sages, eating meat will result in sin and one's downfall. One who kills animals for meat is unable to attain heaven or liberation. From the butcher, seller of meat, cook and the one who consumes is committing a sin.

However, as mentioned in the *Gita* (IX, 30) even a most sinful person can change by his strong resolution and devotion to God. We have the example of Valiya Koli, the robber, transforming himself into Valmiki rishi, when he realised that none of his family members will share his karma. The same holds good for a meat-eater.

There are those who avoid eating meat on certain days, certain occasions, in certain holy places or in the presence of holy people,

etc. because deep down, on some level all of these people realise that consuming meat is a sin which must not be committed on certain days, location, etc. and that can help one to quit the habit. The percentage of non-vegetarians in India has considerably increased in the last few years, which raises *tamo guna* and that in turn results in negativity and downfall of the country. When there is a demand, it leads to an increase in production. The king of our country along with spiritual gurus should promote vegetarian diet by awakening people about the deep impact of a non-vegetarian diet, writes Acharya Upendra Ji. (*Sunday Free Press Journal*, September 3, 2023)

Some of the arguments of vegetarians that show meat-eating to be dangerous, even on physical plane level, are sound. For instance, it is true that eating meat may give us diseases of the animal, and that we have no right to take life, as we did not give them life. However, as life depends upon life and there is life even in vegetables, both vegetarians and meat-eaters are destroying life, and hence it is a question of killing more or less evolved organisms.

There is also the other fact to be borne in mind and that is, suitability or fitness of the food for each person. There are people who tried but found it impossible to switch over to vegetarian diet, not because they experienced weakness resulting from lack of meat diet, but because of imperfect digestion causing disease. It is held by many physiologists that stomach is an organ for the digestion of animal food only. As a result, in a vegetarian person the pyloric valve between the stomach and the small intestine is almost paralyzed from want of use, so that the food passes almost directly from stomach to small intestine. On the other hand, in the case of a non-vegetarian, the animal food remains in the stomach for a long time. Hence, when a meat-eater turns vegetarian, the stomach cells that have got accustomed to keeping the food for longer time in the stomach—because it takes longer to digest meat—retain also the vegetable matter in the stomach for a long time. Though vegetarian food is digested quickly, the pyloric valve does not open, and the stomach retains it for long, causing it to ferment and turn toxic. As a

result, yeast and other growths are thrown into circulation, which may cause tuberculosis, nervous diseases and other manifold derangements. “It is well known fact that a man who has melancholia due to systemia cannot expect to reach a high development on occultism,” writes Mr. Judge. Then again sometimes it is inevitable for people to eat meat, in the absence of any vegetation, as is true of places like Tibet, Alaska and North Pole.

It is true that at a certain stage of spiritual progress as a chela, the use of meat food has to be abandoned because of its psychical and physiological effects. Meat retains the characteristics of the animal even when it is cooked very well and it leads to *coarsening* of the body, whereas, as one advances on the path, it is conducive for spiritual development that “physical man must be rendered more ethereal and sensitive.” Moreover, each body extracts from any kind of food only that which conforms to the nature of the possessor of the body and that nature is subject to change from within.

It is important to remember that “physical, mental, moral and spiritual” development must run on parallel lines. H.P.B. says, “If from illness or long habit a man cannot go without meat, why, by all means let him eat it. It is no crime; it will only retard his progress a little; for after all is said and done, the purely bodily actions and functions are of far less importance than what a man *thinks and feels*, what desires he encourages in his mind, and allows to take root and grow there” (*The Key to Theosophy*, Indian Ed. p. 259). The warriors were allowed to eat meat and out of the warrior caste arose many that attained to the supreme heights of adeptship.

A self-realized person, or a *Jnani*, who is identified with the Self within, takes up the position of a witness or an observer. Even in ordinary activities like sleeping, breathing, eating, etc., a saint, performs all his actions with the attitude that he is merely an instrument of the divine, by renouncing attachment to the fruits of action and also the feeling of doership (*kartabhav*). Therefore, he does not offer a focus for the results to return.

INDEX TO “THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT”

Period: NOVEMBER 2022—OCTOBER 2023

GENERAL INDEX

Action, Guidelines for ...	May-23	Feelings, Hurt	Feb-23
Action, Renunciation of ...	Feb-23	Foe, Man's Eternal	Jan-23
Adaptability, The Spirit of ...	Jul-23	Food for the Body and Soul	Apr-23
Atonement, Repentance and	Oct-23	Food for Thought—	
Avarice—Greed for Money ...	Jun-23	A Passage to India ...	Jan-23
Battle-Cry, "Try"—A ...	May-23	... ..	to Feb-23
Child Souls	Jan-23	A Sound of Thunder ...	Nov-22
Choice and Evolution ...	Aug-23	... ..	to Dec-22
Christos—The Inner Ruler ...	Feb-23	The Infant Prodigy ...	Apr-23
Colour Our Day, Learning to	Aug-23	The Story of My Life ...	May-23
Control, On Establishing ...	Nov-22	... ..	to Jun-23
Despair and Self-Reliance ...	Jul-23	The Wish House	Oct-23
Don't Look Over the Fence	Sep-23	The Withered Arm	Mar-23
Economy, Non-violent ...	Nov-22	Foundation of Religion, The	Nov-22
Eknath, Saint—		Four Golden Links, The ...	Apr-23
Life and Teachings ...	May-23	Freedom, Slavery and ...	Sep-23
... ..	to Sep-23	Game of Life, The	Sep-23
Equal Vision, Samadarshi—		Greed for Money, Avarice—	Jun-23
One with	Mar-23	Guidelines for Action ...	May-23
Evolution, Choice and ...	Aug-23	Heart Energy in Our Work	Aug-23
Evolutionary Plan, The	Jan-23	Humility, True	Apr-23
Extracts From Unpublished Letters—		Hurt Feelings	Feb-23
Body and Health	Apr-23	Hypnotism, Incidents— ...	Mar-23
... ..	to Jun-23	Ideals, Our	Jul-23
Devachan	Sept-23 to	In the Light of Theosophy)	
... ..	Oct-23	... ..	(Separate Index)
Duty	Jan-23	Is Theosophy for All?	Jun-23
India	Mar-23	Judge, A Tribute to William Q.	
Karma	Jul-23	... ..	Mar-23
... ..	to Aug-23	Karma, Thoughts on	Apr-23
Money and Possessions	Feb-23	Learning to Colour Our Day	Aug-23
Planetary Influences	Dec-22	Let Us Become Listeners ...	Aug-23
The Centre in the		Letters, Extracts From Unpublished—	
Whirlwind	Nov-22	Body and Health	Apr-23

INDEX TO “THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT”

...	...	...	to Jun-23	Reliance, Despair and Self-	Jul-23
Devachan	...	...	Sept-23 to Oct-23	Religion, The Foundation of	Nov-22
Duty	...	...	Jan-23	Renunciation of Action	...
India	...	...	Mar-23	Reptentance and Atonement	Oct-23
Karma	...	...	Jul-23 to	Resistance, Passive	...
...	...	...	Aug-23	Right Time, The	...
Money and Possessions	...	...	Feb-23	Saint Eknath—Life and	...
Planetary Influences	...	...	Dec-22	Teachings	...
The Centre in the Whirlwind	...	...	Nov-22	Samadarshi—One with Equal	...
Life, The Game of	...	...	Sep-23	Vision	...
Life, Tree of	...	...	Jun-23	Slavery and Freedom	...
Listeners, Let Us Become	...	...	Aug-23	Souls, Child	...
"Man, Know Thyself"	...	...	Oct-23	Spirit of Adaptability, The	...
Man's Eternal Foe	...	...	Jan-23	Spiritual Progress	...
Metaphysics—Some	...	...	Nov-22	Steps on the Path	...
Reflections	...	...	to Apr-23	Theosophy for All?, Is	...
Miracles	...	...	Jul-23	Theosophy, In the Light of	...
Money, Avarice—Greed for	...	...	Jun-23	...	(Separate Index)
Nonviolence, Pragmatism of	...	...	Dec-22	Thoughts on Karma	...
Non-violent Economy	...	...	Nov-22	"Thy Kingdom Come"	...
On Establishing Control	...	...	Nov-22	...	...
Our Ideals	...	...	Jul-23	Time, The Right	...
Passive Resistance	...	...	Oct-23	Tree of Life	...
Path, Steps on the	...	...	Dec-22	Tribute to William Q.	...
Pragmatism of Nonviolence	...	...	Dec-22	Judge, A	...
Progress, Spiritual	...	...	Dec-22	True Humility	...
				"Try"—A Battle-Cry	...
				Work, Heart Energy in Our	Aug-23

INDEX TO “IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY”

Aliens or Extraterrestrials, how can we communicate with them? Oct-23	Gossip, it appears that not all gossip is bad Aug-23
Animal testing, should it be banned? Nov-22	Gratitude, we must learn to be grateful for all that silently works in our lives Jun-23
Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT human Robot, should we be slave to a machine? Apr-23	Happiness, endless pursuit of it, leads to unhappiness... .. Oct-23
Belief, do we have right to believe whatever we want to believe? Mar-23	Head injuries, traumatic, can give rise to remarkable creative talents in victims Jul-23
Chairs, three, of Solitude, Friendship and Society, represent three aspects of spirituality Jan-23	Hibernation, human, can help in treating cardiac arrest and boost longevity and have many potential benefits Dec-22
Earthquake prediction based on planetary conjunction May-23	Impermanence, its awareness brings wisdom Nov-22
Earth's pole drifted due to redistribution of groundwater, caused by excess groundwater exploitation Jul-23	Innovations, ground-breaking, are not always strokes of genius but could be product of context, consequences and coincidence Mar-23
Emotions, negative, accepting and then learning to reframe one's thoughts, could prove conducive to better mental helath Jun-23	Intellectual Humility (IH) teaches to accept competing veiwpoints, encouraging search for truth Aug-23
Experiencing with awareness can help us go from gross to subtle levels of consciousness Dec-22	Knowledge, besides reading, measuring and deducing, can be gained through direct experience Feb-23
Extraterrestrials or Aliens, how can we communicate with them? Oct-23	Life, difficult and challenging, gives to soul learning of a hundered lifetimes... .. Nov-22
Femal-male, superiority or inferiority, due to complete identification with the physical body Apr-23	Male-femal, superiority or inferiority, due to complete identification with the physical body Apr-23
Freedom, does it work best within rules? Sep-23	Meat-eating, do the saints incur sin by meat-eating? Oct-23
<i>Gospel According to St. John</i> and interpretation of the symbology of Vine and branches Jun-23	

INDEX TO “IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY”

<i>Mundana</i> ceremony, shaving of the head, the inner significance of Apr-23	<i>Mundana</i> ceremony, the inner significance of Apr-23
Optimism and Pessimism is based on our response to successes and failures Mar-23	<i>Shruti</i> or Universal Truth, and <i>Smriti</i> or truth based on remembrance, are Truths in Indian Philosophy Aug-23
Past, chasing, instead of staying in the present moment, suggested by Vikram-Betal story ... Feb-23	<i>Smriti</i> or truth based on remembrance and <i>Shruti</i> or Universal Truth, are Truths in Indian Philosophy Aug-23
Pessimism and Optimism is based on our response to successes and failures Mar-23	Thinking too much or overthinking, is it harmful or could it also be advantageous? May-23
Pilgrimage, what is its purpose? Sep-23	Thoughts, quality of, help us become strong and courageous to stand our ground ... Feb-23
Placebo or fake medicine, could it be as effective as the real thing? Sep-23	Truths in Indian Philosophy— <i>Shruti</i> or Universal Truth, and <i>Smriti</i> or truth based on remembrance Aug-23
Planetary conjunction having relationship with earthquakes May-23	Uncertainty Principle by Werner Heisenberg teaches that there is an act of balancing between two opposing things ... Jul-23
Racial bias arises out of belief that Racial differences are inherent and not the result of racial discrimination and injustice Dec-22	Vikram-Betal story suggests staying in the present moment instead of chasing the past Feb-23
Relationships, both harmonious and toxic, necessary for spiritual growth May-23	Vine and branches, symbology interpreted in the <i>Gospel According to St. John</i> Jun-23
Robot, ChatGPT human, Artificial Intelligence, should we be slave to a machine? Apr-23	Weaknesses of others should not be used to hurt them but to protect and heal them Jan-23
Self-knowledge must be based on our own perception blended with other people's perception ... Jan-23	
Shaving of the head,	