

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”

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THE WORK ON OURSELVES

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If thou art taught that sin is born of action and bliss of absolute inaction, then tell them that they err. Non-permanence of human action; deliverance of mind from thralldom by the cessation of sin and faults, are not for “Deva Egos.” Thus saith the “Doctrine of the Heart.”

—*The Voice of the Silence*

There is, first, our own work, in and on ourselves, each one. That has for its object the enlightenment of oneself for the good of others. If that is pursued selfishly some enlightenment comes, but not the amount needed for the whole work. We have to watch ourselves so as to make of each a centre from which, in our measure, may flow out the potentialities for good that from the adept come in large and affluent streams. The future then, for each, will come from each present moment. As we use the moment so we shift the future up or down for good or ill.

—*Letters That Have Helped Me*

THERE ARE two kinds of devotees of the Great Self: those who seek emancipation from the woes of birth and lose themselves in the Light of that Self; and then, those who voluntarily exile themselves from the World of Weal and, accepting the martyrdom of self-conscious existence, live to benefit mankind.

The Esoteric Philosophy recognizes the existence of the first path, that of the release of the Soul in its realization of the Supreme Spirit; but the Masters of that Philosophy teach Their disciples to walk the second path — by Self-Immolation. Through a prolonged training, ex-

tending over more than one life, those disciples learn the mystic meaning of Self-Immolation, through "long and bitter duty." Adaptability — Right Adaptability — to the world of mortals is the master-power of those who live as Impersonal Individualities, continuously helping humanity in the mass to rise higher. Their disciples, walking the way of duty leading to that supreme Self-Immolation, slowly unfold that power of adaptability whereby real soul-perception is gained and true soul-service rendered. The great moment of Choice looms far, far away, but that moment of Great Choice is made up of innumerable moments of small choices. In the performance of the small, plain duties of life with disinterestedness and with concentration, we purify the motive and acquire the method, and thereby learn the art of serving by living. This is preparation for the moment of Great Choice.

The student of the Esoteric Philosophy has to learn to control the senses, to make porous the brain, to purify his desires, and to acquire knowledge so that he may live on, helping humanity to cease to be merely a superior genus of animals. Those desiring emancipation also work on their senses, their brain, their emotions and their thoughts, but, their motive being different, their method also becomes different.

The Esoteric Philosophy lays down three injunctions for its earnest practitioner:

I. Become impermeable to the lower titanic forces which surround you.

II. Become invulnerable in your personality.

III. Become immortal in your individuality.

This cannot happen before every animal element is eliminated from your nature.

The first is related to our connection with the ocean of Life in which we live: in that ocean are lower elemental forces and the waves made up by them are moving towards the shore of matter, while we human beings are trying to move towards the other shore, *viz.*, that of spirit. Also, there is the Astral Light which is enlivened by man's use of those forces; to its influence also we have to become impermeable. We ourselves, however, each one of us, in the past, has given to that Light his own quota and through this he attracts to himself his Karmic affinities which make him permeable to the lower titanic forces. It is this quota which makes our second task so very difficult.

Achilles was invulnerable except in the heel, but that is where the arrow of Paris pierced him. Most students are vulnerable in numerous

places, and one by one these have to be so cleansed and so strengthened that we become *wholly* invulnerable. Let us not make the mistake of allowing some Thetis to dip us in the Styx, but let us plunge into it ourselves, and emerge not from it till every part of the personality, from head to heel, becomes invulnerable! To become invulnerable the personality must lose its own existence as a quasi-living entity and become but a crystal lamp through which the glory and the grace of the Soul streams forth. Personality is the red flower proud of its beauty which grows out of the dung-heap of egotism. The world of matter and of mortals prizes it as something fine; to the Soul its only worth is in the possibility of its becoming a channel and an instrument for its own work. To become impersonal does not imply the loss of personality but its transmutation into a beneficent vehicle for the impersonal forces of God in Nature, just as that Deity Itself is but an impersonal reflection of the unfathomable Absolute.

To become immortal in our individuality is a high enterprise. The nature of the God in us, the character of the Divinity which we are, will not be known to us till we have succeeded in observing the two previous injunctions in some measure. But while we are holding the mind and the senses against the attacks of the titanic forces, while we are watching the machinations of the personality, we should steadfastly endeavour to perceive that the Great Self is there in our own heart. If we follow the lines of our determination we shall gain the active guidance of the Self within. Not until it is admitted that the Self eternally persists and is always unmodified, will any real knowledge be acquired by us. Patanjali's aphorism gives us the starting exercise: "The modifications of the mental state are always known, because the presiding Spirit is not modified." When the ever-modifying mind catches the gleam of the Unmodifiable Spirit, the way to immortality has opened.

POWER belongs to him who KNOWS.

—*Brahmanical Book of Evocation*

“ISIS UNVEILED” THE HIDDEN WORLDS

We commenced research where modern conjecture closed its faithless wings.

—BULWER-LYTTON in *Zanoni*

IN the years prior to 1874, the 19th century had already seen the emergence of such momentous events as had left their marks upon Western thought and had moulded it into new patterns of ideation and research. The industrial revolution was already tolling out the knell of feudalism, while science was fast challenging religious dogmas which in yester-years were looked upon as infallible. In their respective spheres, Max Müller and Darwin were undermining bigoted thought with a logic that neither pedantry nor fanaticism could counter. In the midst of these trends, a new and sensational wave was sweeping the Western hemisphere. The never-ending stream of wonders at Lourdes and the Spiritistic phenomena occurring at Rochester and Chittenden were forcing the attention of the West to subjects which were previously considered taboo. The hidden world was coming to life and knocking for admittance at the doors of circles which were previously scoffing at its very existence.

In the séance-rooms of the rich and the poor, a brave new world was steadily emerging — nay, had already emerged. The dead appeared fully dressed and booted, sometimes carrying arms and wearing medals, and held converse with the sitters, bringing forth long-forgotten memories and giving indisputable proof that a world hidden from ordinary human senses existed. It offered consolation to the bereaved and opened up large vistas for those who cared to extract lessons from this (to them) new aspect of life. However, with the passing of years, it became apparent that in the hands of the inexperienced the movement was getting out of control. “Spiritualism” was failing because so far it had failed to divert men’s minds to a greater awareness of the occult. In short, it had failed to lead men on to spirituality.

On an examination of the lives led by the mediums, the public discovered that even if the phenomena were genuine, they did not require any great morality on the part of the medium for their production. And they argued that from a corrupt or amoral medium it would be wrong to expect a flow of spiritual knowledge. Purity was not expected to make its appearance through an impure vehicle. The nature of both forbade

it. Potable water is not obtained from polluted wells. It was further found that neither education, study nor discipline was required of the medium for the obtaining of phenomena. The charlatantry and trickery indulged in by a few mediums resulted in a general doubt regarding the authenticity of all phenomena, and a feeling of disenchantment was creeping in. It was thus that phenomena which should normally have awakened men's minds to the existence of hidden planes thronged with unfamiliar forces and agencies fell into disrepute. A revulsion set in and there came to be manifest a tendency to go back either to materialism or to orthodoxy. It was at this critical juncture that the Masters of Madame Blavatsky sent her to America to prove the genuineness of the phenomena and establish their reality. This was in 1873, H.P.B. having landed in New York in July of that year. Her mission achieved, the next task given to her was to commence revealing to the public the basis and rationale of the phenomena and the part that the mediums played in their production. The writing of *Isis Unveiled* was a step in that direction.

To initiate the lay public into a knowledge of the hidden forces of nature and of the planes on which they acted was a difficult and delicate task. To tell that public that what it took to be the returning spirit of a dear departed one was really a mere objectivization in visible form of a record of the dead one—his physical appearance, mannerisms and memory—projected from the photo micrographs of Nature, was to make instant enemies of the Spiritualists. Yet, however unpleasant the task, it had to be done. Erroneous beliefs can never lead men to realities. In the introductory chapter entitled "Before the Veil," H.P.B., while seemingly defining terms, gave out knowledge about the hidden realms and the lives and intelligences that throng these regions. A considerable portion of the two volumes of *Isis Unveiled* is devoted to a brilliant exposition of magic and what part these planes and their inhabitants play in it.

No study of the Occult can be fruitful without an understanding of the vast plenum that men call Space. Just as air is everywhere on earth and saturates it, so is this air together with the earth surrounded by the universe of the Astral Light out of which this physical world has evolved. In turn, this Astral Light itself is bounded by the Supreme First Cause. Whereas the term Astral Light is applied to the lower planes of the universal essence, the pure and ethereal aspect of it is called the *Akasha*—the Occult Electricity, the Alkahest and the astral

ocean of invisible fire. According to Paracelsus, there lies hidden in each man a sidereal force which is that emanation from the stars and celestial bodies of which the astral spirit of man is composed. Thus, between man and the stars there exists a mutual attraction, both being magnets. The body of man comes from the elements which make it up, but from the stars come his intellect and his thoughts. It is because of the mutual attraction between the real man and the stars that this absorbent and chemical body susceptible of attractions gathers into itself the astral or sidereal influences. "The sun and the stars attract from us to themselves, and we again from them to us." (I. 168, 169)

More than two hundred years later, Mesmer reiterated the same tenet when he said that there was a fluid which was so universally diffused as to admit of no vacuum, and that it was this fluid which acted as a medium between the stars, the earth and all living bodies. The chief characteristic of this fluid was its capacity to receive, propagate and communicate the slightest impression of motion wherever it may have occurred. In *Isis Unveiled* (I. 178) H.P.B. tells us that the Astral Light keeps an un-mutilated record of all that was, is, or ever shall be. The minutest acts of our lives are imprinted on it and even our thoughts rest photographed on its eternal tablets. It thus becomes in short the "MEMORY OF GOD." That those who knew of this included not only the Kabalists, the Hermetists and the Fire-Philosophers, but even a portion of the intelligentsia, is proved by a quotation given by H.P.B. from *The Soul of Things* by Professor Denton. Says he:

Not a leaf waves, not an insect crawls, not a ripple moves, but each motion is recorded by a thousand faithful scribes in infallible and indelible scripture. This is just as true of all past time. From the dawn of light upon this infant globe, when round its cradle the steamy curtains hung, to this moment, nature has been busy photographing everything. What a picture gallery is hers!

Eliphas Levi, the great Kabalist of the 19th century, called the Astral Light the great serpent and dragon from which there radiates on humanity every evil influence. H.P.B. says in *The Theosophical Glossary* that he should have gone further and clarified that "the Astral Light gives out nothing but what it has received; that it is the great terrestrial crucible, in which the vile emanations of the earth (moral and physical) upon which the Astral Light is fed, are all converted into their subtlest essence, and radiated back intensified, thus becoming epidemics — moral,

psychic and physical." She adds that the Astral Light is a subtle Essence visible only to the clairvoyant eye, and is the lowest — barring the earth — of the seven Akasic or Kosmic principles.

To Pythagoras (6th century B.C.) and the ancients, the universal ether was not simply a something stretching, tenantless, throughout the expanse of the heavens. It was a boundless ocean peopled like our familiar seas with monstrous and minor creatures, and having in its every molecule the germs of life. Each creature of the seas is known to have a habitat in some spot to which it is curiously adapted. Some are friendly to men while others are inimical, some pleasant and some frightful to behold. Some seek the refuge of quiet nooks and land-locked harbours, and some traverse great areas of water. Likewise, the ancients believed that the various races of the elemental spirits inhabit different portions of the great ethereal ocean, and that they are exactly adapted to their respective conditions. (I. 284)

It is not difficult to understand that an absolute disturbance would be created in this astral plastic and attenuated medium by the planets that rush through space, in the same manner as the passage of a steamer through water, but on a cosmic scale. We can therefore understand that certain planetary aspects may produce much more violent agitation and cause much stronger currents to flow in a given direction than others. We can also see why, by various aspects of the stars, shoals of friendly or hostile elementals might be poured in upon our atmosphere — or some particular portion of it — and make the fact appreciable by the effects that ensue. Human beings are therefore affected favourably or otherwise by conditions of the Astral Light, resulting from the different aspects of the planetary bodies. (I. 313)

What *Isis Unveiled* teaches is (1) that *Akasha* is the imponderable and intangible life-principle — and astral and the celestial lights combined together, and which two form the *anima mundi*; (2) that these two constitute the soul and spirit of man — the celestial light forming the divine spirit, and the other his soul or astral spirit; and (3) that it is the grosser particles of this astral spirit which enter into the fabrication of his physical body (I. 139 fn.). In *The Theosophical Glossary*, it is explained that the Astral Light is the second principle of the Kosmos (the third being the Life, of which it is the vehicle), and corresponds to the *Linga Sharira* or the astral double of man. Once that the existence of the Astral Light and of the corresponding astral body of man is recognized, the rationale of many a phenomenon becomes clear.

Because of the passivity (dangerous at all times) in which the medium throws himself, the Astral Light is enabled to act on his magnetized organism. It penetrates and saturates him when directed (*a*) either by the powerful will of the mesmerizer or (*b*) by unseen beings who achieve the same results (I. 159). The medium thus lends his bodies as channels for the manifestation of forces over which he has no control. If he is not pure or is inclined towards the matter side of life, he will be a focus of attraction for consubstantial forces that inhabit the dark and densest stratum of the Astral Light. And, because each person's atmosphere in the Astral Light is peopled with the images of his immediate family, the mesmerizer, magician or sorcerer can, through the medium's abnormally awakened sight, get access to the most secret astral records pertaining to the families of the medium and the sitters.

What the "spirits" that come to séances are — and they are of different classes, mischievous, malicious or benign — is dealt with at some length in *Isis Unveiled*.

LIGHT would be incomprehensible without darkness, to make it manifest by contrast; good would be no good without evil, to show the priceless nature of the boon; and so, personal virtue could claim no merit, unless it had passed through the furnace of temptation. Nothing is eternal and unchangeable, save the Concealed Deity. Nothing that is finite — whether because it had a beginning, or must have an end — can remain stationary. It must either progress or recede; and a soul which thirsts after a reunion with its spirit, which alone confers upon it immortality, must purify itself through cyclic transmigrations, onward toward the only Land of Bliss and Eternal Rest, called in the *Sohar*, "The Palace of Love"; in the Hindu religion, "Moksha"; among the Gnostics, the "Pleroma of eternal Light"; and by the Buddhists, Nirvana. The Christian calls it the "Kingdom of Heaven," and claims to have alone found the truth, whereas he has but invented a new name of a doctrine which is coeval with man.

—*Isis Unveiled*, II. 280

RANDOM NOTES FROM "THE THEOSOPHIST"

ON ZOROASTRIANISM

[An inquirer asked: "Am I right in saying that the custom of keeping a fire constantly in Parsee Temples is to symbolize the immortality of the soul as well as the impermanent nature of man's mortal body? What is the real occult meaning?" The following reply was given in an editorial note.]

IN ADDITION TO the reasons given in the correspondent's letter for this custom, a few other reasons may also be mentioned.

1. The divine fire, which the Parsees are called upon to worship, is the divine fire known under the name of Atharvana-agni or Samvartak-agni to the Hindu adepts. This fire in the Cosmos is always blazing and never is, can, or will be extinguished. In order to indicate to the fire-worshippers of the Parsee faith that the fire which they worship is not the ordinary fire, this custom has been introduced.

2. Moreover, in ancient times, whenever it was thought necessary to worship this fire, an adept or a magian used to invoke it and attract it from *akasa*. But an adept, who could perform this difficult and dangerous operation with success, was not always ready to attract this divine fire for its worshippers. Hence, when once the heavenly flame was kindled by a real adept by his occult power, it was kept up for a considerable length of time without being extinguished.

(July 1884)

[Pestonji Dorabji Khandalavala, in his article "Zoroaster and His Religion," remarked: "...pre-occupied first of all with moral and metaphysical order, the reformer of Bactria could not fail to see before his spiritual eye...the question of the origin and the existence of Evil...As opposed to Ormuzd, the good God, and the principle of good, he admits the existence of an adverse principle...a principle equal to him in puissance and similar in nature, 'the Evil Spirit,' Angra Mainyus, in Persian, Ahriman... Ahriman has been eternal in the past as Ormuzd, he has had no beginning and proceeds from no anterior essence." Upon this H.P.B. commented:]

Very naturally, for Ahriman is — *matter*, the begetter of all Evil, and the Destroyer, since matter — eternal *per se* and indestructible — having to ever change form, *destroys* its units, while Ormuzd, or Spirit,

remains immutable in its abstract Unity and as a whole.

[The writer asked: "But how conciliate the existence of the two beings, absolute, equal, similar, co-eternal?" To this H.P.B. appended the following footnote.]

Nothing can have "*no* beginning and yet have an end" in the literal sense. This is contrary to all metaphysical teaching and logic. Ahriman, or Evil, "had *no* beginning," because no more than spirit had matter any beginning. Were they "two coeternal *beings*" — this would be a fallacy. But Matter and Spirit are one — the former at the lower, the latter at the higher pole of *Being*, differentiated in degrees, not in their essence. Ahriman "will disappear from the face of the Universe," when "creation," or rather matter in its differentiated condition, becomes "pure as on the first day" — *i.e.*, when matter gradually purified becomes once more undifferentiated, or returns to its primitive condition in the seventh state of cosmic dissolution: and this takes place periodically at the *Maha-Pralayas* or the universal dissipation of *objective matter*.

[The writer then commented upon a doctrine professed by the Parsis which "...supposes anterior to Ormuzd and to Ahriman, and above them both, a unique principal source of all, 'Time illimitable,' *Zervana-akarna*, out of whose bosom there shot out by way of emanation the two principles, which are to be absorbed anew one day with the beings who people the globe." H.P.B. commented as follows.]

As beyond Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, the "Creator," the "Preserver" and the "Destroyer," there is Parabrahmam, so beyond Ormuzd in his "dual character of Ahour-mazda" and Ahriman, is placed "*Zervana-akarna*" — the "one life" of the Buddhists, the Prabrahmam of the Vedanta Adwaites, and the En-soph of the Chaldean kabalists, placed beyond and above the three trinitarian groups of the nine sephiroths. Sephira, the mother of all — being exoterically the tenth, but esoterically the essence of the nine. Let us remember that Binah (Jehovah) is included in the first group yet stands second to *Chokmah* or wisdom.

[In conclusion, the author asked: "Did not Zoroaster understand that the notion of time necessarily implied a limit? Has he confounded it with Eternity?" To this H.P.B. answered:]

"*Zervana-akarna*," loosely translated *Boundless Time*, means nevertheless ETERNITY. In our limited languages with their limitations of expression and as limited a duration of life, "notion of time implies neces-

sarily a limit." A difference ought to be made between "absolute" and "apparent" time; between duration and Eternity. Thus it is not Zoroaster who confounded time with eternity, but rather his modern followers, who, instead of reading his doctrines in Zend, read and interpret them in English.

(May 1883)

["N.D.K.," a Zoroastrian student of Theosophy, wrote in a letter published under the title "The Efficacy of Funeral Ceremonies": "Enlightened reason rejects the idea that the blundering ceremonial acts performed mechanically could be of any avail to the disembodied portion of man, and yet the Parsees and the Hindus have to spend large sums of money from year to year to allay a superstitious dread lest they might unconsciously do injury to the departed soul. The funeral ceremonies are a real curse to the Parsee, and the middle classes are ground down by needless expenses which lie heavy upon them. Their civilization has been greatly retarded by this crushing superstition. It will therefore be no small boon to learn the opinion of the Occultists as to how far men on earth can — if at all — benefit a deceased person. At p. 179 of the fourth volume of *The Theosophist* Mr. Chidambaram Iyer quotes a Shastra which says that "he who omits to perform Shraddha on the anniversary of the day of death will be born a chandala a crore of times."¹ This is evidently a writing of an uninitiated priest² who scarcely knew anything about the true doctrine of rebirths. But sentences like these sway the populace, and thoughtful persons for want of a correct knowledge of the occult teaching on this point are themselves troubled with doubts. . . . I sincerely trust you will be good enough to enlarge upon this point as it is of the highest moment to the Asiatic races to know what their funeral ceremonies are really worth."

To the above the following answer was given in an editorial note.]

In every country, as among all the peoples of the world from the beginning of history, we see that some kind of burial is performed — but that very few among the so-called savage primitive races had or have any funeral rites or ceremonies. The well-meaning tenderness felt

¹ The punishment, even if true, would not be so dreadful after all in this our age of enlightenment, when social equality and education are levelling all the castes. — ED., *The Theosophist*

² Most assuredly the threat does not come from an initiated Rishi. — ED., *The Theosophist*

by us for the dead bodies of those whom we loved or respected, may have suggested, apart from the expression of natural grief, some additional marks of family respect for them who had left us for ever. But rites and ceremonies as prescribed by our respective Churches and their theologians are an afterthought of the priest, an outgrowth of theological and clerical ambition, seeking to impress upon the laity a superstition, a well-paying awe and dread of a punishment of which the priest himself knows nothing beyond mere speculative and often very illogical hypotheses. The Brahmin, the Mobed, the Augur, the Rabbi, the Moolah or the Priest, impressed with the fact that his physical welfare depended far more upon his parishioners, whether dead or alive, than the spiritual welfare of the latter on his alleged mediatorship between men and God, found the device expedient and good, and ever since worked on this line. Funeral rites have originated among the theocratically governed nations, such as the ancient Egyptians, Aryans, and Jews. Interwoven with, and consecrated by, the ceremonies of theology, these rites have been adopted by the respective religions of nearly all the nations, and are preserved by them to this day; for, while religions differ considerably among themselves, the rites often surviving the people as the religion to which they owed their origin have passed from one people to another. Thus, for instance, the threefold sprinkling with earth with which the Christian is consigned to the tomb, is handed down to the westerns from the Pagans, Greeks, and Romans; and modern Parseeism owes a considerable portion of its prescribed funeral rites, we believe, to the Hindus, much in their present mode of worship being due to grafts of Hinduism. Abraham and other Patriarchs were buried without any rites, and even in *Leviticus* (chap. XIX, v. 28) the Israelites are forbidden to "make any cuttings in the flesh for the dead, nor print any marks" upon themselves. In the same manner the oldest Zoroastrian books, the old and the new *Desatir*, with the exception of a few acts of charity (to the poor, not to the Mobeds) and the reading of sacred books, prescribe no special ceremonies. We find in the Book of the Prophet Abad (*Desatir*) simply the following:

154. A corpse you may place in a vase of *aqua fortis*, or consign it to the fire, or to the earth (when cleansed of its *Nasa* or dead matter).

And again:

At the birth of a child or the death of a relative, read the *Nosk*, and give something in the road of Mazdam (for Ormuzd's

sake, or in charity).

That's all, and nowhere will one find in the oldest books the injunction of the ceremonies now in use, least of all that of spending large sums of money, which often entails ruin upon the survivors.

Nor, from the occult standpoint, do such rites benefit in the least the departed soul. The correct comprehension of the law of Karma is entirely opposed to the idea. As no person's Karma can be either lightened or overburdened with the good or bad actions of the next of kin of the departed one, every man having his Karma independent and distinct from that of his neighbour — no more can the departed soul be made responsible for the doings of those it left behind. As some make the credulous believe that the four principles may be made to suffer from colics, if the survivors ate immoderately of some fruit. Zoroastrianism and Hinduism have wise laws — far wiser than those of the Christians — for the disposal of their dead, but their superstitions are still very great. For, while the idea that the presence of the dead brings pollution to the living is no better than a superstition, unworthy of the enlightened age we live in, the real cause of the religious prohibition to handle too closely the dead and to bury them without first subjecting the bodies to the disinfectant process of either fire, vultures or *aqua fortis* (the latter the prevailing method of the Parsees in days of old) was as beneficent in its results as it was wise, since it was the best and most necessary sanitary precaution against epidemics. The Christians might do worse than borrow that law from the "Pagans," since no further than a few years back, a whole province of Russia was nearly depopulated, in consequence of the crowded condition of its burial grounds. Too numerous interments within a limited space and a comparatively short time saturate the earth with the products of decomposition to such a degree as to make it incapable of further absorbing them; and the decomposition under such a condition being retarded, its products escape directly into the atmosphere, bringing on epidemic diseases and plagues. "Let the dead bury their dead" were wise words, though to this day no theologian seems to have understood their real and profound meaning. There were no funeral rites and ceremonies at the death of either Zoroaster, Moses, or Buddha, beyond the simple putting out of the way of the living the corpses of them who had gone before.

Though neither the *Dabistan* nor the *Desatir* can, strictly speaking, be included in the number of orthodox Parsee books — the contents

of both of these if not the works themselves anteceding by *several millenniums* the ordinances in the *Aesvta* as we have now good reasons to know — we yet find the first command repudiated, but the second corroborated, in the latter. In *Fargard* VIII [Verse 74 (233) of *Vendidad*] Ahura Mazda's command, "They shall kill the man that burns the corpse," etc., is thus commented upon — "He who burns *Nasa* (dead matter) must be killed. . . . Burning *Nasa* from the dead is a capital crime" [*Farg.* I, 17 (63)] for "thereupon came Angra Mainyu who created by his witchcraft a sin for which there is no atonement, the (*immediate*) burning of corpses."³ Ahriman being man's own ignorance and selfishness.

But as regards the rites observed after the funeral of the corpse, we find no more than this — a repetition of the injunction given in the *Book of Abad* (*Desatir*). "An Athravan . . . shall say aloud these fiend-smiting words: *Yat̄ha ahu vairyo* — the riches of *Vohu-mano* (paradise; *vohu-mano* or Good Thought being the doorkeeper of heaven — see *Farg.* XIX, 31) shall be given to him who works in this world for Mazda and wields agreeably to the will of Ahura the power he gave to him to relieve the poor" (*Farg.* VIII, v. 19–49).

Thus, while abrogating the Fersendajian usage of burning the dead among the devotees of Mah-Abad, Zerdusht the 13th (of the Persian prophets) *who introduces* many improvements and reforms, commands no other rites than charity.

(June 1883)

[The following editorial note was appended to a long letter from Dhunjibhoy Jamsetjee Medhora, who wrote on the subject of various astral entities as mentioned in certain portions of the *Zend-Avesta*.]

From the quotations made in the foregoing letter it is evident that by *Devas*, *Drugs* and *Drug-nasus* the ancient Zoroastrian writers meant *black-magicians*, *elementaries* and *elementals* respectively. The other names cited by our correspondent indicate some of the various sub-divi-

³ Twelve hours at the least had to elapse between the death of the person and the burning or the destruction by any other means of the corpse of the dead. This old law was equally forgotten by the Brahmins as by the Zoroastrians. It was not the act of *burning* that was forbidden, but burning before the corpse was empty, *viz.*, before the inner principles had the time to get entirely liberated. As the *aqua fortis* was thought possessed of an occult property to that effect, hence the preliminary burning of the flesh by this means — with the Fersendajians.—ED., *The Theosophist*

sions of elementaries and elemental spirits. These words do not merely mean the magnetic aura of a living or dead body. The question of auric emanations is important in considering the case of these agencies.

The injunction regarding the burial of hair and nails is intended to be a safeguard against the sorcery of black magicians who generally try to get possession of these things for purposes of black magic and for establishing a link between the intended victim and the mischievous agencies they evoke.

Mantras are supposed to implore the assistance of good spirits, friendly to man, to counteract the effects of black magic or demoniacal possession and drive away the evil elemental spirits; the recitation of these words must also be accompanied by appropriate ceremonies rendered effective by concentrated will; they are supposed, when the ritual is duly performed, to attract higher powers and induce them to grant the prayers of the person who uses them.

It is generally supposed that a strong terrestrial magnetic current flows from the north-pole towards the Equator, bringing with it swarms of elementals (Nasus) who live and have their being in it.

The seclusion of women during the period of menstruation is a time-honoured custom amongst several nations. Elementals, it is said, are easily attracted towards the female during this period, and so are the infernal incubi. If a woman is moving about freely, the contagion of bad magnetic aura is supposed to infect every person and thing in the house and render them amenable to the same influence; and hence seclusion and purification are strictly enjoined in this case by the codes of several nations.

Magnetic emanations are constantly radiating from every human being. Their influence is present in the person's shadow, in his photo or picture as well as everything else with which his aura comes into contact. It is interesting in this connection to refer to the "Chhaya grahini" (Shadow-Catcher), mentioned in *Ramayana*, which was able to arrest the aerial progress of Hanuman by seizing on his shadow on the surface of the Sea. It is a well-known fact that the figure of a person or his picture is a great help to a black magician who intends to affect him by his infernal art.

The remaining questions contained in the letter of our correspondent can be easily answered by the light of the interpretation put upon Devas, Drugs and Nasus in these explanatory notes.

(June 1885)

[The following appeared under the title "Gujarat and the Gujaratis," the title of Behramji M. Malabari's book.]

The author's exposure of religious shams and superstitions is very interesting. What he says about the Parsees is more or less applicable to the generality of mankind. The following extract may be especially interesting to our readers:

... Above all, they [the Parsees] have to create or organize a new national church, founded on the simple tradition of *good thought, good word, and good deed*, bequeathed by Zoroaster. Let them weed their Scriptures of their verbiage, and then let them defy the threats of the Levites. Let them see that neither greatness nor happiness is to be achieved by a compromise with conscience.

... There is very little element of genuine devotion in the formula as at present gone through. There is no intelligent appreciation of the recitals. The priest says his prayers for hire. He mumbles a certain quantity of jargon without indicating the least appreciation. There is no solemnity, no dignity, often no decency in the performance of the hireling priest. He knows it all to be humbug, and he gets through it as fast as he can, to see if he can give the benefit of his services to another credulous client soon after. And the devout layman! How does he offer prayers? He recites chapter after chapter of matter which he ought to read once in a way, which contains some excellent moral or philosophical dissertation, but which has as little of devotional merit as *Gulliver's Travels*! He does not understand a word of what he recites. ... The fact is, the average orthodox Parsee has mistaken the scope and spirit of genuine devotion till he has drifted into a callous, selfish, presumptuous creature, unworthy of the name of Zoroastrian. And this is entirely owing to the mystery in which a crafty priesthood has hitherto shrouded his scriptures. ...

And now after reading the above extract, let every theologian substitute his creed for that of the Parsees and see whether the same remarks are not equally applicable to his "*ism*." The fact is that every theology has retained the outer shell, the external mask, while true religion, which is the basis of them all, is entirely lost. The true spirit, the divine light — Theosophy — is gone, neglected and forgotten. The superstitious followers blindly follow the dogmatic interpretations of the priests who are as ignorant as themselves of the WISDOM-RELIGION.

(July 1884)

WORKING WITH CYCLES

THERE IS a true resignation to Karma which does not mean inertness or unpreparedness. General cycles come and go, and our lives add to, or detract from, these. We guide them to the extent that we become wise and perceiving. The personality, to pattern itself after the individual Ego, has to wage a constant struggle, requiring what the Buddha called "Vigilance."

It is an exercise in futility to struggle personally against a general cycle, and it is unwise to do this impetuously or carelessly. Learning has to become eclectic to lead to wisdom, and universal laws need to be invoked to measure immediate decisions. A consciousness of being in essence the eternal, immortal, reincarnating Ego gives to our life a meaning, a divine mission.

As disciples, we need to see the value of striving to "appear as nothing in the eyes of men." We have an inner life, and this ought to be the directive behind our outer acts and words. Each is accountable only to his Real Self—to the *Manasa-putra* (mind-son), the "returning Nirvanee" from preceding *Maha-Manvantaras*, that he is in reality.

Metaphysics is the only basis for real ethical application. Indifference to the Higher Mind, to Buddhi-Wisdom, means lost opportunity. As disciples, self-reform, study, constant work is our *dharma* and our opportunity. Promulgation—the preservation of the original literature, and the providing of forums for study—ensures the wider diffusion of the concepts of companionship, or Karmic sharing, and of brotherhood among reincarnating Egos.

Our endeavour to make application in personal life of our understanding of immutable principles sometimes arouses opposition from others. There are things commonly accepted in the world that we cannot, or will not, agree to if we are to follow our self-imposed discipline. Such opposition or adverse reaction ought to point out to us that we need to gain in ability to apply our growing wisdom.

Our single will, our faith (*Shraddha*), the duty outlined for us by our line of life's meditation, all go to galvanize millions of "lives," making a constellation of "lives" that we draw along with us for our use as reincarnating Egos. Likewise, a Mahatma or an Adept draws together a group of disciples whose life-work is to galvanize the thoughts and aspirations of a whole segment of humanity—a race or a nation. The cyclic tide in a nation's character sometimes draws to it Egos who are

great, generous and heroic, and who in turn influence others to raise themselves to their full stature. Our philosophy gives us the reasons underlying the ethical life so that we can rise with the cycle consciously, while others react to the current unconsciously to themselves — or fail to benefit by it altogether.

As student-teachers of the immemorial philosophy of Theosophy we must point to ideals, and as practitioners we need to do our best to improve our own lives. This is our true work in the cycle in which we are involved.

SINCE the roots of our natures are established in divinity, from which also we are produced, we should tenaciously adhere to our root; for streams of water, and other offspring of the earth, when their roots are cut off become rotten and dry.

The strength of the soul is temperance; for this is the light of a soul destitute of passions. It is much better to die than to darken the soul through the intemperance of the body.

You cannot easily denominate that man happy who depends either on his friends or children, or on any fleeting and fallen nature; for all these are unstable and uncertain; but to depend on one's self and on divinity is alone stable and firm.

He is a wise man, and beloved by divinity, who studies how to labour for the good of his soul, as much as others labour for the sake of the body.

It is impossible that the same person can be a lover of pleasure, a lover of body, a lover of riches, and a lover of divinity: for a lover of pleasure is also a lover of body; but a lover of body is entirely a lover of riches; but a lover of riches is necessarily unjust; and the unjust is necessarily profane towards divinity, and lawless with respect to men. Hence, though he should sacrifice hecatombs, he is only by this means the more impious, unholy, atheistical, and sacrilegious with respect to his intention: and on this account it is necessary to avoid every lover of pleasure as an atheist and polluted person.

The divinity has not a place in the earth more allied to his nature than a pure and holy soul.

—PYTHAGORIC SENTENCES OF DEMOPHILUS

OVERCOMING IMPEDIMENTS

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

—*St. John*, XII. 36

MAN makes his own impediments by building up habits which, though at one time he considered desirable, have now on mature experience become obnoxious. Vice is a habit recklessly welcomed with a sense of pleasure and a degree of satisfaction, even though it is known to militate against all canons of morality. Because of the fascination that is exercised by vice over certain natures, the craving that it arouses makes the man work towards its satisfaction. The urge for this may at times become so acute that it will compel him to stoop to anything to consummate its gratification. What are the mechanics of the process that enables vice to hold a man captive against his will and his better judgment? What force is it that seemingly compels him to drink the cup of lasciviousness to its bitter dregs? Neither religion nor science has either the answer or the panacea. They have to be sought for in the laws of the Occult.

All men are interlinked, not only among themselves but also with the innumerable lives and intelligences that throng the seen and unseen realms of space. This space which embraces the stars and the planets and the vast interstellar expanses is full of lives which are, some friendly and others inimical to man. These continually impinge upon and affect him intimately, though he knows it not. They are within him, in each of the sheaths of his Soul, as they are around him, having their continuous ebb and flow in and through him. They change with every change of his moods and feelings. They people his current in space and reflect his clean and unclean fancies. It is these lives that make up every secret part of his nature. Given the proper conditions — the psychic atmosphere that exudes from men, places, ideas and images — they are aroused to feverish activity and begin to clamour for expression. The mind gets involved through dwelling on the anticipated enjoyment and thus permits itself to be used as a playground of the senses.

These lives are subservient to the laws of Causation and to the dominant will of man. Their actions on him are guided by the attraction and repulsion produced by himself and their activities are under the law of cycles and the other law which makes the man subject to atavistic tendencies and the hereditary bias provided by family, nation

and race.

If man can in his blindness open himself to the undesirable, he can, when his eyes are opened, become receptive to the desirable. Why, then, does he hold back? Why is it that seemingly against his own will he goes and does exactly that which he wishes to avoid and even to shun? It can only be so because he is cowed and subjugated by a force superior to his enfeebled will—a force that compels him to do evil where the moment before he had intended to do good. As his cycles of aspirations are followed by cycles of darkness, the man lives through his ups and downs and becomes a Dr. Jekyll or a Mr. Hyde by turns, with no clear prospect of virtue finally triumphing over the hordes of evil. Long years spent in unholy acts and in sense indulgence have already fashioned his physical and ethereal bodies with lives that are congenial to vice and evil. They cannot be evicted overnight. The beginner does not have at his command those reservoirs of energy that can work the transformation. He has deliberately to build within himself that force which is superior to the one in the possession of the lives he had welcomed as honoured guests, but whose presence is now a source of worry and torture.

The law that can help the student in his plight is the same law that science has come to recognize at least in part. It is the law under which the physical body undergoes a complete alteration and renovation at intervals of about seven years. What science has yet to discover is that this change can be controlled by the human will, which can accelerate its action. Occult psychology affirms that this same will can select the type and quality of lives that will be attracted to replace those that are being shed. Man is potentially a God. The voice of that God is within him. But it is crowded out by the hubbub raised by his desires and his thirst for sensation. If by some means available to him he can starve and remove from his make-up lives which have the quality of grossness, then will he be able to give opportunity to the ethereal particles of his inner vestures to manifest themselves.

The first step, then, would be to take the benefit of the seven-year cycle and to concentrate the will-force on such acts, words, feelings and thoughts as would deny entrance to the grosser elements and at the same time help in purging such deleterious ones as have already made their lodging in him. By so doing, he will initiate the process of attracting ethereal and more refined particles to come in and fill the vacated places.

It is now recognized that the flesh of animals is made up of lives

and organisms that are the carriers of the qualities inherent in the animals. Lust, anger, greed, deceit and craftiness are in all flesh in greater or lesser degree. There are also strength, tenacity, determination, love and loyalty, though these are of lives not suited for the ethereal aspects of the man. When a man eats flesh, he takes in these lives with the essence of the animal's qualities. His body will of course reject those that are not congenial to it. But, if he has qualities that shut him off from the higher regions, then, by taking flesh food he but augments the gross particles within him, and these will successfully thwart all efforts at reform.

Alcohol — in whatever form — has the potency to inject the grossest forms of life, so that even if it is taken in miniscule doses it will incline the man towards the irresponsible and murky sides of life. It has the tendency to paralyse the nerve centres and to shut out from the consciousness the light that is inherent in all life.

Sexual desires are the great drainers of energy. Indulgence in them leads to debility and a lowering of the nerve vitality. On the inner planes, the after-effects produce a great disturbance in the mental balance and moral stamina. Sexual acts produce pleasurable physical sensations which are only enjoyable at such stages of density as require the use of a certain gross quality of the original matter of the Universe. It therefore becomes a great setback for the student because in his urge to satisfy a physical craving he is tainting matter which it is his duty to leave unsullied. His misuse of this matter and his draining away of energy make him so much the poorer in will and soul-force.

The avoiding of certain foods, the total abstinence from alcohol and its products, the curbing of indulgence in sex — these are but negative, though none-the-less curative, steps. Unless these preliminaries are taken care of, the beginner will find that he is not only marking time but slipping backwards. Yet, it must be evident to the merest tyro that no abstention from alcohol, no care in the selection of foods, no outward adoption of sex restraint will take him even a little step forward if the craving is still in his heart or if his inner food — sights, sounds, thoughts, ideations and feelings — is amoral and insipid. It is here that study and familiarity with the scriptures helps. The silent repetition of sacred texts as a form of worship is recommended in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The student has to discover through his own experience that when the mind is made to dwell exclusively upon morals and metaphysics, the grip that the grosser particles exert upon him is for a time loosened. As the

adoration of the God within increases, the ethereal particles that clothe the pure and the diviner parts of the man (he *is* a sevenfold being) find a chance to shine through.

The danger which must still dog the steps of the aspirant lies in the cyclic return of impressions and the precipitation of the bad Karma which he has gathered. Step upon cautious step must remain the order of the day, till in time the Soul will become unfettered and the desires free. It has to be kept in mind that the gross elements that have been unceremoniously bundled out resent their expulsion. They will combine together, devise strategies, gather their cohorts and mount a determined attack particularly on that front where the individual's defences are weak. The Mahabharata War *has* to be joined. It cannot be escaped. But, by this time, the disciple — like Arjuna — will have secured his celestial weapons and opted to take Krishna as his charioteer. All the energies of the aspirant have to be made to converge on this point in time, when the forces of good are challenged by the forces of combined evil. To support the aspirant in this hour of danger, *Light on the Path* offers valuable advice and instruction. It says:

1. Stand aside in the coming battle, and though thou fightest be not thou the warrior.

2. Look for the warrior and let him fight in thee.

3. Take his orders for battle and obey them.

4. Obey him not as though he were a general, but as though he were thyself, and his spoken words were the utterance of thy secret desires; for he is thyself, yet infinitely wiser and stronger than thyself. Look for him, else in the fever and hurry of the fight thou mayest pass him; and he will not know thee unless thou knowest him. If thy cry reach his listening ear then will he fight in thee and fill the dull void within. . . . But if thou look not for him, if thou pass him by, then there is no safeguard for thee. . . .

He is thyself, yet thou art but finite and liable to error. He is eternal and is sure. He is eternal truth. When once he has entered thee and become thy warrior, he will never utterly desert thee, and at the day of the great peace he will become one with thee.

5. Listen to the song of life.

THE ONE PURE LIGHT

IT WAS a good many years since Nirmal, while employed in a diamond mine owned by a relative, had met with an accident that crippled him for life and reduced him to poverty. His kinsman at the time had treated him meanly, but when dying was moved by remorse to leave him a large uncut diamond, which, to Nirmal, proved a source of much anxiety, he having no idea how to set about selling it, nor would he have dared to, lest he be accused of having stolen it.

So it lay in a box in his poor hut, looking a mere dull lump in its unpolished state, and when he occasionally ventured to peep at it, it caused him a pang of self-reproach. Well he knew what beauty lay hid in it — how it could sparkle with all the colours of the rainbow. And by degrees he fell to wondering, Was he doing wrong? Was he denying a gem its rightful glory? Would the few tools he had kept be adequate? More important, did his hands retain their skill?

Nirmal had more than a craftsman's hands — he had an inward-looking speculative mind. Years of physical incapacity had helped to develop this, but more was due to the fact of there being an ashram near the village, where a kindly Swami had given him a little employment in repairing some brass and copper kitchen utensils.

The ashram had a library to which came students from many lands, and after being given an evening meal it was Nirmal's task to sweep the floor and restore to the shelves any books that might have been left lying on the desks. As he did so he could overhear the discourse being given in the next room, which was separated from the library by a curtain, a discourse dealing almost invariably with religion. Nirmal was a Hindu, but among the students there seemed to be a great many different faiths. He heard of Buddhism and Christianity and Mohammedanism — these names he knew already. But others were unfamiliar — Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism. Why so many, he wondered? Only good people came to the ashram. So why did they differ, not all believing the same thing? That seemed foolish. It must cause disputes and ill feeling.

The old Swami sighed when Nirmal put this question to him. "Alas, my son, it is because, through their varying mental tendencies, men dwell on aspects of truth instead of on Truth itself. It is as though each looked at the separate facets of a diamond instead of concentrating on the precious jewel as one whole."

Nirmal started at these words. Strange that the Swami should say

just that! "Then each," he said, after a moment's thought, "is mistaken?"

"Not entirely," replied the Swami. "Every facet has its worth. But none, taken separately, has the value of the whole. And the arguments arising from comparisons of them are much to be regretted."

Late that night, in his poor home, with the door barred and the window shuttered, Nirmal sat brooding over his diamond, and gradually an idea came to him. The diamond as it was spelt only worry. Yet he had not the heart to bury it in the earth. Instead, he would give it to his friends at the ashram, who would, he felt sure, believe his story, but first he would cut and polish it, and what the Swami had said about religion was going to guide him. He would make a list of all those different names and cut a facet for each of them. Had not the Swami said, "Every facet has its worth"?

He began his task that very night. Only by night could he work in safety, for though neighbourly calls from the villagers were few, he dared not risk being caught at it by day. For several days he laboured, his old skill gradually coming back to him, and when the first facet sparkled up at him his delight was such that he sat smiling at it for quite a while with idle hands.

When only two facets remained to be cut some special festival was held at the ashram. "This is an annual event with us," the Swami told him. "Of great import to all Truth-lovers. As you are one such, you must stay and hear the discourse."

"On what religion is it?" asked Nirmal.

The Swami answered smilingly, "On none. Or rather, my son, inclusively on all. The subject is *Sanatana Dharma*, which means, quite simply, the Eternal Wisdom."

"*Sanatana Dharma!*" Nirmal repeated under his breath. The strange words pleased him. Somehow, they even seemed familiar. He had a sudden notion that he had heard them before — inside his head! But aloud he said only, "I have kept count of how many religions there are to choose from. Here is a new one for me to add." As he spoke, he thought of his diamond's glittering facets.

The Swami laughed softly. "New! My good Nirmal, far from it! There are indeed religions aplenty. But *Sanatana Dharma* is the mother of them all."

"Indeed, sir?" said Nirmal politely.

"Indeed and indeed again," replied the Swami. "As all corn originates

from one seed, even so come all faiths, however distorted, from *Sanatana Dharma*, the Wisdom-Religion."

Nirmal stood silent for a moment or two. Then he said slowly, "I am sure that is true, sir. Unlike you, I am very ignorant. I had little education and am no reader. But as regards religion I have a feeling that there could never be meant to be so many different kinds. Must there not be *one* meaning behind this life of ours, which seems to many of us so puzzling, and one way of responding to that meaning if we knew it? If these two points were agreed upon there would be no need of so many religions, except of course that we would value the teachings of the various holy men connected with them. But we would not argue as to which was best, still less dislike those who do not think as we do."

"Nirmal, my son," said the Swami softly, looking down at the worn face with kind eyes, "say no more about lack of reading and education. The voice of the Teacher has assuredly reached your ears."

Nirmal could find no reply to this, and as the speaker was now being ushered into the lecture room, he followed the Swami to the back row, where the latter preferred to sit. Soon began the address. To the first half Nirmal listened with rapt attention, amazed to find many of his own thoughts given utterance with a clarity that he himself could never attain to. Then, midway through, he lost the thread of it. Suddenly, his mind seemed centred on his diamond. What was he about, cutting so many facets, polishing each with loving care, perpetuating the idea of all those unnecessary different religions? "*Alter it!*" a Voice said imperatively. With a start, Nirmal looked round to see who spoke. No one! The Voice was only within himself. It was probably nothing more than a strong impulse that seized him to do just that.

But — to undo his patient work! Even to reduce the diamond in size! The next moment, and he knew that he must. For now the meaning of those sparkling facets troubled him. What did they stand for but disunity, the direct opposite of this late-found *Sanatana Dharma*? And as though to urge him to a decision the Swami's words came echoing back to him, words not of blame but rather of sorrow for those who each looked at a diamond's separate facets instead of concentrating on the precious jewel as one whole.

The days came and went. At the appointed times Nirmal hobbled to the ashram. But for the present, so far as possible, he avoided conversation with the Swami. By night he toiled secretly, and the great diamond underwent a second transformation. That accomplished, Nirmal wrapped

it, with reverent hands, in a piece of cotton and set out on the familiar path feeling both heart and mind at rest at last.

The Swami was pottering in the garden. Nirmal bowed to him, then made the little speech he had prepared.

“Honoured sir, I am about to ask you to accept a gift to the community. But first I would like to tell you how I came to own it and to hear you say that you accept my word that it was honestly.”

“Nirmal, I know you,” said the Swami, smiling. “Could you suppose that I would doubt you? Let us sit in the shade here and you shall tell me. Somehow, lately, our talks together have been few.”

Under the pipal tree Nirmal told his story of the diamond. As he spoke of his idea of the facets representing the different religions — “A fine thought, a poet’s thought,” broke in the Swami. “Yet another, you say, occurred to you? You have recut the diamond accordingly? I must confess I cannot think what it may be.”

“I will show you,” said Nirmal quietly, unfolding the piece of cotton. He drew out the diamond, held it up, and the play of the sunshine upon it was so dazzling that only when he lowered his hand again was its beauty fully seen. Without the facets it was a simple, flawless gem, a perfect round of clear, pure radiance. A slight tremor in Nirmal’s hand caused some rainbow rays to dart from it, but in itself it was a thing of essential *light*.

The Swami stood silent, looking down at it. At last he said, “So that, my son, is your conception of *Sanatana Dharma*. I can only marvel that you should find so apt a symbol for what to you at your present stage must seem an abstraction.”

“You accept it?” said Nirmal timidly.

“On behalf of all of us I do accept it most gratefully. And if in return for this rare gift you choose to make your home with us henceforth, you will speedily find *Sanatana Dharma* no abstraction. Even as from this diamond — ” he touched it gently — “come forth these multi-coloured rays, so from *Sanatana Dharma* emanate all the religions of mankind. Each, my son, has its worth, for each derives from one single source, one light. Your gift will be a visible demonstration to us of that. May every student who looks upon it be as perceptive as yourself.”

Nirmal bowed. But he felt embarrassed. The Swami was crediting him with more than he deserved. “Sir,” he said quickly, “I can cut and polish a diamond, but I would never have thought of any of these things

if you yourself had not once spoken as you did.”

“How did I speak?” inquired the Swami.

“You said — ” Nirmal tried to recall the exact words — “that when people saw only *parts* of Truth instead of all of it, it was like looking at the facets of a diamond instead of at the jewel as a whole.”

Again the Swami stood silent, this time for so long that he seemed to have fallen into a muse. The birds flitted, the diamond shone, and Nirmal, watching him anxiously, waited patiently.

At long last the Swami stirred. He picked up the diamond, which Nirmal still held on his open palm. At that moment a small bell rang softly within the old ochre-tinted walls of the ashram.

“Come!” said the Swami. “Come see your gift laid safely in our sanctuary. I think I shall never have to say to you, Nirmal, as I do to others from time to time, ‘*Thy Soul-gaze centre on the One Pure Light.*’ ”

A LITTLE VISION

I STOOD where my old and wise friend had been, and as I listened in the silence the strong deep tones of a great organ swept through the air. On the wings of sound came a noble being, youth and man in all the ages. He was clad in robes of white and in his hand bore high a golden wand, from the tip of which blazed forth a silver star. “Look at the light, look not at anything else,” he said. Then the organ tones changed to the furious hissing of a storm, and black clouds rolling up obliterated everything except the pure white star which blazed high over all. “Look at the light; fear not,” came his voice. “Nothing can hurt it, for it is not of earth.” The storm swept all away, then rushed off to the distance, and the beautiful, wise, strong, and ancient being vanished also. Yet far off the faint but dominating sound of a great diapason could be heard. It was the singing of the faithful Choristers of the Lodge, those who know not fear and have left sorrow behind.

—AMARAN (*The Path*, November 1894)

GURUS AND CHELAS

[The *Supplement to The Theosophist* for August 1883 contained the following “emphatic declaration” by over 200 signatories on the subject of the relation between Gurus and Chelas.—EDS.]

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER printed by some masked enemy from Lahore, in the *Statesman*, against our modern Rishis and Mahatmas, is simply infamous. . . . European Theosophists, we learn, persist in treating the relations between Gurus and Chelas from the standpoint of their own misguided conceptions. This has, of late, become a very painful subject to all of us. We are orthodox Hindus, and it is as such and not as Theosophists (most of us not being Fellows [of the Theosophical Society] at all) that we beg the privilege of stating our views most unequivocally this time, hoping that you will kindly find for them room in your journal. Our emphatic declaration is as follows:

Once that a man offers himself as a Chela, he must be prepared to be tested (or tempted, as Europeans may call it). He will be tried from the first day of his probation to the last, very strictly, and in a thousand and one ways by Chelas of higher and lower grades, by black magicians let loose upon him, by elementaries (*bhoots* and *pisachas*), by elementals — nay by the GURU HIMSELF — as he and others will be allowed to believe, especially those who judge only from appearance and the delusions of Maya; and the Guru may even send *Mohinis* to try his chastity. The unfortunate Chela on probation will be tempted to commit forgery, theft, and adultery — what not!! Since the Chela wants to make abnormal progress spiritually and morally, he has naturally to submit to abnormal tests. He has to become victor and trample under foot every temptation, to show himself worthy of taking his rank among the gods of true science. Bliss and success are in store for him if he comes out victorious. Woe to him if he succumbs! . . .

This may sound strange to the Westerns who are yet crawling on their way to a correct understanding of true Eastern Occultism. It is simply ridiculous and preposterous to see a Chela, whenever discomfited by such trials, playing the part of a Glyndon and blaspheming at his Guru and the noblest of all human sciences — Occult philosophy. There is no limit, we say, as to how far the Guru can go. He can do *anything* with His Chela, and the latter has to submit, or give up the SCIENCE for ever. A Guru is regarded as God. And he who has placed himself under

His care had better submit, or take the consequences. All of us agree with and corroborate this statement.

IN MY OPINION *imagination* is exactly what it imports on its face, that is, the *image-making power* possessed surely by man, and inferred in brute creation. It was so defined by the ancient occultists and by the hermetic philosophers. But nowadays it is given a low place generally, yet has been raised to slightly greater eminence by the Metaphysical Healers who have stumbled unknowingly on a great law. That which is often called *imagination* is, in fact, only fancy, or the idle creation of images whose tenure of life is short. But conscious exercise of this power raised to its highest degree is one of the necessities of occult art, for no occult feat can be performed without it. Experiments in mesmerism for a century, and lately those in hypnotism, show that each person has the power to create an image about himself which is perfectly objective to the inner senses of the seer. This creation is done by the use of imagination solely. If the image be indefinite, owing to the imagination not working strongly, the seer or subject will only see indefiniteness, because the subjective picture was badly constructed. But the constructor, poor or good, was the imagination. The Indian fakir makes you see the snake or other object — though you have all your senses — because through centuries of heredity and years of training his imagination has been put into such order that it sees before it the form so vividly that you perceive, as you suppose, an objective reality when none in fact exists. And turning to the letters from Adepts to Mr. Sinnett, we find them saying that in order to precipitate a note they must see (in imagination) each and every letter complete and unwavering before they can precipitate the material elements through that matrix upon the paper. So not only have we the testimony of all the mystics, but also that of those Adepts who in later days have shown those things to some.

—W. Q. JUDGE

“THE SALT OF THE EARTH”

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

—*The Sermon on the Mount*

IN the above words attributed to Jesus is implicit the importance of disciples' duties and responsibilities in continuing to tread the spiritual path, fulfilling their noble task of spreading broadcast the great teachings that they have been privileged to receive. Just as the chief characteristic of salt is its savour, and its usefulness lies in preserving different articles of food, so too the disciple's work is to preserve the teachings through constant study, application and dissemination, so that they reach other minds, awakening them to immortal ideas and enlightening their hearts to help their fellow beings. In spite of the efforts of the great Saviours of humanity to incarnate on this earth age after age to proclaim the Eternal Verities, the world is groping in darkness — the darkness of ignorance about the true concepts of God-Law-Evolution, leading to selfishness and self-gratulation; the darkness of the imbalance caused by materialistic tendencies and religious orthodoxy on the one hand, and lack of correct morals on the other. Hence the need for disciples not to lag behind in their great work in spite of all the difficulties that surround them physically, mentally and morally.

The One Life, or God, expresses itself under three aspects — creative, preservative and destructive-regenerative, represented by Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva — within us and in the nature around us, otherwise there would be no progressive evolution. Once the disciple has determined to follow the spiritual path, his duty is to preserve the teachings as given out by the great Teachers. Therein lies the significance of the image of salt, not only its preserving quality but its savour. The disciple has to preserve his zest and enthusiasm, his faith and devotion to carry out steadfastly and earnestly his aspirations. He has to give the doctrines a life-giving savour which would keep them alive to nourish other human souls. This has to be a constant reminder to every disciple when he feels bored or distressed or neglects his duty.

In order not to lose the savour of life, one needs to live more and more on the plane of the higher mind, leaving behind the ephemeral pleasures of sense-inclinations and passions and desires of the personal self. With purity of thought, word and deed, one also needs to take care

of the powers of will and imagination. Mr. Judge states in his *Ocean of Theosophy*: "The Imagination is the picture-making power of the human mind. . . . When trained it is the Constructor in the Human Workshop. . . . It is therefore the King faculty, inasmuch as the Will cannot do its work if the Imagination be at all weak or untrained." And Madame Blavatsky, in summing up the Ten Items from *Isis Unveiled*, states: "One common vital principle pervades all things, and this is controllable by the perfected human will." So there is a great deal for disciples to do in the human workshop — to strengthen the will so that what is created is preserved and perfected. Often good resolutions are made, but are soon neglected and forgotten. Why? Because the power of perseverance is weak and lacks the savour to influence and benefit others.

In the Thirteenth Discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Sri Krishna enumerates the characteristics of true spiritual wisdom, and among them he mentions "birth, death, decay, sickness and error" as subjects for meditation. Ordinarily, people fear the destructive power of life, but it is a needless fear. Once it is realized that the creative, preservative and regenerative aspects of the one life are within us, it becomes necessary to understand the proper meaning and use of each. Sickness and error are the results of going in the wrong direction — against the laws of nature on one or another plane. Birth represents the creative aspect of embodied existence — growth, unfoldment, expansion. Death is the disintegrating process, when the seven principles of man held together during life begin to disperse and the consciousness withdraws itself on the spiritual plane where it digests and assimilates the food garnered during life. In between is the preserver, Vishnu, who pervades everywhere. Jesus addresses his disciples as "the salt of the earth," that they may wisely make their choices and become embodiments of the doctrines, adding savour through their example. They have to become preservers of peace and goodwill upon earth, deliberately and consciously, otherwise they would be failing in their self-chosen task.

It is necessary also for the disciples to preserve the unity of the *Sangha*, or of the particular Order to which they belong. Centres of the one United Lodge of Theosophists are bound together on the basis of the same aim, that of changing the minds and the hearts of the people; of the same purpose, that of the formation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood; and of the same teaching the study, application and promulgation of which can make for united work. Devotion to Masters'

work is to be cultivated by ever keeping in mind the Seven Golden Keys, or the Divine Virtues of *The Voice of the Silence*. In various life events and human contacts, through pleasure or pain and the struggles of life, these virtues are ever so helpful in uplifting us that it is necessary to fill our minds and hearts with them and to make them a part of ourselves. Temperament, character and outlook on life vary from person to person, but that is the savour of life, that is the way to learn from one another, not through criticism but in co-operation with all, for the sake of the Great Cause. United we stand, divided we fall, like the famous story of the bundle of sticks. So let us keep in our minds and hearts the vision of a regenerated humanity, a heaven established on earth, and not quarrel over petty things and trivial differences. The savour of salt enables us to relish food and get nourishment out of it; so, too, with spiritual food. It must be assimilated and preserved for the benefit of all.

To them thus always devoted to me, who worship me with love, I give that mental devotion by which they come to me. For them do I out of my compassion, standing within their hearts, destroy the darkness which springs from ignorance by the brilliant lamp of spiritual discernment. (*Bhagavad-Gita*, X. 11-12)

THERE ARE a growing number of facts available that show plainly that we are as much a part of our own diseases as we are of our health, that we should be able to and indeed can help ourselves. The task of the doctor today is what it has always been, to help the body do what it has learned so well to do on its own during its unending struggle for survival—to heal itself. For it is the body, not medicine, that is the hero.

—RONALD J. GLASSER

ROBERT CROSBIE SPEAKS

XI.—ABOUT "OTHERS"

WE always act on and in connection with OTHERS, affecting them for good or evil, and we get the necessary reaction from the causes set in motion by ourselves. This presents to us the idea of absolute Justice, for under such a conception of Law each being receives exactly what he *gives*.

There are many temptations, some of which may come disguised as angels of light. Our best safeguard is an unselfish desire to benefit OTHERS, with no anxiety about our own progress, while striving all the time to make ourselves the better able to help and teach OTHERS.

Let us take the beam out of our own eyes before we try to remove the mote from the eyes of OTHERS. . . . Let us follow the lines of the law of our own being — compassion, love, helpfulness for all — and then we shall be able to understand ourselves and the natures of all OTHERS. Then we shall be able to help men in a way they are sometimes not aware of; we shall be able to help leaven the whole lump.

We are apt to overlook the good we afford to OTHERS by our effort. Every one we affect, even in a slight degree, affects OTHERS, and no one can say what may be done for the future through indirect methods.

We should be united in aim, purpose and teaching; to do this we have to accept all OTHERS on the same basis, who, under the Law of Karma, are drawn together with us. Each should endeavour to learn as much as possible so as to be the better able to help and teach OTHERS, and in so doing gradually eliminate such defects as present themselves in the course of study and effort.

It is assumed in charity that one who wrongs the Truth does so in ignorance; but the custodians of Truth voice it in the face of lie, ignorance and error, and take every opportunity possible to correct erroneous impressions. Theosophy is in the world for that purpose. We are not to be self-assertive nor flabby; knowing the Truth, we speak it and care only for it and that it be as widely known as possible. All of which is entirely compatible with charity to the weaknesses of OTHERS and abstention from condemnation of OTHERS.

The sincere desire to help OTHERS acts as a great inlet from our supersensuous consciousness.

If students succeed in grasping and applying the Philosophy, their

gratefulness will include all that contributed to their opportunity; this gratitude will find expression in their doing the same for OTHERS.

We accept and know many things interiorly, but if we are to give OTHERS the proper words and ideas that will convey them, we have to be able to formulate them; so we practise formulation of answers, constructing them ourselves, or adopting those used by OTHERS that do so effectively.

Some think it to be intolerance to point out to OTHERS holding different views any errors of statement or fact. But Truth never yet agreed with error, nor does error agree with error; Truth agrees only with Truth. So, if we firmly believe, and are convinced by fact and reason, that we are in possession of Truth, it would be a false tolerance which would withhold it in the face of error.

We have to think at all times of OTHERS and of the future. If OTHERS are not helped and trained to take hold, to share in the work and its responsibilities, then, should anything happen to us, the work would suffer.

There is the true idea to be established in us — that of our individual responsibility to all OTHERS for the use of our powers. In it is implied the Spiritual Identity of all beings, the *divinity* of every being that exists — not only of mankind — the good and bad natures there — but every being below us, as well as every being above us.

Law is operative everywhere and upon every being. . . . So, as we act along those lines that affect OTHERS for good or for evil, we necessarily receive the return from those good or evil effects which we cause OTHERS to experience.

True morality does not depend upon words, phrases, or conversations, but upon a *universal* perception of all things, whereby everything is done for good, every thought and feeling expended for the benefit of OTHERS rather than for one's self.

While our life lasts we will keep on doing all we can to give OTHERS a sound basis, a better understanding of what the great Ideas of Theosophy mean.

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The Indian Prime Minister announced recently the government's decision to introduce total prohibition throughout the country within four years. The high consumption of liquor has become a sensitive political issue from time to time, but, as Shishir Ray-Chaudhuri recalls in his article, "Battling the Bottle" (*The Times of India* August 14), whenever action was taken in the past to ban the sale and consumption of liquor, it failed to achieve the objectives of the prohibition policy.

It is unfortunate that liquor consumption, instead of being appreciably reduced, has in fact increased. The phenomenal growth of the Indian liquor industry is evident from the fact that India produced nearly 505 million litres of alcohol in 1975-76 and has started exporting industrial alcohol and molasses. Liquor-brewing has become a cottage industry in some regions. The illicit liquor trade, catering to the poor man who cannot afford costly brands, has become so widespread that it eludes the authorities.

The direct, marked and very deleterious influence of alcohol in all its forms on man's body and his psychic condition cannot be denied; yet it has time and again been proven that not enforcement, but education, can pave the way for any reform. The force of temptation to go counter to what is enforced from without has to be reckoned with. As Robert Crosbie says of prohibitions in general:

Consider our selfish pursuits, our condemnations, our judgments, our criticisms, our foolish laws, which seek to make men "good" by legislation with no attempt to arouse the real nature of man, but only to repress what is considered "bad." Prohibitions of all kinds serve only to exasperate the evil nature in men. We need not to *prohibit*. We need to *educate*.

Generally speaking, drinking intoxicants results from the desire to get rid of what might be called the present personal consciousness; to drown pain, sorrow or worry and to be free of an intolerable sense of identity, monotony or sameness. It is an effort to produce by extraneous aids what can only be properly and lastingly had by inner character development. For the ordinary person at the present time, W. Q. Judge suggests "healthy and interesting occupation" as the best cure for such a habit, an idea which is being used in the treatment of alcoholics.

Crime in the United States has reached epidemic proportions, striking one out of every four households — one out of three in big cities. And this includes serious crime, such as murder, rape, assault, burglary. In a recent issue of *Family Health*, sociologist John Norton writes on the national climate of fear bred by crime:

Last year almost half of all Americans admitted they were afraid to walk on the streets of their own neighbourhoods at night. And 20 per cent felt frightened even in their own homes! Today, more Americans than ever before barricade themselves behind double- and triple-locked doors, equipping their households with guard dogs, burglar alarms and guns; more downtown areas become ghost towns after dark. Every day there are more locked and gated stores, more weapons hidden in women's purses, more signs announcing "Bus Driver Has No Change," more private guards, martial arts trainees, fortress-like housing developments, more of almost every defensive device — but no more genuine security for the public....

Last year, 5.3 million crimes of violence were committed in this country. The victims numbered an almost unbelievable 39.6 million men, women and children. And these people discovered that financial loss, however devastating (insurance rarely covers more than a fraction!) was often only a small part of their long-term anguish.

The victim suffers severe mental and/or physical pain. "Victims may tend to become paranoid," say crisis-intervention specialists Dr. Morton Bard and Katherine Ellison, "and to feel that someone is following them, or that the environment is dangerous, or that the offender is lurking nearby, even when this is not possible. They may develop nighttime compulsions or excessive, unreasonable phobias...." Such lasting terrors often afflict women who have been raped, children who have been kicked and beaten by juvenile gangs, even strong men who have been held up at the point of a knife which could have slit the throat, or a gun which might have blasted through flesh and bone....

It is an appalling truth that today more crimes are committed by children under 15 than by adults over 25. It is even more horrifying that young criminals perpetrate sex attacks on still younger children and are attracted to savage and senseless violence — murders committed "for fun," and brutal muggings, especially of the helpless elderly. Possibly half the crimes committed in this nation are the work of teenagers — whom we seem helpless to control or rehabilitate....

What is the outlook for the future? Bleak. Virtually no national, state or local law enforcement officials see much hope for a decline in crime; in fact, says FBI Director Clarence Kelly, crime "will reign over our lives ever more cruelly in the future" — *unless we as a people do something about it!*

The old view was that the responsibility for crime rested solely on the criminal. How mistaken it was H.P.B. brings out when she declares that if each transgression were impartially investigated it would be found that in nine cases out of ten the offender was the one sinned against, rather than the sinner. Society cannot evade responsibility for the conditions that increase temptations to crime.

The odic and magnetic currents of the Astral Light [says H.P.B.] often incite to murder, drunkenness, immorality, and, as Eliphas Lévi expresses it, the not altogether pure natures "can be driven headlong by the blind forces set in motion in the *Light*" — by the errors and sins imposed on its waves. ("Psychic and Noetic Action")

Elsewhere, H.P.B. speaks of the unconscious influence of a person's visible or invisible surroundings:

He may become a prey to Elementaries or Elementals, even without knowing the meaning of these words, and he may consequently become a thief, a murderer, ravisher, a drunkard or a cut-throat, and it has often enough been proved that crimes frequently become epidemic. ("Are Chelas 'Mediums'?": *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 13*)

The student of Theosophy, who recognizes the unity of humanity, who accepts the teaching that the bad man and the foolish man are himself, that the sin and shame of the world are his sin and shame, because he is a part of that world, has a safeguard against "the great dire heresy of Separateness" that makes so many law-abiding citizens look upon criminals as a race apart. And yet, in the final analysis, the individual must reform himself; but he can be helped in that task, as we have all been helped, by others' standing by to hold the light. The individual criminal needs proper training and he needs to have ideals put before him that can prompt a change in his mental and moral outlook. "As a man thinketh, so he will become," and to resolve aright is half the battle.

Dr. George Ritchie, who claims that he underwent a "life after life" experience after he was declared clinically dead back in 1943, is today a respected psychiatrist in Charlottesville, Virginia, U.S.A. For years he did not tell anyone except one or two intimate family members what had happened to him in the interval between his "death" and later revival, and if he speaks openly now it is because people — scientists, scholars, clergy — are listening. And more and more are recounting "life after life" experiences, many of them encouraged by Dr. Raymond Moody's best seller of the same name. Dr. Moody was prompted to begin his inquiry — among some 100 persons who had been pronounced dead or been close to death and had later revived — after hearing Dr. Ritchie relate his story.

In an article entitled "Man Who Came Back from the Dead..." (*The Sunday Standard*, August 7), William Gildea writes about Ritchie's experience:

There is no question that Ritchie was pronounced dead. He's got the hospital staff's sworn testimony on that, including one doctor's additional opinion that Ritchie's "virtual call from death and return to vigorous health has to be explained in terms other than natural means."

What Dr. Ritchie says he experienced in that nine minutes or more when he stopped breathing lends itself to scepticism, raising as it does questions that cannot be explained. But Ritchie's credibility has been substantially bolstered in recent years, beyond the capacity of his character references, by Moody's research showing that any number of clinically dead persons who made come-backs tell extraordinarily similar stories independent of each other.

As Moody concludes, the stories don't strictly prove anything but, then again, "it's impossible to have talked with all the people I have without becoming convinced that something about us survives bodily death, that we will go on to some other state of consciousness or realm of being..."

The events that Moody heard of in his interviews with those who "died" include feelings of peace, hearing noise, leaving the human body, seeing a being of light, seeing a panoramic review of one's life and approaching a border or limit...

In his book, *Life After Life*, Moody says that those who encounter a being of light — and he says an encounter is the most common element among his interviews — identify the being in various ways, seemingly according to their religious backgrounds.

Ritchie's first experience after being pronounced "dead" was that of feeling free of his body, and of wanting to do what had been uppermost in his mind before he was hospitalized with pneumonia — catching the train to Richmond, Virginia, whither he was to proceed to complete his medical studies. Then, after the "being of light" had appeared to him, in Dr. Ritchie's own words:

"... the hospital walls disappeared and every single thing that had ever happened to me from the time I was born was there in panoramic view. Every detail. Everything I had ever done in public, in private, in light, in darkness... I have never been in the presence of such total and absolute love, a being that totally knew everything about me and totally accepted me and totally loved me...."

"Now the first question he throws at me is, 'What have you done with your life?' I definitely can hear, but I'm not hearing from ears but it's like you and I sitting here and there's no need for us to talk because every time you think of something I'm instantaneously aware of it...."

Then Ritchie says he was taken on a rare tour. He says he was conducted through "different realms of life." His first realm is life as we know it. His second realm is made up of creatures who can observe this world and — he says as best he can explain it — look something like human beings. He says there's a third realm with beings "not as dense as us," and a fourth realm where the beings were "beings of light...."

Ritchie, as does Moody in his book, offers rebuttals to any number of alternative explanations. As for the suggestion that he merely had a dream, Ritchie says that in a dream "you wouldn't see yourself as two people at one time" and that he has come across nothing like this in his work as a psychiatrist.

Nor does he think it was some latent thoughts that surfaced at the time of his physical collapse. "Although there are quite a few cases in literature like this," he says, "I'll tell you on a stack of bibles I had never read any such thing...."

He says of the concept that "somehow when we die we go floating away on a cloud — I can't think of anything more stupid. It's much more involved than anything our religions have ever taught us." It's his opinion that this life is sort of a first stage.

"We don't leave junior high school to go into medicine or law, right? We have to go through high school, college and the professional school. It's the same thing.

"I think these are the lower classrooms of the universe that we're in. I think that our ultimate destiny is to reach the Christ state. Now I don't think you do it in one lifetime. Some people might, but I don't think I'm going to make it.

"If you're interested in, say, photography, in this third realm I'm telling you about you will see instruments and techniques they haven't even begun to think of here yet. You start off where you leave off. That which you sow, you reap."

Which brings up that other realm which Ritchie says he saw and where he says he would never want to go. "A place devoid of love and peace — what I consider hell, although I didn't see any fire and brimstone."

The experiences narrated by Dr. Ritchie and others who have come back from the "dead" need to be viewed in the light of what we have been told in our philosophy about the after-death condition.

The growing band of futurologists may roughly be divided into two — the pessimists and the optimists. Doomsayers who solemnly declare that the end of the world is near are no worse and no better than dreamers who speak of utopia tomorrow. The Indian co-president of the world constitution and parliament association has come out with the forecast that in 20 years a world government will be set up. Global conditions, he says, will compel nation-states to have some kind of world authority to solve human problems. (*The Times of India*, August 13)

This is a pleasant dream, though if current tensions are any indication, the nation-state concept is being constantly strengthened with the chasm between the haves and havenots daily widening. Wendell Wilkie popularized the "one world" idea, and at the time it went down rather well. Now ecologists have taken up that slogan and speak unceasingly about "spaceship earth" and the oneness of mankind. Futurologists such as Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute and Buckminster Fuller are also qualified optimists, but they are not hasty enough to set the date of a global government in our century.

The failure of the United Nations is sufficient evidence of the cursedness of the species. That organization was born of a beautiful dream set off by the trauma of a terrible war. Perhaps only another war or an equally traumatic experience will push mankind to the same path of unity and co-operation.
